

I. God's Expectations

Last time I was here, I told you to beat your kids. Anybody beating their kids? All right, amen. So it works.

Today I want to talk about God. I think God has expectations. God has expectations that we make choices in our life. Everybody has expectations, whether you admit it or not. You have expectations about what I am going to do here. Some of you think I am going to blow it; I probably will. Some of you think, "Well, he is going to do okay." Some of you think I am going to do great, and those are the people that I really like. I have expectations of you. I expect you to go home and beat your kids. I have a bad record here. The first time I preached here, the piano lady quit. The second time I preached... anyhow, there are expectations. I have expectations of myself.

Expectations are not a bad thing. Everybody has them. They are proper; they are good; they are right. If you do not set expectations, we will never achieve anything in life. God has expectations too, and you and I ought to be interested in what those are. In case you never considered it, God does have expectations.

I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that ye present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God, which is your reasonable service.

It goes on and on, but it is a reasonable expectation that God has. My boss has expectations. My wife and kids have expectations. And sure as I am standing here, so does God. I dare say He has earned the right to have those expectations based on the things He has done for us. It is reasonable. I think it is reasonable for Him to do that.

II. The Importance of Context

Sometimes we miss expectations by how we approach the Bible. For me, it is like this: we take the Bible, and we pick it apart, and we put it into little sections or little snippets. We call them memory verses. It is a syndrome I like to call "the verse before and after the famous verse syndrome."

For instance, can anybody tell me what John 3:16 is? That is not a bad verse to know.

For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life.

How about this one? We all know Ephesians 2:8-9.

For by grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God: Not of works, lest any man should boast.

And verse 10. What I am saying is there is a thing; I am going to make a point. Romans 3:24. Am I advocating memorizing the whole Bible? Yes, you should do that. By the next time I preach, go home, beat your kids, memorize the Bible, and be back next time. It will probably be about a year, probably in August, when Bob goes... every time I preach here, Bob leaves. He just does not want to hear the truth. Truth is hard, is it not? It is hard.

I am going to be in the book of Joshua today. That is where my next snippet is. I think you all know where I am going to go in Joshua chapter 24. You have that world-famous verse: "As for me and my house, we will serve the Lord." You see it on bumper stickers, refrigerator magnets. I have got it on the wall of my hearth room. It is there. "As for me and my house, we will serve the Lord." There is more to the passage than we give credit for, though. It is a great life verse to have, but if you read it in verse... I am going to read the whole... I am going to read from verse 1 to 15 because there is a point to the whole passage, I think.

So if you are with me, let us read that there.

1 And Joshua gathered all the tribes of Israel to Shechem, and called for the elders of Israel, and for their heads, and for their judges, and for their officers; and they presented themselves before God.

2 And Joshua said unto all the people, Thus saith the LORD God of Israel, Your fathers dwelt on the other side of the flood in old time, even Terah, the father of Abraham, and the father of Nahor: and they served other gods.

3 And I took your father Abraham from the other side of the flood, and led him throughout all the land of Canaan, and multiplied his seed, and gave him Isaac.

4 And I gave unto Isaac Jacob and Esau: and I gave unto Esau mount Seir, to possess it; but Jacob and his children went down into Egypt.

5 I sent Moses also and Aaron, and I plagued Egypt, according to that which I did among them: and afterward I brought you out.

6 And I brought your fathers out of Egypt: and ye came unto the sea; and the Egyptians pursued after your fathers with chariots and horsemen unto the Red sea.

7 And when they cried unto the LORD, he put darkness between you and the Egyptians, and brought the sea upon them, and covered them; and your eyes have seen what I have done in Egypt: and ye dwelt in the wilderness a long season.

8 And I brought you into the land of the Amorites, which dwelt on the other side Jordan; and they fought with you: and I gave them into your hand, that ye might possess their land; and I destroyed them from before you.

9 Then Balak the son of Zippor, king of Moab, arose and warred against Israel, and sent and called Balaam the son of Beor to curse you:

10 But I would not hearken unto Balaam; therefore he blessed you still: so I delivered you out of his hand.

11 And ye went over Jordan, and came unto Jericho: and the men of Jericho fought against you, the Amorites, and the Perizzites, and the Canaanites, and the Hittites, and the Girgashites, the Hivites, and the Jebusites; and I delivered them into your hand.

12 And I sent the hornet before you, which drave them out from before you, even the two kings of the Amorites; but not with thy sword, nor with thy bow.

13 And I have given you a land for which ye did not labour, and cities which ye built not, and ye dwell in them; of the vineyards and oliveyards which ye planted not do ye eat.

14 Now therefore fear the LORD, and serve him in sincerity and in truth: and put away the gods which your fathers served on the other side of the flood, and in Egypt; and serve ye the LORD.

15 And if it seem evil unto you to serve the LORD, choose you this day whom ye will serve; whether the gods which your fathers served that were on the other side of the flood, or the gods of the Amorites, in whose land ye dwell: but as for me and my house, we will serve the LORD.

Let us pray. Father, we just thank You so much for allowing us to come here this morning and so freely worship Your Word, whereas we all know around the world that is not so easy to do anymore. Father, we may be the last bastion of a country where we can freely worship You in openness. Lord, I pray that we never take that for granted and that we realize that You have expectations of us. Those expectations include us making choices, choices that You would have us make rather than the ones we have. Lord, I pray for our pastor and his family as they are traveling that they would have a good time, they would have safe travel, and bring them back. Lord, I pray for this message today that You would speak instead of me and not let me get in the way. I ask these things in Jesus' name. Amen.

