

I. The Spirit of Antichrist and the Sins of the Saints

Last week, we talked about one of what I think is the all-time issues that we face in churches today in New Testament Christianity, especially in the time period that we live in. So many of God's people are actually used to the wrong spirit to destroy not only people's lives, their credibility, their character, but ultimately, in time, the work of God. What we do and how we either respond or react has a long-term effect on the cause of Christ when somebody sows discord and says something that they have no business saying to someone who many times has no real issue with somebody or something.

We talked last week about Job 26:4, which asks, "Whose spirit comes from you?" Galatians 5:22-23 talks about the nine fruit of the Holy Spirit of God and how those are the nine characteristics of Christ that, when we have them in our life, represent the Spirit of God in your life and how God will work through you.

Then I showed you in Proverbs 6:1-6, in talking about the sins of the saints, the things that God's people get into. There we saw the spirit of the devil, or more appropriately, the spirit of Antichrist. When we think the word Antichrist, we always think of a man of sin that shows up in the tribulation period, and that is true. But I want you to know that there's a rapture of the church and the second coming of Christ. And then there's the second coming of the Antichrist. Of course, in both cases, long before either one of them showed up, they both sent their spirit here. On the day of Pentecost, the Holy Spirit of God showed up, and you can bet that the unholy spirit of Antichrist, in fact, 1 John 4:3 says:

1 John 4:3

> And every spirit that confesseth not that Jesus Christ is come in the flesh is not of God: and this is that spirit of antichrist, whereof ye have heard that it should come; and even now already is it in the world.

It's nothing more than the influence of doing wrong versus doing right and not following what the Word of God says when it comes to dealing with all the issues in life. We talked about last week how we are not to live our lives as Christians, allowing rumors and accusations or slander, whether true or false, to enter into our world.

I showed you that if you have a legitimate issue with somebody—and that's the key word, a legitimate issue. Many people don't even know the facts or what happened to somebody; somebody just tells them, and it never affected them one way or the other. You don't have a legitimate issue. But if you do, you go to that person. The Bible says last week in Proverbs 25:9 that you debate the cause with that person himself. You sit down and find out both sides of the story, not taking what somebody tells you to be the right story or the whole truth.

Remember, I gave you, and I hope you marked it in your Bible, one of the most incredible verses in Proverbs 18:13:

Proverbs 18:13

> He that answereth a matter before he heareth it, it is folly and shame unto him.

Then I gave you the example in 1 Kings 3, the Solomon Principle. You remember how the Bible says to prove all things, and you find the answer, the example of that in 1 Kings 3 when Solomon has to deal with the two women over the babies. I showed you all of those things as we walked through.

Then I told you that many times—I know it's been true in all of my ministry dealing with people—the person who slanders or the person who backbites or the person who is a talebearer will have a hidden agenda. Their motive is not to fix anything. If they were, then they would handle it biblically, but they have a driven agenda because they are driven by the wrong spirit to actually go in and to ruin somebody or to hurt somebody. The Bible is full of it. Proverbs is full of it.

Proverbs 10:18 and 1 Timothy 3:11 talk about people who slander. Proverbs 11:13, Proverbs 18:8, Proverbs 20:19, Proverbs 26:20, and Proverbs 26:22 talk about the talebearers. Romans 1:30 talks about the backbiters, people who go behind your back. People who are saved and on their way to heaven will forsake the Spirit of God and all of the fruit of that spirit and yield themselves to an unholy spirit of all the things that are listed. There are seven things we talked about last week in Proverbs 6:16. You can't have both. You can't have half of God's spirit in what you do and half of the devil's spirit in what you do. You just can't do that. It's one or the other.

As Paul said in Romans 16:17, we as God's people are to protect people, to protect the Word of God, and to protect the Church of God. He says:

Romans 16:17

> Now I beseech you, brethren, mark them which cause divisions and offences contrary to the doctrine which ye have learned; and avoid them.

Make an example of them so everybody knows that that's not what this church is going to permit to happen. Then we saw how lying and bearing false witness and slander, gossip, and sowing discord will be used by the devil to destroy the number one element that the church has to have to really be productive, and that's unity. Everybody being of a singleness of heart and mind based on the Word of God. That's the real agenda behind what the devil's trying to do. If the devil destroys the Church of Jesus Christ—not that he will—but if he ever could, he wouldn't destroy it with the world. He'd destroy it with his own people. He'd do the same thing to the church that he did with the Nation of Israel. It got corrupted from within and then went from there.

II. A Word Fitly Spoken

That was last week, and we're going to move on today. Today we will enter into the next three verses, and they are rich in what they hold for us in our walk with the Lord and what God wants us to see. I want to read them for you. It's Proverbs 25:11-13.

Proverbs 25:11-13

> *11 A word fitly spoken is like apples of gold in pictures of silver.*

> *12 As an earring of gold, and an ornament of fine gold, so is a wise reprov-er upon an obedient ear.*

> *13 As the cold of snow in the time of harvest, so is a faithful messenger to them that send him: for he refresheth the soul of his masters.*

Now, if you're here this morning and you want to help people, you want to work with people, and I know we've got a host of people on various levels that do that, I want you to listen very carefully today. This is going to really help you. I think it's going to put much of what you do into a context, not that you didn't already have one, but I want you to listen carefully as I come down through here.

