

## I. Recap: God's Handwriting on the Wall

Some of the most recent books of the Bible are Proverbs, Proverbs chapter 25. We have been out of that for a couple of weeks. Last week, before we had Joe and Jim here, we had our New Year's Bible conference, and that was a phenomenal time we had together. Last week, I preached a New Year's message to you after the Credible Bible Conference that we had.

Last week, I preached from Daniel chapter 5, verses 1-8. I preached to you about God's handwriting on the wall, in particular to the King of Babylon in that particular chapter. It was a time when God had had enough of the defiling of the holy things of God. Even though I preached out of Daniel chapter 5, and I know they are in the captivity at that point in time, there was a progression that you saw building that I did not really have time to get into last week.

As we use this for an introduction to this coming week, which kind of follows the same line, you will find that as the nation of Israel begins to go into apostasy, as they lose sight of the things of God and all that God has for them, you will begin to see the kings of Israel begin to take the things that are in their treasuries, the things that God gives to them. When they get in a jam, like Ahaz did in 2 Kings 16, or Joash did in 2 Chronicles 25, Asa in 2 Chronicles 16, and even Hezekiah in 2 Kings 18, when they get into a bind, when the Gentile nations are pressing on them, because they are not doing what is right as a nation, and the hand of God's protection is off of them.

So these Gentile nations are coming down and oppressing them, and they are having all kinds of issues. To buy them off, to stave them off, they are actually taking the things that are in the treasury long before they go into captivity and buying off these Gentile nations, giving the holy things that God had given them. We talked about it last week, that were so special and should represent to Israel the good hand of God and the blessings of God and all that God gave them. They are actually taking those things and giving them to the world system instead of God's hand of protection on them.

I made the parallel last week pretty clear, I think, that it also is a picture of you and me. All of the principles and the promises, all of the blessings, everything that God has done for us, the special things that God has given you and put into your world from the time you got saved, the blessings and the things that God did, those hidden things in your life that you keep close to you. How, when we get out of fellowship with God, we actually then begin to give those things to the world, taking all of those things that God gave us and now displaying them before the world, most of all, your body being the vessel of God and filling it with the things of this whole world and taking those things that God has given us and mocking God by giving them to the world system.

We talked about the world, the flesh, and the devil, and I showed you how the world system is run by the devil to destroy you in your flesh. The Bible says in 1 John chapter 2, verse 15 and 16:

1 John 2:15-16

*Love not the world, neither the things that are in the world. If any man love the world, the love of the Father is not in him.*

*For all that is in the world, the lust of the flesh, and the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life, is not of the Father, but is of the world.*

The key to all that last week, if you remember, is God was not really concerned as long as the King of Babylon, it was Belshazzar at this time. God was not really concerned if they just wanted to drink themselves to hell and have a great party. He leaves the world system to itself because, as the Bible says in John 8:44, "Ye are of your father the devil, and the lusts of your father ye will do." He understood that. He let them go, just like He does the world today. If the world wants to be the world, then God will allow them to.

But when, by design, the King of Babylon, in his boasting of how great he was and his taking captive the people of God, when he called for the holy vessels to bring into his drunken feast and to actually drink the slop and the filth of this world out of those holy vessels of God, God had enough. The end of his kingdom was spelled out by the finger of God on the wall, which we talked about, the handwriting on the wall, and God killed him in that same chapter at the end of that passage.

I showed you how it is a great lesson for America. America is in that same position. The handwriting on the wall is clear for America. America is in that downward spiral, spinning out of control. There is nothing on this planet that is going to fix America. Without Christ, this world, every nation, every country, is in dire need. It is an absolute insane asylum run by the inmates. You see it over and over again.

Then, as I made the parallel to you and me, God's people taking all the blessings and the salvation that God gave us, the good things, the plan, the principles, the job, the ministry that God has for our lives, and literally, instead of doing God's work, we do the work of the world. In the Bible, there are two great aspects to the finger of God. In Exodus chapter 31, verse 18, the Bible tells us that the Word of God came to us by the finger of God. When Moses came down, Moses had the tablets. The Bible says, "by the finger of God," God wrote that Bible and gave it to Moses, the Ten Commandments.

Then in Daniel chapter 5, you have the other aspect of God's finger, and that is the handwriting on the wall of God's judgment. That God is finished, He has had enough. We, as God's people, will have one or the other in our lives. You will either have the finger of God and the Word of God you hold in your lap today, or you will experience the finger of God on the handwriting on the wall that will seal your fate of what God wants to do with you.

## II. A Hard Message from Proverbs 25:20

So that was last week, and today, as I said, we are back in Proverbs chapter 25. I do not know how to tell you this. I know I am the same way. Last week was really rough. It was a hard message. You all needed it, I needed it. I would like to move on now to spongy, warm, fuzzy

things, but I cannot help it. I did not write the book of Proverbs, and I am certainly not in control of how this thing falls down.

We are right in Proverbs 25 again in verse 20. This verse, I am sorry, is going to go hand in hand with last week. I wish we could just step over it and preach a nice snowflake message, and be the nowhere man, going to the nowhere land and going nowhere. I wish we could do that, I cannot. I have a plate of cards God deals me, and He dealt us a full hand today.

If, now we are going to pray here in a moment, now would be a good time for you to get sick and run out of here. It would be a good time to fake you get a phone call from your lawyer that your divorce papers just went through, or you just won the lottery, that would be a good one. I will go with you on that one. Somebody has got to protect you. Anyway, I am sorry, it is what it is.

Let us read Proverbs chapter 25. We are going to order brand new chairs for the church, I want you to know that. They will come with seat belts. So, sit back, relax, buckle your seat belt. It is going to be, I will try to make it fun, I will. Have you ever been in a fight where a guy just beat the fire out of you but he made you laugh while he is doing it?