So there it is: "But as for me and my house, we will serve the Lord." If you think about those memory verses and the refrigerator magnets and the wall art and the bumper stickers, they are not bad. But if we fall into a trap there, we miss what the passage really says. We are sometimes missing the point in bumper sticker Christianity. We get part of a verse or a verse, and we burn it into our memory, but we miss the real point. Bob always says, the pastor always says, "Look ahead, look behind, look around." It is the same with the Bible. You have a verse right here; there is a bunch before it and a bunch after it, and the context really matters because when we do this, I think we sometimes miss the point.

The passage that I want to look at today is 14 and 15 mostly, and it is telling us two things. It is letting us know that there are choices that we need to make, and I am going to examine those, and that God has expectations, and I am going to examine those. Every choice we make tells us something about who God is to us, and not only that, but every choice we make tells everybody else who God is to us. The Bible says over and over again, "Her husband is known in the gates." If you look in the book of Ruth or in Proverbs, "Her husband is known in the gates." Your husband is known in the gates by how you behave. What you do and what you say and how you do it and how you say it are a reflection on God, whether you like it or not. So you are making choices every day, and the choices that we make will tell the whole world.

I used to watch these Christians try to witness to me in bars and places where neither one of us should have been, and I thought, "Really? Is that who God is?" That is what I thought. That is an extreme example, but we make choices every day. He reminds these people in chapter 24. Joshua was giving his kind of farewell address, sort of like Paul does. Joshua was gathering them all together, and he starts out reminding these people about what God has done for them. He says there are people that once chose to serve other gods. Abraham's father was an idol worshiper; he was an idolater. Abraham got up out of that land and went where God told him to go, and he chose this guy. God chose Abraham for no other reason than He chose him, and He gave him a promise, and He made his man fruitful, and He multiplied his seed on the earth, and then the people did not do right anyways.

Then He sent them a man called Moses, and he led them out of the bondage of the world in Egypt, and the Lord protected His people, and He led them through the Red Sea, got them out of there. Then Joshua got chosen, and he takes them over this battle, this place, this place called the Jordan. It was at flood stage when he did it, and God got these people, a picture of God's people, across this great divide that only God could get them across. They could not have got across that without God, and He protects them over and over and over again, even though they rebel against Him. God protects them over and over again. He is the first helicopter parent, guys. God is a helicopter parent. I am sorry, you watch this thing in the Bible: God sets it up, the kids screw up, God gets them out of the mess. They screw up, God gets them out of the mess. I mean, if that is not a helicopter parent, I do not know what is. But he says here in this passage that God fought the battles for them, even if they thought they did it themselves. God expects that we acknowledge what He does for us.

I do not know about you guys, but I am not so good. I am not such a good person. I was not born saved. I was not born good. I did not even wake up good this morning, and I will go to bed not good. I am not a good person at heart. Anything good about me is all right, Ryan. Ryan, do you care to share? Amen. All right, I finally got an amen. Amen. That is strange. I only get amens when it is about me. All right, Ryan. I see how that goes. He is just too big to pick on, so I am going to move on.

Joshua was speaking to historical Israel in this passage, but the Bible is speaking to us. This applies to us every bit as much as it does to them. He is telling his people that God has expectations of them, and He wants us to make decisions because you will choose one way or another, for if you think it is evil to serve the Lord, you are going to choose. So let us examine this thing here.

III. God's Expectations for His People

The first one here is found in verse 14. I am going to read it again.

Now therefore fear the LORD, and serve him in sincerity and in truth: and put away the gods which your fathers served on the other side of the flood, and in Egypt; and serve ye the LORD.

God expects that we fear Him. "Now therefore fear the Lord." I like how the Bible is real complicated. You need like a doctorate or something to understand it, right? Because those are

hard words to understand. "Now therefore fear the Lord." Seems pretty simple to me. Salvation is free, but it came with a great, great price, and so I feel like God gets to have a reasonable expectation of me that I fear Him. Therefore, all those things, based on everything that God has done, therefore, fear the Lord, fear Him. I am sure we all agree on what that is, but have we ever really investigated what fearing God is?

Fear the Lord

The Bible says in Proverbs 8:13, "The fear of the Lord is to hate evil: pride, and arrogancy, and the evil way, and the froward mouth, do I hate." I had a Bible, one of the first Bibles I ever had was a Scofield Reference Bible, and in the margin of Psalms 19:9, note 1, it says the following: "Fear the Lord is reverential trust with hatred of evil." I think that is wrong, guys. I think it means to be afraid. There are a lot of things that sum up fearing the Lord, but if that is reverential trust and admiration, that is most... that is like our fathers, and I am not really afraid of my father anymore. I am not afraid of him. It is more than that. It says to be afraid of Him. If fearing God is reverence and trust, He is no better than our father, and most of us, some of us, do not have a lot of respect for our fathers or elders for that matter, because we are young and you are young and you are energetic. I am old, so I am talking about me.

2 Corinthians 5:11 says something like this: "Knowing therefore the terror of the Lord, we persuade men." I think we need to be afraid of God. I think we need to really truly be afraid of God because if you ever suffered the wrath of God, you would know what I am talking about.

Now consider this, ye that forget God, lest I tear you in pieces, and there be none to deliver.

I do not know. That is more than respect and admiration with a hatred of evil. That is being afraid, and it says there, "Lest ye forget, ye that forget God." The only way that you could forget God is to not fear Him. There is just no way you could fear God if you have not forgot Him. So how do you know if you really fear God? You have got to have an attitude that shows that you hate the same things that God hates, that you love the same things that God loves, and that you expect that He has expectations of you when the choices that you make are right and wrong.