I read three verses for today, but we're not going to get through three verses. We're just going to look at verse 11 today. There's so much in here that I want to just be able to take the time to get it all out. I want us to look at the phrase in verse 11 where it starts out, "A word fitly spoken." Now, we would be reading this, and we would just think, and rightly so, that it's talking about the Word of God. Anytime you give the Bible out to somebody, you're giving the good Word of God, and it's going to be good for that person. That would be true, but there's more to that here that I want us to see today. I want to show you something else here that I think will really help you.

This verse will be an incredible key to all of the Bible and how it will relate to us. So just listen to me for a few minutes. Obviously, take your notes, do what you want to do, but let me have your ears for a moment. There is much here. Like I said, we're going to just take this one verse today, and then one verse next week, and then a week after, I think, but definitely just one verse today.

A couple of months ago, I preached a message when we were back in Proverbs 24. I preached a message on verse 27, a verse that talks about getting yourself ready to do the work of God that He's called you to do, the work of the ministry. Back there in that verse in Proverbs 24:27, it said this:

Proverbs 24:27

> *Prepare thy work without, and make it fit for thyself in the field; and afterwards build thine house.*

You remember, I told you that that was a great picture of the ministry. We know from Matthew 13 that the field is the world. We know that you're going to have to build your house, which is your body, to serve the Lord, the temple. It takes a preparation. It was a great verse dealing with you and me getting into the book and seeing God's plan that He has for you in His overall plan. Then here it comes, how you fit into that plan. "Prepare thy work without, and make it fit for thyself," fitting yourself into the work of God. That was the key word back then. It's also going to be the key word today. I want to make the parallels between the two.

III. The Importance of Biblical Patterns

I talk a lot about patterns in the Bible. I talk a lot about principles. I talk a lot about models and types and pictures in the Bible. They're different words that basically mean the same thing. That's because the whole Bible, from a practical standpoint, will wrap itself around patterns. In Romans 1:19-20, Paul said:

Romans 1:19-20

> 19 Because that which may be known of God is manifest in them; for God hath shewed it unto them.

> 20 For the invisible things of him from the creation of the world are clearly seen, being understood by the things that are made, even his eternal power and Godhead; so that they are without excuse:

What does he mean by that? It means that everything God made physically will show you something spiritually if you know how to put the pattern together to see how God used everything He made in a little creation to show us the things that we can't understand. This is why Jesus all the time in Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John was going back and using illustrations about animals, the sky, plants, the ground, sowing seed. He was using all of those practical things that everybody was doing. But he knew that those very things that he was using set up a pattern of spiritual things that they needed to see.

When you get into Hebrews 8, it talks about the tabernacle that God gave Moses. I don't know if you know or not, back in the Old Testament, when Moses was up on the mountain, Mount Sinai, God gave him all the instruction for everything that he was to do that was going to put the nation of Israel on a map, so to speak, as the nation of God's people. So when he came down, he had all the plans. One of the most intricate pieces that God gave Moses to give to Israel was the concept of the tabernacle.

The tabernacle was later, as they go through their journey, once they get settled in Jerusalem, it becomes the temple. Then Solomon builds that temple. That replaces the tabernacle. But before it had a permanent place, it was a temporary tabernacle that they put up, took down, put up, took down as they went through their wilderness journey. That tabernacle was absolutely key to Israel's relationship with God. It was an incredible thing. He told him in Hebrews 8:5 that when you make that tabernacle, Moses, make sure you make that tabernacle after the pattern that I showed you in the mount.

Hebrews 8:5

> Who serve unto the example and shadow of heavenly things, as Moses was admonished of God when he was about to make the tabernacle: for, See, saith he, that thou make all things according to the pattern shewed to thee in the mount.

I don't know how God did that. I don't know if he had a big old overhead projector up there. He said, "Okay, Moses, here's plan one, plan two. Here's what you do." But on that mountain, he gave him a pattern. That pattern is what he had to go by. Let me just say something to you. Moses didn't have the option to deviate from the pattern. He didn't have the option to think, "You

know, I think I can save two days' work by doing this." No, that's what I do. That's what you do. That's what we all do. We always think when it comes down to whatever God tells us, that we've got the edge on it, we're just a little bit smarter than God in the thing. Moses didn't have that option. God made it clear to him, "Look, Moses, make sure you follow the pattern that I gave you."

The references on patterns in the Bible, I want to give them to you because they're all very important:

- Exodus 25:9-40
- Numbers 8:4
- Joshua 22:28
- 2 Kings 16:10
- 1 Chronicles 28:11-19
- Ezekiel 43:10

Those are Old Testament passages that show you how God was using and does use everything he does through a pattern. Now, when you get over to the New Testament in 1 Timothy 1:16 and Titus 2:7, he doesn't stop. You know what he says? He says that you and I, as the children of God, in the life that we live with Christ before others, should be a pattern of good works to everybody else. Everything that God does, he will do by a pattern, and he will have a pattern to it.