16 These six things doth the LORD hate: yea, seven are an abomination unto him:

17 A proud look, a lying tongue, and hands that shed innocent blood,

18 An heart that deviseth wicked imaginations, feet that be swift in running to mischief,

19 A false witness that speaketh lies, and he that soweth discord among brethren.

We have all been through the study of Proverbs, and the pastor covered this section, and for me, they do not sum it all up, but they sum it up pretty good. There are six things that God hates, and the seventh thing is a person. That seventh thing is that one who sows discord among the brethren. But there are two things in here that really stick out to me. These feet that are swift and mischievous. Did you ever notice how quick you make a decision to do wrong, but how slow and hard it is to come back and get right? When I want to sin, I am in it, man. I am all in. Why? Because sin is fun. Sin feels good. Sorry. It does. If it did not, I would not do it. If sin did not feel

good when I started to do it, I would never start. Now it all hurts at the end, but ask any drug addict or alcoholic how it was when they started. It was great. How did it end? It ended bad.

Feet that are swift to mischief. There is lots of energy going in, but there is not a lot of energy going, "Well, you know, I have been in this so long, I just cannot get out of it." Yeah, okay. Feet that are swift to mischief. How much we fear God will be measured by how swift we get into trouble and how swift we get back. That is just the way it is. If you are afraid of God, you will realize it. I mean, everybody, okay, so do we fall backwards into sin and not know we are doing it? Probably not. But I mean, more than likely, we do it knowingly, but there are a few times you get in trouble, you do not know it. And then you realize, "Hey, wait a minute, I should not have probably been doing this thing." How quickly do you get out, and how much energy do you put into it? Do you put the same amount of energy that you got into it with?

How about the last one? "He that soweth discord among the brethren." That has got to be the worst one. The seven are an abomination. The seventh one is an abomination. The first six are sins. The last one is a sinner. "He that soweth discord among the brethren." What would you think about me if I used this opportunity to attack the pastor? How about that? Would not that be great if I got here, "You know, Bob, this and he, that..." How... you would probably think pretty low, would not you? Probably already do. What would you think about a man who complained about his wife to another woman? How about that? That would be pretty bad, right? How about a man? How about a woman that complained about her husband to another man? This is not good. It is bad. Those are the easy ones, but this discord sower is a lot more subtle than that.

How about this? How about someone that would take a devotion and use it to attack church leadership with? How about that? Would not that be bad? See how it gets. I was like, "Oh, you want to really make a point about somebody. You really do not like someone, and you use an opportunity to do that." That is sowing discord among the brethren. You are messing with God's kids. You know how I find that people would forget God, people that do not fear God, are like people that would forget that if you mess with God's kids, you are going to get in trouble. If you mess with my kids, you are going to get in trouble. And the only way you could mess with my kids is to forget that I am really going to call you to task for it. That is just the way God is. Someone that would mess with my kids does not fear me. You know, maybe you should not, maybe you should, but someone would mess with God's kids, this does not fear Him at all.

Serve Him in Sincerity and Truth

The next thing you see there is He expects us to serve Him. It says to serve Him in sincerity and truth. Well, we all know we are supposed to serve Him, right? But how, how do we do that? Well, it says it right there in simple terms: in sincerity and truth. To serve Him is a study I did once on "serve," to serve God. So the first servant we see in the Bible is Adam. You find him in the Garden of Eden. And in Genesis chapter 2, verse 5, let me, let me just go here. We see that God tells Adam something.

And every plant of the field before it was in the earth, and every herb of the field before it grew: for the LORD God had not caused it to rain upon the earth, and there was not a man to till the ground.

So one of Adam's methods of serving God was to till the ground. How was the service? He was told to till the ground. To till is to take something and turn it over, right? You take the soil, you turn it over, and what comes up? You are trying to get that soil ready to what? Bring forth fruit. But when you till the soil, farmers will tell you rocks come up, and after you do it, weeds come up. So you have to have someone there to dress it. You look over in chapter 2, verse 15.

And the LORD God took the man, and put him into the garden of Eden to dress it and to keep it.

Those two words are important: to dress. It means to line it up. When you make a mess and you till the ground and you make a mess, you have got to do something. You cannot just leave the mess there. You have got to, you have got to dress it. To dress it means to line it up. We used to get in formations in the Navy, and they would say, "Dress right!" You look right, you dress right. And everybody would be lined up, and you would not look like a bunch of misfits standing there when you marched around. To dress that thing is to prepare the soil to bring forth fruit. And when we do these things, when we till the ground, things start popping up. So apply it to your life. When you start tilling the ground that you are walking on, and those rocks start popping up, those sins, that is serving God. And the point is that it starts with you. Ministry starts with you first. It goes to God. That comes back on you, and then it goes out to the world. But what we see today is a lot of people just want to go out to the world. It is about them. It is not about God. "I am serving God. Look at me. Watch me serve God. Look at me. Did you see me serve God? I am doing it right now. Here I am. Look at me. Look at me." That is not serving God.

But what Adam is doing is he is tilling the ground. He is dressing the ground, and it says there to keep it because there is a point where you can line up a garden. You can till the ground. You can line everything up, plant the seeds, walk away. It is not going to grow very good. The weeds are going to come up and choke that thing out. The Christian experience is keeping at it and keeping going. God expects that we hang in there. It is not a part-time job. Christianity is not a part-time job. When it gets hard, we just walk away. And when people are not noticing what I am doing, I get discouraged, so I stop doing it. No, that is not what the Christian experience is. God expects that we keep at it. Someone who serves God with a proper attitude of fearing God will continue through tough times and be consistent.

Yeah, we all mess up. God knows this. He knows that we are just dust. We are not that strong. If we did not need a Savior, we would not need a Savior. We would be perfect, would not we? We need to serve Him in sincerity and truth. Sincerity speaks to our motives. There is no sincerity and truth. There is no fear. I am sorry. There is just something about a person who is a Christian. They are a saved child of God. They are going to heaven. We are going to spend eternity with them, but there is just something about that person that does not... that the glory is for them and not God.

Here is an example. You meet a new Christian. Maybe they are from another church. Maybe they are not even a Christian yet. Maybe you are trying to witness to him. The first issue you go to is, "What version of the Bible do you use?" What is that? Is that sincerity? Is that really the way God wants this thing to be? I do not think it is. That person is not serving in sincerity. They are serving out of pride and arrogance. Hey man, I have got a King James 1611 Authorized Bible in

my hands right now. Thank God. Thank God. It would have been really hard to get me to put down a different version because of pride and arrogance on my part. I fell backwards into this thing. I went to buy the Bible that day, and the only thing I had in my mind was to not buy a King James 1611 Bible. I did not want that old thing. I did not want any part of that thing, but I accidentally bought a King James 1611 Bible. So I have got that issue under my belt, and I have to deal with that, but that is not the first thing I am going to deal with with a new Christian. Why would we do that? Why do people do that? Is that really the first thing you want to do? Then the person gets all turned off, and what do we do? "Well, that person, they are just one of them evangelical types. They will never get it anyways." And we just dismiss them because they did not get it. That is the first thing we deal with them. I have seen it happen. It is just a disingenuous kind of thing. It is not a sincere thing for a guy or a gal. "We got it right. Look, we are on the right side of that issue. Who cares that we are on the wrong side of all these issues over here, but we have got that one right, and we are going to go make that our thing." That is just not... the motives are wrong. It is not sincere.

Here is another one. You are on a street. You are witnessing to someone about salvation. Within a minute or two, you are on manuscript evidence, right? "Oh, manuscript evidence. That is what you need. That is what you know what the Ethiopian eunuch did when Philip ran over there." It is not recorded in the Bible, but I have got this knowledge. "I went to Bible college." You got it, right? What he did was Philip made sure that the Ethiopian eunuch had the right manuscript first. It was like he had to write, "You got a King James Bible, right? Okay. Well, let me tell you what that says." He did not do that. He dealt with the guy the way he was dealing with the guy at the moment the guy was there. He dealt with them at the level he was at. And that is sincerity. That is, that is sincerity. That is truth. You get about six months under our belt, and we find out what gets the attention and praises of men, do not we? And then we go after that. That is not sincerity. That is not truth. That is proud. That is arrogant. It is wrong. It is sin. And we ought to, we ought to run from it.

Look, I am not preaching against the King James Bible. I would never use another one. I do not even want to hear another one. I get it. I am with you all on this, but please remember that that poor slob out there on the streets in Kansas City that needs to get saved does not care about your King James Bible. He does not care about your manuscript evidence. He does not care about the doctrines of this or doctrines of that. He is going to go to hell, and you are a chance for him to not go to hell. Deal with that. Deal with the Romans Road. Deal with salvation. Meet him where he is, and then till that ground, keep that ground, and dress that ground. Disciple that guy, disciple that woman, and bring that person into heaven instead of sending them off into hell going, "Boy, wonder what that manuscript evidence means." They do not even know what it means. We need to check our motives.

I saw, and this is something I actually saw happen, okay? And let me tell you this, the guy that did it, he was as sincere as the day is long. Okay. He just had not got maturity yet. I can give a handsaw to a kid. The handsaw is perfect. It is a perfect tool, but the kid is going to make a mess with it. You have got to watch where you are at, do a self-assessment, till your own ground, dress

your own ground, keep your own ground, and then go out and try to mess with God's kids. Because it is a scary thing when you mess with God's kids. I do not want to do it.

Here is another one. Boy, I was really in a bad mood about page five. Here you go. How about this? "Look at me. Look at me." Emotion-based false spirituality. How about them crazy Charismatics? How about that? They are pretty weird, right? They run around, jumping up and down, screaming, hooting, and hollering. It is just them, right? Look around, look ahead, look behind, look everywhere you are at. Is it you? Are you here trying to show me how spiritual you are? Because I am too stupid to notice, by the way. You would have to put a sign on your head that says, "I am spiritual," for me. I just do not get it. It is about God. Is God the center of our worship, or is it me?

The Bible says something like this in Matthew 6:5.

And when thou prayest, thou shalt not be as the hypocrites are: for they love to pray standing in the synagogues and in the corners of the streets, that they may be seen of men. Verily I say unto you, They have their reward.

1 Corinthians 14:40 says, "Let all things be done decently and in order." It is not about us. It is about Him. And when it becomes about me, you are all in a lot of trouble. I am not that good. Someone who is sincere just does not need that. They do not need to be seen worshipping God. Sincerity speaks to our motives and service and truth. Here is the truth: if you are at least sincere about something, no one honest could ever question your motives. That young guy on the streets that day that ran into manuscript evidence with this poor homeless guy, I am like, "Really?" He was, he was very sincere. And I have watched him grow since. It has been about two, three years ago. I just watched this kid grow up, and he is different than he is then. And it is a good thing. His motives were pure. You can never attack that. And that is a good thing. To serve God is a package deal. Service outside of sincerity and truth is just eye service as men pleasers.