Our verse says, "A word fitly spoken." Here's what you've got here. I'm going to give it to you, and we're going to come back and we're going to tweak it a couple of different ways, but a prepared child of God, if you prepare yourself in the Word of God, that you're going to get your own life first together and then work with the people that God gives you, and that's what we are called to do. A prepared child of God will know how to take any given situation that you have to deal with in your own life or as you're working with somebody else. You know how to take any given situation that God presents you with and then, using the patterns in the Bible dealing with that issue, how you will then take the principles that go along with a pattern and fit those principles into the problem you're dealing with. It's just that simple.

Thursday night, we had a great example of that when, and it doesn't get any better than Thursday night than when it did last week, when that little Isaac guy started asking the question about eternal security and how to be saved. Immediately, I began to see where he was probably going and what his issue was. I just allowed the Holy Spirit of God to take that thing and run with it. Right there before everybody in Bible study, when we got to that point, I just said, "Hey," I told him what I did. You notice I didn't tell him, and this is so key when you're working with people, and many of you, my phone blew up all night that night and all the next day. So many of you said you learned something from that. But I want to tell you something. The greatest thing that you want to learn is the fact that when he's having his questions, I didn't tell him what God would do for him. I told him what God did for me. That was the conduit pipe, so to speak. That was the non-threatening thing. He saw that if it worked for me in the same situation, and what did he do? He stopped right in the middle of that thing, grabbed the mic, and asked God to save

him right there on the spot in Bible study. All that happened was that I saw where he was going. I knew that there was a pattern that I had to cut out of the Bible to give that to him. It worked. It'll always work because everything that we do will be established by a pattern.

IV. The Responsibility of Handling God's Word

The absolute incredible responsibility—boy, I'll tell you, and I cannot emphasize this enough—the absolute incredible responsibility for you and for me handling the Word of God with people correctly. In 2 Corinthians 4:2 says that there are those that are handling the Word of God deceitfully.

2 Corinthians 4:2

> But have renounced the hidden things of dishonesty, not walking in craftiness, nor handling the word of God deceitfully; but by manifestation of the truth commending ourselves to every man's conscience in the sight of God.

I cannot impress upon you that if you're going to work with somebody in the Bible, you have to know what you're doing. When it comes to pastors, in most cases, teachers, counselors, over the years, I've seen some absolutely terrible advice, horrendous advice, given out that really hurt the situation and in many cases absolutely destroyed it. I mean, I've seen pastors give parents advice on dealing with their children that was a recipe for losing your child. I've seen couples go in and talk to a pastor or a counselor, a marital counselor, and the advice they get is absolutely ludicrous and almost guarantees that you're never going to fix that thing and put it back together.

I've seen pastors and churches where they look at women, and the pastors from the pulpit, and a while back there was an evangelist, he's dead now, but he had a whole legacy of children who were about as legalistic as you could get. Probably they and their writings and their books did more damage to people than the devil ever thought about doing on his best day. They actually wrote books, pamphlets, and held seminars and telling in churches how their woman had absolutely no say in anything in the family. That she's basically a doormat, that she doesn't have any say. If her husband beats her, she's supposed to take it. In the process, the idea is that if you submit yourself to all this abuse, that through all of that God will reach down and save him. Well, I've got some news for you. Taking abuse may let God reach him, but so will the ball bat when he goes to sleep at night. In other words, the bottom line is you as a wife do have a say. You are not a doormat. I categorize those people as Muslim Christians. They're nowhere connected to the Muslim faith, but they treat their women like the Muslims do. They hold them in an absolute hold that they just can't have any say in anything. That the husband's always right. Well, I've got news for you guys. We're not always right. It's a thing where I've seen that ruin so many women and so many relationships.

I've seen men and women who had strongholds in their life, and the absolute advice they get is just terrible. I've seen churches that have a recovery for addiction, whether it be drugs or whatever they may be. They'll have a night of the week where they have a recovery night. You can drive down the street and see them. Then we have a new chance recovery program, this or that. You go together there, and you have a little meeting. I'll tell you what they do. They get

somebody's worldly book put out by the government or put out by some medical deal, and they get somebody that's totally unqualified to teach it. They just sit there and read the book.

Now, I'm all for recovery. I think that every church needs to have a recovery program for whatever strongholds or addiction you have. We do have a recovery program. It meets on Sunday morning. It meets on Thursday night. It meets on prayer group up there in the morning. It meets on whatever else that you need. The advice that we give out today doesn't fit the situation that people are dealing with.

When you walk into Hallmark cards, there's a big sign there, or at least there was at one time, that says, "We have a card that fits every occasion." That's true. The Bible has a pattern that fits every issue that you're going to get into in life. That's just like Hallmark cards in that aspect. Each issue that you face, every issue that you personally face or you deal with with somebody, will have a pattern based on principles of truth that must be applied if you're going to fix it. What you do is you fit the Word of God. He said, "A word fitly spoken." You fit the Word of God, the principles, to the situation. But you have to understand the patterns.