Part of serving God in sincerity and truth means that we are studying and hiding God's Word in our heart. What was the last Bible verse you memorized? I cannot check you on that, right? What was the last Bible verse you hid in your heart? "Thy word have I hid in my heart that I might not sin against thee." If I do not fear God, I will not memorize Bible. I will not hide it in my heart. I will sin against Him. And I will not care because I do not, I forgot who He is. He could tear me to pieces. He will laugh at my calamity. That is our loving God. He will laugh at your calamity. He says that. God said it in His Bible, not me. Remember Diotrephes, the guy that loved to have the preeminence? Paul was no fan of Diotrephes. We ought to be no fan of having the preeminence in our service and worship of God. It is about Him, not about me.

Put Away Other Gods

The next thing here, what we see in here, it says there, "Put away gods." So I am going to go back here to Joshua. It says in verse 14: "And put away the gods which your fathers served on the other side of the flood, and in Egypt; and serve ye the Lord." God expects us to be faithful to Him. I know I am not telling you any great truths that you do not know, but maybe you do not know it. One of the biggest things the lost world sees when it looks at a Christian is

unfaithfulness to God. They see us put God aside when we want to do what we want to do. Hey, I am guilty. You all know that. I am not telling you, like Bob says, pastor says, "You only have to hear this once." I had to hear it for the last three weeks over and over and over again. And you try not to say things because, "Well, that is me too," but I have nothing to say. I am not better. I am not better.

God's people have always had a propensity to wander towards other gods. You see it throughout the Bible. It is the weirdest thing. As a new Christian, I would read the story in Exodus, and they would be out there, and they would be hungry. God gave them food. They did not like the food He gave them, so God gave them different food. They got thirsty. God gave them water. The Egyptians came, they flooded them, and every time they turn around, God is helping them out. And within moments, they are back to their old vomit, like a dog returning to their vomit. Moses goes up into the mountain. He is gone a couple of days. That is it. "We are done. Let us make a calf." Right. God's people always do this. They always wander to other gods, and we need to make choices every day. I think God expects us to make those right choices. After all, I do not know, He kind of died on a cross for your sins. He kind of left His throne in heaven, lived as a man. That has got to be bad. Imagine this: go live life for 32 years as a cockroach. You still will not understand how far God came to live as a man. You will never get it. He left His throne in heaven to come and live as a man for 32 years and then die. No, you know, it was not that bad, right? It is kind of bad. He has expectations that we make the right choices.

They choose to serve gods they had before their salvation, right? How many people, you know, still hold on to the concept of God they had before they got saved? "I just cannot believe God would smite me for doing this. I have always been that way. He knows He made me that way." That is a God from the other side of salvation. They do not think God will do anything because they have not put away that God they served on the other side of salvation because He would not do it. It might be a false religion that tells you that you need a man to intercede. "You cannot talk to Christ." I came out of that one. "You cannot talk to Christ directly. You have got to talk to this guy over here. He will talk to somebody else who talked to it." It does not work that way. It might be a false religion God that says that you can lose your salvation or you have to work to keep it. They bring it in. I mean, you know who they are. You have seen them, and what do you do? "Well, you know, you have got to get Sinaiticus and Vaticanus out of your head, and you really need it." No, you have got to deal with them where they are at. You have got to help them get through that, but they bring them. We bring our gods. Some people think God is just Santa Claus. That is basically it. They think God is Ronald McDonald, the "have it your way" God. We could do it any way we want. Whatever I want, when I want, how I want it.

They choose to serve gods they pick up along the way. It says there in verse 15, "and whose land ye dwell." Right? So they had these gods they brought with them. There is a story of a... I do not want to do it yet. No, no, not doing it. No, they take the gods that they had before they got saved, and they had them, and they get rid of those, and they grab a whole bunch of new gods on this side of salvation. Let us see. There is the soccer God, the football God, the job God, the relationship God. That is prevalent in society today. The children God, you name it. Today's Christian has a lot of replacements for the gods they left behind on the other side of salvation.

Thou shalt have no other gods before me.

We say, "As for me and my house, we will serve the Lord." Careful when you say that because you cannot serve two masters. You will not serve two masters. You will love one and hate the other, or you will hate one and love the other. Gods are anything we place in front of God. Okay. So that means time on Sundays, on Thursdays, not just Sundays and Thursdays. When was the last time you picked up your Bible before today? He did not say that. Money, talent. And when it comes pushed to shove, you are not going to take what you are supposed to give to God and take it for yourself. "Well, I have got a car payment too. Better cut back on that." Okay. Let me know how that goes for you. "He that forget God, lest I tear you to pieces." I have been torn to pieces before. It is not pretty because God will tend to go after someone you love instead of you. So try this at home, guys. You will not like it at all.

God's expectations that we remember that everything we have is His anyways. All my time, all my talent, all my treasure, everything I have is from God. I have a hard time remembering that. I am not going to tell you that I am perfect in this, but as I get older, I remember that everything, everything, every ministry I have ever had is God's. I have never had a ministry. I serve at the, at the pleasure of God. I am serving here today at the pleasure of our pastor. Our pastor was given care of one of God's ministries of shepherding a flock. And the first time you ever hear someone say, "This is my ministry, and I am going to do it my way," you just watched someone that stepped over a line out of the pit of hell and said, "I am going to do it my way." That is the Burger King God. The Burger King God says, "Do it my way." They are not our ministries, guys. They are God's ministry. We are just borrowing His people. And when we let our flesh tell us that it is good for the kids or it is good for me, or I have got this great new idea, that is what the translators did in about 1800. They had a better idea, guys. The new gods of the world tell us that your idea is better than what has worked for 2,000 years.

I have been in churches where they phase out the old hymns because the new songs are better because "we have to change with the times, guys." I mean, everybody knows that American society and Christianity is way better now than it was 200 years ago, right? We are more on fire now than we were 200 years ago. That sounds wrong when I say that, right? We are not better off, but we continuously make little tweaks and changes because we are smarter. We are educated. We are genteel folk now. And we are now those stupid people back there in the 1600s. They did not really know what they were talking about. They did not have the great minds like Westcott and Hort to come along and tell them that the Bible they had was wrong, and it needs to be corrected. It is the same in churches. It is a comfortable God to serve, right? These old folks, they can just, "I wish they would not bother us anymore." That way you can serve the God that you serve and feel good about it. That is great. That is a comfortable God to serve, but it is not the Lord God, Savior of mankind. It is a different God. The gods of this world and this side of salvation say that you can have it your way. And that is any way you want it.

There is a, there is a right way. My Bible says, "Remove not the ancient landmarks." And you can apply that in a hundred different ways, but one of them is the stuff that was working. Why would you change that? Because it is boring, right? It is boring. Who needs that old stuff that worked for hundreds of years? This is the 21st century, and I have evolved. Like I said, I have

seen churches that phase out the old stuff, and all they sing is the new stuff. And maybe there is nothing, I am not saying there is or is not. Maybe there is nothing wrong with that new stuff, but what was wrong with the old stuff? I kind of like the old stuff. "We are better than they are." Do you believe it? No, I am not going to say that. I do not want to be that mean because it is, it is, this is me. Okay. I am going to say, look, the gods of this world and this side of salvation, they are going to tell you that you are okay simply because you are holding a King James Bible in your hand. That is all you need. "I have got a King James. I have got a King James Bible in my hand." So do I. You should see me on a bad day. It is not all that good. That King James Bible does not work for me unless it is open in front of my face, and I am hiding that word in my heart, and then doing it, then doing what it says, right? And to do it, we have to do it.

It says in verse 14, "And put away the gods which your fathers served on the other side of the flood." There are apparently some people left in his congregation. Go right back to the story now, right? If you remember the story of Joshua, they crossed Jordan, that flood stage, only God could get them across. They get over there. And the next thing they see is Jericho, and they go surround Jericho, and they march around the city of Jericho 152 times or whatever it was. And the walls fall down, and all the commentaries are great. They say that the marching caused a harmonic vibration, which made the thing fall down. I just think God did it. I think God just wiped out the wall, and that is all there was to it. Rahab lived on the wall. The wall fell down, and she did not die. So God somehow was able to make that wall come down. Maybe just melt it. I do not know. The wall came down. They had this great victory in Jericho. And one chapter later, they are getting their butts handed to them in Ai. Why? Why is that? Well, good old Achan grabbed the accursed thing, a God other than the Lord God. And he hid it in his tent. And what did they do? They took his whole family out and burned them. What do we do today? We just talk about them behind their back. We are better than that. We are more genteel. "So did you see what Achan did? Boy, can you believe what Achan did? Oh boy, Achan, he sure does get up there on Sunday morning and preach a message. And then he does not do it." That is what we do today. He took the accursed thing, and a single man's sin and coveting idols caused the entire nation of Israel to get defeated. They got beat bad. Just after this great victory, they got beat bad. Today we are super Christians. We just talk about them behind their back. We cannot figure out why we still have these problems in our life. If there is someone out there messing up, how does it help them to tell someone else what is wrong with them? Why do not we tell them what is wrong with going to a brother or a sister in Christ and say, "Hey brother, that thing you did, that thing you said, that was not right." You know what stops us? We do not want the responsibility for the mess that it creates. Joshua did not have a problem with it. He took that whole family out and wasted them. Now I am not saying we have got to take, do not take me out and burn me and my family after church today. Okay. I am just saying some 17 chapters later though, they are in chapter 24. Now there are still people there. He says, "Put them, Joshua is saying, put them away." They are still there. These people saw what happened to Achan, and they are still bringing it in. People today see the devastation of sin in people's lives, and they still will not put away sin in their lives. God expects that we put those away. He expects that we be faithful to Him and not the gods that we had before we got saved and the gods that we brought back with us out of salvation on this side.

Yeah, boy, this guy is mean. Joshua 24 is really a good picture of people who are God's people. They are a picture of us today. They are still serving the idols and the gods that they found on the other side of salvation. They are not being faithful to God. God expects us to be faithful, or they are serving the gods that the world serves up every day. It is easy. They are easy gods to serve. They are comfortable gods to serve.

IV. The Daily Choice

It says there in verse 15, "And if it seem evil unto you to serve the Lord." He is telling Israel here that those who choose to serve the old gods are saying something that you do not think you would ever say. "I believe it is evil to serve the Lord. I think it is evil. I am not going to serve the Lord because it is evil." When I serve another God, I am effectively saying not only I am not going to serve God, but it is evil to serve the Lord. And I will tell you what, if one of my kids said it was evil to obey me, I would have not been happy about that. And if we think that God is our father, we probably ought to think twice about what we do when we do it.

If it seemed evil, here is the application. These are not a bunch of heathens. They are God's chosen people. Now they are serving other gods, but it does not mean they are not God's chosen people. And today among God's chosen people, the Word of God is telling us that there are strange gods among us. I am sure of it. They pop up in my life every once in a while. I am sure they pop up in your life every once in a while. And if we do not deal with them, we run a chance of bowing down and serving them. How would you like your kids to go worship somebody else's father? How would that feel? If your kids had more respect for somebody else than they did for you, that would feel bad. Now, I did not die on a cross for my kids. I buy them food and clothes, but I have some expectations of my kids. So for me, the metaphor works really good with God. God gets to have a few more expectations. And I think the penalty ought to be a little more harsh when we do not do what He wants us to do. If we do not do that, we are just saying it is evil to serve the Lord. And there is not a chance we can claim that we fear God and serve Him in sincerity and truth if we are still hanging out with the gods of this world. You cannot do it. The car God, the house job, job God, you cannot do it. We need to serve.