Most pastors, 99% of them, anyhow, they could do this in no way, shape, or form. They're simply not qualified in the Bible to be able to do that. This is why, just so you can connect the dots, these big-time pastors out there that run these mega churches, you'll never get in to see them with your personal problems. If they were put on the spot to give you, I could ask them five questions, and they wouldn't have the answers to it. I'm telling you, it would expose them as the front man from some big organization that he knows nothing about the Bible, but he's a great speaker. He's a great communicator, but he knows nothing about the Word of God. So when you've got a problem, he'll send you to somebody else over here, some professional, and they'll try to deal with your problems.

A little guy on Thursday night, we got saved. He's been coming several weeks now. A couple of weeks ago, he asked a question. He's got a question every week, which I think is great. A couple of weeks ago, he asked a question out of Mark 10. It was about the rich young ruler, whoever, who said, "Why one Jesus was called good." Later on, he told one of our people in the church that he goes to his own church, and he asked that same question on Wednesday night Bible study. His pastor told him to figure it out for himself. He says, "You know, I feel like if I ask any questions about the Bible, that I'm doing wrong." You're not doing wrong by asking questions about the Bible, but what you are doing is exposing a phony pastor who couldn't preach his way out of a wet paper bag and knows nothing about the Bible. I mean, if you go to the pastor who's supposed to be teaching you the Bible and he tells you to figure it out for yourself.

There's a pastor, another example. I have hundreds of them, but I'll just use a couple. I was a pastor in the town here who had a situation with a husband and wife, and it was a very bad situation. It was a terrible situation. There were so many things here that had to go down deep that had to be fixed. But this kid doesn't have a clue. So he gets this couple in here, and they're having major problems. His answer to their issues is, "You know what? You need to start dating again and start dating again and fall in love with each other all over again." Like that will solve your problem. Look, love potion number nine will not work. There are some deep issues here.

There are some deep problems here, and they have to be addressed before you ever can do what you've got to do. But that's where it's at. In cases like that, they wind up getting a divorce. It turns into a disaster.

The pastor's job is to teach his people the simple patterns of life through the principles of the Word of God, and then help them apply them. And yes, keep them accountable to them. But he can't because he doesn't know the patterns himself, so he's left to making it up on his own. It always ends in disaster. He cannot take a word fitly spoken and fit it to the problem. My advice to them is J-truck driving school. You said, "Well, I've been to Bible college." Well, try Barber College this time because you've got to get out of what you're doing. You have no clue of what's going on.

V. Examples of Biblical Patterns

In our people ministry here, the people ministry is nothing more than a bunch of people who are dedicated very simply to the patterns and the principles. We simply started in Genesis and walked through laying out and developing every pattern and principle that shows you how everything works, every cause into effect. We just started in Genesis.

For instance, in Genesis 3, the first time the serpent shows up, and he shows up to Eve and he says, "Yea, hath God said?" We took that as a pattern of deception to show you in the church age exactly what the devil is going to do when he wants to destroy the church. He says, "Yea, hath God said?" And then he changed what God said. That's a pattern. It's an unbroken pattern that has stood the test of time now for 6,000 years.

That's not all. You'll find, and again, scholarship laughs at this, the law of first mention in the Bible. The first time something is mentioned for the first time in the Bible will set a precedent for a pattern.

- In Genesis 3, he's called a serpent. That sets a pattern of the devil as a serpent.
- In 2 Chronicles 21, he's now first time called Satan. There's a reason for that because now it sets a pattern of his operation as Satan, which means accuser.
- In Matthew 4, first time, he's called the devil. You see a pattern emerge by that name.
- In Nehemiah 2, he's called the dragon. First time. The first time you find each one of his names, it sets a pattern differently of how he's going to operate.
- In Isaiah 14, for the first time, he's called Lucifer.
- In John 17, the first time he's called the son of perdition.
- In 2 Corinthians 4:4, he's called the god of this world.

Every time it pops up for the first time, it establishes a pattern. If you want to know how he's going to work in any given situation, go back to the name, see what the pattern is, and then put them all together. That's how it works.

In Genesis 24, you have a bride being searched out for Isaac. Abraham sends out Eliezer, his servant. You see him going to find a bride for Isaac. We know that in a doctrinal picture, that's a picture of you and I, Christ coming up as a Gentile bride. But there, it establishes a pattern

because in that chapter 24 are 19 patterns, principles of finding a spouse. You follow those 19, and you won't get a dud. It's the pattern to look for in the person you marry.

In 1 Corinthians 7, it's the New Testament teaching on divorce, marriage, and remarriage. You have 20 patterns, 20 principles that teaches you everything you need to know if you're going to deal in those three situations.