Yeah. Some people are serving to be seen rather than being seen to serve. There is a difference. I do not really care what you think of me. As long as I am okay with God, I should be okay with that. I should not have to spend any extra time trying to convince you that I am serving God. You all know who I am. I know who you are. We all know each other. So we all give each other a pass on certain things, right? But let us not try to fool God. We cannot fool God. God is always watching. He knows what is going on. You want to know how faithful you are to God? How quickly do you put God aside when it comes time to do what God wants you to do? Something that takes you away from church. Say, how quickly, how easy is it to get taken away from church on a Sunday night or a Sunday morning or a midweek Bible study? Is it easy? It happens from time to time. I travel a lot. Sometimes I am not here. Now, when I come back, I can tell you exactly where I was and exactly what I was doing when I do that. But if I was at a bar or I was at a party or some other place, some other sin in my life, some other God I was serving that day, it would be hard for me to come back and tell you what I was doing. When you make a decision

like that, can you come back and tell me what you are doing? Could you tell Bob? Could you come back and say, "Hey, pastor, guess what? I missed Sunday, but boy, I was at the best tailgate party in the whole world." I am not saying that not go to football games. I have been doing them. But what if it was like, "Well, you know, I have got season tickets, and that is important to me." I think that is another God that we are serving. God expects us to be faithful to Him. Whatever you are doing at church, here is a test. If it is good enough for me, then I should come back to church and tell everyone, "You ought to do this too. You should do this too. I have got season tickets to the Chiefs. We should all go. In fact, I will buy them all for you. Let us go." And in 16 weeks or whatever it is, we will be back. That is a pretty good test. How faithful are you to God? Maybe once in a while, we ought to take a step back and examine our own lives and see what is going on there and see how faithful we are to God because God expects us to be faithful to Him.

So what is your choice going to be? "Choose you this day." That is what Joshua was telling Israel right now. "Choose this day. Choose you this day." You are being presented with a choice. And the good news is you get to choose every day. "Choose you this day." So it is a verse of hope. See, this is a message of hope. "Choose you this day." In some ways, every day is a new beginning because you can choose to do something about what you have got going on. There is baggage. I have baggage. You have baggage. Maybe you do not have baggage. Joshua says to choose you this day. Do not let the devil tell you there has been too much water under the bridge, folks, because there is a lot of water under my bridge. Not too many people know what water went under my bridge, but there was a lot of water that went under my bridge. Do not let the devil tell you that you will change your mind and go back to your old ways because you will. You will. You will turn back probably a thousand times, but you can choose every day to turn and go back and worship the one God and serve the one God in sincerity and truth and be faithful to that God and that God only.

God knows your problems.

13 Like as a father pitieth his children, so the LORD pitieth them that fear him.

14 For he knoweth our frame; he remembereth that we are dust.

Tell the devil if you could handle it all the time, you would not need a Savior. Just choose you this day. Choose you this day. It does not matter who you are, what you have done, where you have been, turn around and start all over again. He is a God of second chances. He is a God of many things. He is a God of second chances. The Apostle Paul got to choose again, did not he? The Apostle Paul was kind of a bad guy, right? He was killing Christians, kind of happy about it. He is good at it. He was top of the line, the best Christian killer you ever met. Then towards the end of his life, he says:

6 For I am now ready to be offered, and the time of my departure is at hand.

7 I have fought a good fight, I have finished my course, I have kept the faith:

I do not think anyone would doubt that Paul turned it around. Paul had a lot of water that went under his bridge. And I do not know the struggles that he went through. I am sure he did. Shipwrecked a bunch of times, beaten a bunch of times, put in prison a bunch of times, freezing

a couple of times, snake bitten. Paul was kind of a guy that really did not care what you thought about him, and he suffered for it. But he was ready to be offered because he feared God. And we see it in the choices that he made. He fought a good fight, and he was sincere about it. He had truthful service to God. We see it in the choices he made. He was certainly faithful to God. We see it in the choices he made. Paul wanted his followers to do what he is writing about in 2 Timothy. And Joshua wants Israel to do what he is talking about. And God wants us to take a lesson from it, take it home.

V. A Call to Action and Reflection

Here is an interesting thing. Not going to keep you long today. That should be something you should be happy about. Amen. Got an amen for me? All right. Oh, cool. I got another message right here. Joshua 24. Israel is in the same exact place that Joseph was back in Genesis chapter 33. He is in a place called Shechem. And in Genesis 35, he is given a speech to his people. He gathers his people to him. What does he tell him? He says, "Put away strange gods." And he took those gods from his people, and he buried them under a tree, under a tree, which was by Shechem.

Now look at verse 25 in Joshua chapter 24.

25 So Joshua made a covenant with the people that day, and set them a statute and an ordinance in Shechem.

26 And Joshua wrote these words in the book of the law of God, and took a great stone, and set it up there under an oak that was by the sanctuary of the LORD.

27 And Joshua said unto all the people, Behold, this stone shall be a witness unto us; for it hath heard all the words of the LORD which he spake unto us: it shall be therefore a witness unto you, lest ye deny your God.

28 So Joshua let the people depart, every man unto his inheritance.

So he takes those gods, and he buries them under a tree, and he puts a rock over it. So you can see the picture there, right? Let us take those gods that you brought with us into salvation and get rid of them. Put them under the, there is no cross back there. Put them under the tree next to the rock, right? Let them just sit there. Take a hard look at what you are doing and how you are doing it. Not just what you are doing because what you are doing could be good and right. Why are you doing it? Are you doing it for Him, or are you doing it for me? I do not care. I just do not care. So if you are doing it for me, you are impressing the wrong guy because I just do not care. I am not that good. But if God cares about it, if you are doing it for God, then that ought to be the right thing. That is sincere in you, and it is truth. Take that junk and leave it under that rock in Shechem. Shechem means strength. Leave it there. You cannot handle those gods. You cannot handle those gods. Let Him deal with those things. Let us take a look at our lives and choose every day whether or not you are going to serve the Lord or not. The way the Lord wants to be served, not the way you want to do it. It is not your ministry, folks. It is His. You get to borrow His people. You are babysitting His kids. Now when you babysit my kids, I let you hit them. So

that is cool. Hey, you think I just want you to beat your kids? Beat mine too? Okay. Practice on them. They are too big now, so you cannot do it anymore.

And if it seem evil unto you to serve the LORD, choose you this day whom ye will serve; whether the gods which your fathers served that were on the other side of the flood, or the gods of the Amorites, in whose land ye dwell: but as for me and my house, we will serve the LORD.

If you have ever been in my house, you see it on the wall. I see it every day. There is not a day that goes by that I do not see that verse. Truth be told, there is probably not a day that goes by that I do it right. So I have got to wake up the next day and choose this day to serve the Lord the way He wants to be done. Do you mean it when you say it? If you do mean it, are you willing to change to make it happen? Because chances are I have described somebody in this room at least once. Something that I said here applies to somebody in this room, more than one, hopefully everybody in some way. Who is God to you? Who is He? Is He Santa Claus? Is He Burger King? Is He Ronald McDonald? You can have it your way. There is something wrong with the way we view God today.

If we think we need help doing this, well, cool. We are pretty much surrounded by like-minded people who are willing to help you. We have a lot of help here. A lot of people that have been through life, had some things go on, had some baggage they brought with them, had some gods they dumped before salvation. They picked up some on this side, worked through it, got rid of those, serving God. And then they wake up one day and they get it wrong again, just like us. We are just dust. We cannot fix that. That is why we need a Savior. But it is no excuse to go, "Well, I cannot do it perfectly, so I am not going to do it at all." God expects it. We at least give it the old college try. It is important. He thinks it is important. He thinks it is our reasonable service. He thinks it is reasonable, but you need to start talking to each other instead of talking about each other. What you say to someone else about me, it just never gets to me. No one ever says it. What I say about you behind your back generally does not get to you. Why? I am not going to tell someone that is going to tell you. I am talking about you behind your back. You think I am going to go to your best friend and say it, right? That is not how it works. If you have got a problem with someone, take it up with them. The Bible says to do it. The Bible says to take that problem to that brother or sister. If they have a problem and you take it to them and they do not get it right, what do you do? Well, you talk about them behind their back. That is what we do. No, you take it to someone else. You take it to a leader in the church. You go back to them. If that does not work, they let the pastor deal with it. But I cannot believe there are no problems in here. There are problems in here. We need to put away those strange gods we serve, those things we set God aside for in order to do what we want. When we set God aside to get the glory ourselves, that is what I am talking about. There is no glory in self-righteousness. Trust me, there is not.

Let us start by choosing this day to fear God, serving in sincerity and truth. Maybe yesterday was a bad day. Maybe today could be a better day. I do not know. Joshua was a great picture for us here. Israel is a great picture of those who were taken from the world, led across a great divide called salvation, by something other than ourselves. And we owe that something everything, not just a little bit, not just 10% of our money, not just 10% of our... You ever think about a tithe of your time? How about that? 2.4 hours a day. That is 10% of your day. Things just pop into my

head. A lot of baggage. The 70s were rough. So they just pop in there, and they just come out of my mouth. I cannot help it. What this chapter does shows a merciful and gracious God that just wants to show mercy to His people. But sometimes we take advantage of the fact that God wants to show us mercy. And so we do whatever we want. "Well, God will give me grace." Right up until the moment that He decides to let you wallow in that thing for a while. And that is not a pretty place to be.

And the people answered and said, God forbid that we should forsake the LORD, to serve other gods;

I have said it. Have you said it? We have all said it. And like these people, I am sure we are going to fall short from time to time. Just slow down for a minute. Check your motives. Make a correction. Move forward. He knows we are but dust. He knows it. He gets it. It is cool. Do not think that we did not see it, by the way. Hey, I do not fool myself into thinking that you people have not seen my problems. Do not fool yourself to think that I have not seen your... You shut up. If we choose not to choose, you wind up choosing something else. You wind up saying it is evil to serve the Lord God. That is it. I am done now. We are going to close in a word of prayer. And I would just like you to all think about serving God, serve God in sincerity and truth, fear the Lord, and be faithful to God. God has expectations. I think He has the right to do it. I know it is kind of hard to look back 2,000 years and realize what happened back then, but it did. And if it was your kid, I would be pretty mad at some of us right now. If that was my kid that died on that cross, I would get upset at some of my antics. It is a good thing I am not God. I do not have that much mercy, in Christ.

Let us pray. Father, we just thank You, praise You one more time for being able to come here and open up Your Word. I pray, Lord, that we not only hear Your Word today, but that we go and do it. And that when we fall short, and I know we will, Lord, that we know that we can come back to You for that forgiveness that we need and try to make a better life of ourselves. Father, I pray that we find ways to serve You and fear You and to do these things in a sincere and truthful way such that You would get all the honor and glory and that we would get none. And I ask these things in Jesus' name. Amen.