You have Jacob and Esau, Genesis 27. Ah, the pattern of a deception. Six patterns in that story of somebody is going to deceive somebody else or try to deceive you. Learn those six patterns, you'll never get fooled. They're foolproof. You know why? Because they're in a story in the Bible, and they form a pattern based on principles. You know what happens? Jacob wants to steal the birthright and the blessing from his father. So he's the youngest. Esau's the oldest, and he knows that Esau's going to get it. So what does he do? His mama gets involved, and she says, "Here's what you do, son. You know how your daddy loves that venison, that soup that you make. I'll tell you what, Esau is out there hunting, first day of deer season. Here's what I want you to do. I want you to go get a goat, a young kid goat, kill it, skin it, and put that goat skin on you because Esau, your brother, is a hairy man, and Jacob was a smooth man." He didn't have any hair on his chest, so to speak. So he does that. He walks in, and the old man's almost blind. He can't see. So you would think he would be easily deceived. It's a picture of a pattern that when somebody wants to deceive you, they will go to great lengths in the deception.

So he comes in there, and he said, "Daddy, I got you some of that venison you really like because I want your blessing." First off, the old man, he says, "How did you get a deer so quickly, my son?" Oh, here comes one of the patterns. "Daddy, what can I say? The Lord just brought him to me." See, you want a real good deception, bring God into it. So he comes over, he puts the soup down, chili, whatever it was. The old man takes a whiff of it, you know, of the boy standing there, and he says, "You know what? This is really confusing. I may be blinder than I can see, but I've got to tell you, it smells like Esau, but it sounds like Jacob." That's a great pattern because in every deception, something just won't be right. I mean, my favorite expression is, "Are you smelling what you're selling?" You really want me to believe that? I mean, we are afraid, "Something rotten in Denmark." I've never understood that phrase. I've never been to Denmark. Maybe everything's rotten in Denmark. I don't know. How many times has somebody said, "I don't know, it doesn't smell right." Really? What does it smell like? You know, the first thing your dog does in the morning or your animal, when you take them out to go to the bathroom, first thing they do is stick their nose up in the air and take a whiff to see if everything's okay. You can do the same thing. You just got to go to the doctor and get those nostrils enlarged, and you can smell forever. No, use the Bible principles. You can say, you can see, "You know what, it smells like this, but it sounds like this."

Then a little bit later on, oh, this gets better. We talked about this Thursday night. I gave you a little heads up. In Genesis 37, when the boys now, Jacob's boys, remember Jacob deceived his daddy with a goat. Now, years later, when he has his boys and the boys don't like Joseph and they want to kill Joseph, what they do is that they're going to kill him, and then somebody says, "Put him in a hole." Then the Midianites come along, and they say, "Let's just sell him. We can get a couple cases of beer out of this kid. Let's do it." So they sell him to the Midianites, and they

say, "What are we going to tell our daddy?" One of them says, "I've got an idea. Go get a goat out of the herd, a kid, and let's kill that goat, skin it, and then we'll take and put the blood of that goat all over Joseph's coat of many colors. And we'll go back and tell our daddy that a wild beast killed him." You know what they did? They used the same deception to deceive their daddy that their daddy used to deceive his brother. In other words, when you live a life of deception, it passes on to your children. Just as sure as I'm sitting here, standing here, and I'm here.

I'll show you another one. We talked about this Thursday night, David and Absalom. Your sin becoming the sin of your children, only worse. In 2 Samuel 11, David sinned with Bathsheba. He goes up on a rooftop and he sees her and falls into sin. Years later, after Absalom was born, he has four boys, Absalom is born, and in 2 Samuel 16:21-22, Absalom turned total rebellion against his father, David. He wants to destroy him. He wants to take the kingdom from him. He wants to be king, and he wants to enthrone his own dad. So he gets some advice. You know what he does? He takes all of David's concubines, and in front of all Israel, he puts a tent, and he goes in and defiles his dad with those concubines. When you study the passage, it's on the same roof that his daddy sinned in, only worse.

I teach you to see the patterns, and in understanding the principles involved, then take those principles and that pattern and "a word fitly spoken," fit it into the problem. Don't give them stuff that isn't going to help anything. Don't give them your own homespun theology about grandma's version of how to fix the cold. You go to the Bible, you get the pattern, you get the principles, and then "a word fitly spoken," fit it in. Every issue, every problem, every stronghold a man will have, you'll find an answer to it in the patterns and its principles. The patterns will show you how they got into sin, and the patterns will show you how you get them out of it. When you don't do that, then you'll wind up giving bad advice that may ensure, almost for sure, that they'll never fix the issue. Or as Pastor Wanapi with Love Potion number 9, he destroys the whole situation, and it's impossible. You know what, kid, you're in way over your head. You've got to get back to the principles.

VI. Apples of Gold and Pictures of Silver

Now our verse says, moving on through here, "A word fitly spoken is like apples of gold." Now apples in the Bible are a picture of the Word of God or Christ. You'll find in Proverbs 7:2 where Israel was told to:

Proverbs 7:2

> *Keep my commandments, and live; and my law as the apple of thine eye.*

As I said, apples in the Bible will always be a picture of God and Christ. Over there in Psalms 17:8, it talks about the apple of God's eye. Deuteronomy 32 does, in Joel 1, in Zechariah 2, all references of how that the Word of God is likened to apples. Then there's the Song of Solomon 2:3, where for you and for me, Christ is likened to an apple tree.

Song of Solomon 2:3

> As the apple tree among the trees of the wood, so is my beloved among the sons. I sat down under his shadow with great delight, and his fruit was sweet to my taste.

That fruit that he's talking about is the fruit of the Spirit in Galatians 5:22-23, nine of them. Now watch this. The Word of God and Christ is likened to apples. So what do we do with that? It never ceases to amaze me how the devil will take the truth of the Word of God and turn it around to try to grab the honor and glory and make Christ and paint things in the Bible in a negative way. You realize that the forbidden fruit taught by almost everybody started with the Roman Catholic Church way back in the day. When Adam and Eve sinned in the garden, everybody believes and tells you that that forbidden fruit was an apple. When in the truth of the matter is the apple is a picture of the Word of God, but that's what the devil does. He'll take the apples that are a picture of the Word of God. An apple a day keeps the doctor away. An apple a day will keep the devil away, spiritually speaking. He takes that concept and he makes it the forbidden fruit. Everybody today, if you would ask them all down through history, unless they were really a Bible believer and they knew it was a grape, only forbidden fruit in the Bible was the vine tree. If you would ask them, they would say, "Oh, it was an apple." My grandma was smarter than all of them when you would ask her, "Grandma, was that forbidden fruit an apple?" And she looked down through her glasses and said, "No, son. It wasn't an apple that was the problem. It was the pear on the ground." Adam and Eve, pear. Stay with it.

Back in the 40s, the McGuire sisters, during the war, when everybody was off to war, the McGuire sisters, they all sang the song, "Don't sit under the apple tree with anybody else but me." It was a reference that if the love of your life was like the apple, then the apple tree, and that represented your love. While he's away fighting the war, don't sit under that tree with anybody else. That's what the Lord says. You're saved and you're on your way to heaven. Why in the world are you sitting under the apple tree with somebody else other than Him? The devil will always try to take a cheap shot at the Word of God to take something that is right and holy and perfect and an incredible example and make it the forbidden fruit that brought sin upon mankind. When the truth of the matter is, the only thing that got you out of that sin was old golden apples.

So the word fitly spoken, the Word of God, is like apples of gold. Now gold, we know from our previous studies, represented the deity of Christ, 1 Corinthians 3. So based on our verse, the fitting of the word that is likened to golden apples, spiritual health, fitting that to your issue will be the only solution that will solve all the problems that you have in your relationship with Christ.

I watched the midterm elections this year, and I didn't really care who won, but one of the things that I looked at and that I was interested in was the passing of the bill for veterans to get marijuana for their issues, and many of them were suffering from PTSD. You know, I've talked with many, many, many, many of them, and somehow in our society today, we thought that smoking marijuana and getting high and forgetting your pain would be better than trusting the Lord Jesus Christ as your own personal Savior and letting the Holy Spirit of God and the apples of gold fix your problem.

You and me that were older, I know John Christensen would be around that time, so would Gary. Some of you older guys that were in the service during the Vietnam War, you know what marijuana did to the soldiers in Vietnam? It destroyed the morality to fight a war. They got into Vietnam, you could have all the drugs you wanted. I mean, you could have heroin, you could have marijuana, you could have everything that you wanted. It was there, and it ruined our army. You got to the place where guys were so hopped up on drugs and guys were so hopped out high on marijuana that you were afraid to put somebody out on ambush or put somebody out on a listening post and put somebody out on a point someplace because of the fact that they're so ridiculously high because it was so easy to get.

Let me tell you something, if you take human nature who's got a problem and you say to human nature, "You can get into the Bible, do the work of an evangelist, study to show thyself approved, dig in there, come to church, get involved, let us help you, we'll teach you, spend the rest of your life studying the Bible, or smoke a marijuana cigarette." Which one do you think human nature is going to take? It's the most ridiculous thing on the planet.

Now I've got to say this, if you're dying of terminal cancer or you're in some kind of pain and you're terminal, I have no problem with medical marijuana. If you're going to die and it relieves the pain, it's no different than putting them on, you know, whatever other drugs they give you that takes the pain away, morphine, yeah, or something like that. I don't have a problem with that, but I want to tell you something, in a real life scenario where you're not going to die, you're going through some trauma, I get it.

Let me ask you a question, have you ever read Fox's Book of Martyrs? Do you think the trauma they went through of being persecuted by the Roman Catholic Church on a point that they were butchered by the hundreds of millions, put in prison, watched their kids being fed to pigs, and they wouldn't deny Christ? Do you think they didn't go through some traumatic stress? I can just see them now, the Waldensians and the Albigensians and all those over there, their kid down there and mom and dad over in the corner smoking a joint so they can get past it. Really? You know, you know what got them through it? The only thing that'll get you through anything in life. It's the Lord Jesus Christ taking the principles of the Word of God and the patterns and fitting them into your world. Everything else is a temporary fix. Nothing, those things just like Prozac or all of the post-depression, they will not fix your problem. They'll put you in a diluted state so you don't think about it, but the next morning you wake up when the drugs wear off, you're right back where you were. You need something that is absolute, the last thing that'll fix you for the rest of your life, and it's apples of gold. Not wacky tobacco.

My old sergeant used to call, I never smoked drugs, I never smoked cigarettes, I never had a beer in my life. I don't, I haven't ever gotten high. I happened around guys who did. I didn't want them covering my six, I guarantee you. I don't want them out there where their sensors are all lined up and they're around a yellow submarine and strawberry fields forever. That's not where I'm at. But those little yellow guys are going to come over that wire about three o'clock in the morning, and all hell is going to break loose, boy, and I don't need you over there saying, "Ah, ah," no, I don't need it, man. You call in fire coordinates on artillery, you call it in on yourself.

Christianity today for the most part has moved outside the Bible in this principle. We've replaced it with, as Colossians 2:8 says:

Colossians 2:8

> Beware lest any man spoil you through philosophy and vain deceit, after the tradition of men, after the rudiments of the world, and not after Christ.

Proverbs 19:21 says:

Proverbs 19:21

> There are many devices in a man's heart; nevertheless the counsel of the Lord, that shall stand.

All of this stuff today is all devices in a man's heart. They don't know how to fix your problem. They don't know how to deal with your issues. They don't know how to get to the core problem that you have because fundamentally they don't understand that men and women on planet earth only have problems for one of two reasons. Everything else is just a symptom of that basic fundamental problem. If you're unsaved, there isn't anything in this life that's going to fix your problems. If you're saved and out of fellowship with God, there isn't any medicine anybody's going to give you that's going to fix it. It's a spiritual issue between you and God in both cases. The only way you're going to fix yourself is to fix your relationship with God because the Bible says before we were saved, we were enmity to God. We were God's enemy. We allow all these devices to come in. We think that going this and doing that now this is going to solve all these poor vets, and I thank God for them, boy, and their service that they did, but I've got the answer to their problem. The answer to the problem is to trust the Lord Jesus Christ as your own personal Savior, put your faith and trust in the Word of God, and then get to the apple tree as fast as you can and fill up as many bushel baskets as you can with the apples of gold.

Then he says, "A word fitly spoken is like apples of gold in pictures of silver." I don't know how many times I've told you over the years that the Bible is a picture book. Now the greatest picture found in the Bible, and there's lots of pictures, but the greatest picture found in the Bible is the picture of God's salvation. The fact that God loved you and me so much, and almost everything that you find and everything in the Bible, the underlying theme will be the only way out is through the Lord Jesus Christ. God will, through the stories that contain the patterns and the principles, He'll paint a picture for you so you can better see what He's saying.

Along with that, I have to tell you this, I've been in this business almost 50 years. I know you're probably sick of me saying that, but it's true. I'm sick of saying it too. I just wish you'd listen to me, I wouldn't have to say it anymore. On some things in life, I do know what I'm talking about. Preaching, now listen to me, all right, have a little humor, your funny bone got tickled, now I'm going to whack you, here we go. Preaching is a lost art today, it really is. You know, in guys who collect World War II stuff, one of the most, even during the war, one of the most desirable items in the guys fighting in the Pacific was the samurai swords. You know, the officers had one and the NCOs had one, you could tell the difference if you knew what you're looking for, but they were a treasured item, they still are today. Your average legitimate samurai sword probably

brings up to twelve thousand dollars today. It's the thing where the reason why is because I know we fought the war in 1940 to 1945, but those swords were ceremonial swords that were probably made back four or five hundred years before those people were ever born and handed down through the family. The swordsmanship craftsmanship of making those swords, unbelievable. I saw a guy one time, I had a reel when they held it up with the blade sharp end up and his wife threw a handkerchief up in the air and it fell down, just drifted down over that thing and cut that thing right in half. It was always razor sharp, they're tempered unbelievably. If you take the handle off and take the tang off, there'll be a date in there and a sword maker who made it. You've got the rope, rope, rope, but it's like that, it's, you know, Wakataka Sake made in 1918, 14, 1552, it's there. First thing you do when you buy one of those if you know what you're doing is you take the handle off, you look at the tang. No, I know most of you think tang is that orange drink that you drink in the morning before you go to school, more to it than that. They're incredible, and the craftsmanship in those swords was unbelievable.

It's the difference between that and preaching today. It's the difference between finding a samurai sword which is worth 12, 15,000 dollars and going to Mickey's Surplus and buying one for 19.95. They both look good hanging on the wall, but Mickey's, you couldn't cut your way out of a cardboard box. It's a piece of junk made in Taiwan. They brought it over with all that rubber vomit that they put on the planes when you sell it and you buy it, you know, these little things that put little trick stuff, gag stuff, "Oh, who threw up on the floor? Ha ha." It wasn't, you know, they ship it over, we buy it because we're so stupid. They're made in China, you know, they turn them out, you know, these little Chinese guys over there turning out these little swords, "Here comes another one for them suckers in America." You know, one time I did a gun show, and a guy was selling swords. This shows you how stupid people are. I was right there at the table when this kid came up, beautiful samurai sword. They weren't real ones, but I mean, they were really like good copies. So he's looking at this, and really he wants to buy one. So I go on my way, you know, so I went to the bathroom, and about 15 minutes later, I see him coming into the bathroom washing him, blood just running down every place, and I saw this incredible gash, it cutting his hand. I didn't say anything because he's obviously didn't need me and my encouragement, you know, "Put out the, put that hurt, done it." You know, so I go back to the guy who sold it, and it's splattered over the floor, and they're wiping it up, and I asked the guy, I says, "Was that that kid in the bathroom?" He says, "Yeah, yeah." I said, "What happened?" He says, "These kids," he says, "he pulled that sword of that thing and took a rag and ran it right down that sword." And any at any language, "Oh, that hurt." Stupid. But that's the difference between preaching today. You used to get the real stuff. Now everything's a cheap 19.95 imitation, and it looks good hanging on the wall, but when you really look inside it, it's the difference between classical art of Rembrandt and Michelangelo. Oh man, I mean, the great painting that he did, "Night Watch," Michelangelo, the Sistine Chapel, he painted on his back, took him 20 some years to paint that sucker, incredible. It's the difference between a classical piece of artwork and modern art, looks like somebody threw up on the canvas, and you're left to figure out what it is.

A pastor's job in preaching or teaching is to have the ability that through his preaching to have a picture of what God is doing emerge and reveal itself through the truth of the Word of God. It's the difference between the old generation of preachers and a new generation of preachers. This is

the missing element today. So they make up for it with light shows, rock bands, worship singers up on the stage dancing back and forth, smoking lights, and by the time the guy gets up to say something, you've been so entertained that you don't really care what he says.

Back in the day when I was trained, this would be 1976, 75, really before anybody got sent out for that shirt, they had to show evidence that they knew the Bible. They weren't interested in just putting out a lot of fluff. We in 1975 had to go before a group of guys and lay out 10 Bible doctrinal questions, 10 teachings. They spanned from Genesis to Revelation, and those 10 were so designed that they really laid out the core value system of really what the Word of God is. You weren't allowed to use your Bible, no notes, and you had to take about 20, 30 minutes on each one and then tie everything together. They called it the depth test. We called it the death test. Let me say if you could do all 10 and tie them together and get, you had some depth to you. They were not interested in just sending out a bunch of fluff. They wanted to know that if that church sent you out and put their stamp of approval on you, that you knew what you were doing. They were 10 of the most absolute incredible questions that when you looked at them and you answered them, there was no doubt in your mind you knew what you were doing, especially when you pulled them all together and tied them all together.

No, I've never required that here. It's a different time, but I do teach you on such a level that in time you will get them all and can use them, and many of you probably you could pass the test without any problems because of the depth that you have. But they all 10 will lay out and require you to have the right patterns down to make the Bible fit together for you first and then your ability to fit it to somebody else's needs. Simply where God is at and what God is doing, understanding the pattern of Israel, understanding the pattern for church, understanding the pattern for you and for me, all fitting together through the principles. Ephesians 2:21 says:

Ephesians 2:21

> *In whom all the building fitly framed together groweth unto an holy temple in the Lord:*

It goes together, it fits. Ephesians 4:16 says:

Ephesians 4:16

> *From whom the whole body fitly joined together and compacted by that which every joint supplieth, according to the effectual working in the measure of every part, maketh increase of the body unto the edifying of itself in love.*

That's you fitting yourself to the Word of God and fitting into that book so you can take a word fitly spoken and give it to whatever that need is.

The verse says, "Apples of gold and pictures of silver." So is a wise reprove upon the obedient ear. The two main elements of you and me getting all God has for us has absolutely nothing to do with how smart you are. It has nothing to do with where you went to school, your IQ, or your abilities. The determining factor of what you get from God or what you don't get from God comes down to the patterns. Have you learned and dedicated yourself to the patterns, fitting words for all occasions? That's what you learn here, the ability to fit the words of God in too. It'll

be based on two things: the apples of gold, who He is, and the pictures of silver, understanding what He did for you.

Nothing will motivate you to learn the Bible. Nothing will motivate you to give back to God what He's done for you. Nothing will, nothing, no message, no nothing. I mean, the message may point you in the right direction, but the only motivation that'll motivate you to give back God your life, totally, will be the day in your life when you completely understand to the best of our human ability what He did for you. Most of God's people never do a thing back for God because in their life they never understand who He is and what He did for them. Understanding the fitting of these two concepts into your life will transform you into the vessel that will bring honor and glory to the Lord.

So a word fitly spoken is like apples of gold in pictures of silver. Learning the Word of God to the degree that you have the ability in any given scenario, any circumstance, any situation, no matter who it may be, to be able to take the word and its concepts and the patterns through the principles of the Word of God and fit them to the problem and give them the answer based on the principles of the Word of God. That's what needs to happen. That is one of the greatest verses anywhere. "A word fitly spoken is like apples of gold in pictures of silver," getting the Word of God and through that getting a picture of God's redemption in your life and then what God wants you to do with it in the lives of others.

Next week, I'm going to take the next verse, and I'm going to talk to you about the obedient ear, and we'll talk about that next week. Let's stop right there. Let's have a word of prayer.