Proverbs 25:20

*As he that taketh away a garment in cold weather, and as vinegar upon nitre, so is he that singeth songs to an heavy heart.*

John Christensen, would you stand up and ask God's blessing on preaching this morning for me? If you pray for me, I know it will be good. Thank you, John.

### III. The Trained Eye for Bible Study

This verse, I have got to tell you, when you read it, I know you will say to yourself, "How is there a message in this?" I get it, this verse does not look like much to the untrained eye, but it is a powerful principle and truth. I try to teach you the Bible here, and I try to give you everything you need to learn the Bible and help you. We do it at everything: our Bible Institute, our people ministry, our one-on-one discipleship one, two, three, four, five, six, seven, eight, nine, ten, all of those things. My own personal time with you, Thursday night, Sunday morning.

Thursday night is a great example. Was not Thursday night a great time together in working on the strongholds in our lives? It is things like that. I want to tell you something, the real key to the Bible, the real key to the Bible, if you are going to study it and you are going to learn it, is to look at the Bible through a trained eye. That is true in everything.

I had a friend of mine one time that was an FBI agent, and he worked in the Treasury Department, and he was in the counterfeit part. We talked back and forth, and I would see him a couple of times a year. I asked him one time, I said, "Man, these guys are always making counterfeit money. Almost every week, there is a new set of plates, and they look better and better and better." I said, "How in the world do you keep up with studying all the fake \$100 bills or \$20 bills? How do you spend your whole life just looking at fake money to be able to say it is fake?"

He kind of laughed, and he said, "Well," he said, "you might think that, but that is not how we do it." He says, "We train our eye to know what a real \$100 bill looks like. When you train your eye to know what a real \$100 bill looks like, a phony will pop up just like that." That is the key to the Bible. The key to the Bible is training your eye in what to look for. When you get to a passage like this, or like Thursday night when we talk about that, there again, you read a story in the Old Testament, it is a great thrilling story, but who would have thought that within that story was the six steps to breaking a stronghold in your life and give you the victory in Christ Jesus? I think it is 2 Samuel chapter 5, was it not, someplace back there? Who would have thought that? That is what a trained eye does. You have to begin to look for the detail of the Bible that will unlock it. It is so true of this passage here.

#### IV. Threefold Application of Scripture

Historically, this verse is dealing with the nation of Israel, we know that. Israel is out of fellowship and has been taken, as we saw last week, into captivity by Babylon, the world power. Time frame is about 606 BC. So we know that the book of Ezekiel and the book of Daniel are both captivity books that deal with that time period. So historically, we know it is about actual events that actually took place.

Doctrinally, as it looks in a prophetic way, this will be the Jews, who are in deep despair in the Tribulation, and he is being hunted by the Antichrist, and he is being held captive now by the worst world system the world will ever see in the worst time the world will ever experience, which will be the Tribulation period.

Inspirationally, as it applies to me and you, using our threefold application of Scripture, it is aimed right at the child of God today, who was saved and on their way to heaven, but as last week, has been reclaimed by the world system. Now they face a stronghold in their life. It could be anything: it could be alcohol, it could be drugs, it could be pornography, it could be gambling, it could be possessions, it could be money, it could be any number of things.

They are going through life as the child of God and they are being held captive, and in their life, there is no joy, there is no peace, there is no satisfaction, there are no souls being won, there are no blessings in their life. The blessings that they have, they are either buying or they are creating or they are manufacturing, but God is not 100,000 light years around. There is no fellowship, there is no nothing. They have come to the point last week, verse 4, that now they are praising the gods of gold, what they have, the gods of silver, the gods of brass, the gods of iron, the gods of wood, the gods of stone. They are actually praising and looking at what they have physically instead of what they have spiritually.

To fully see this verse in our own lives, we must first see it as it applies to the nation of Israel in history, and then we are going to use our little process, our little swing verses, and we are going to come up and bring it up and show how it is a picture, not only with Israel captive by the world system, but us too.

#### V. Israel's Captivity and the Reclaiming World System

Let me talk to you a minute about the book of Ezekiel. I love the Old Testament, a lot of people do. The Old Testament looks like it is hard, it is really not if you use the trained eye and you just learn some things. The book of Ezekiel, both Ezekiel and Daniel, as we saw last week, are both books that are written during the captivity. You remember last week when I told you that when Nebuchadnezzar comes down to take Jerusalem, he does it in three stages, or three sieges, I should say. He comes down at 606 BC, and that is the first captivity, then he comes down again, then he comes down a third time. I told you last week, Daniel goes into the first captivity, but Ezekiel goes into the second, goes down in the second captivity.

This is why the book of Ezekiel is such an incredibly important book, because it shows the judgment of God not only on the nation of Israel, in fact the book is broken down as God preaching judgment to different nations, but to the Gentile nations. In Ezekiel 1:1, we see this second siege and this second captivity beginning to unfold. I want to read for you Ezekiel chapter 1. I just want you to follow along with me today, and we will get back to our verse in a moment here, but I have got to set the stage for it so we will be able to see it.

Ezekiel 1:1

*Now it came to pass in the thirtieth year, in the fourth month, in the fifth day of the month, as I was among the captives by the river of Chebar, that the heavens were opened, and I saw visions of God.*

This is Ezekiel taking captivity down by the river of Babylon, Chebar, and suddenly God shows him a vision. What comes the rest of this book is what God is showing him, and he is writing it down, you need to know that. The first thing I want you to know is that Ezekiel is among those that are taken captive by the world system of Babylon. They are down there by the river, down by Babylon. The world run by the devil has taken the children of God into captivity, just like so many of God's people today.

God called Israel out. I have always thought this was amazing. In Exodus 12, God called Israel out. You have got to go back and read that account from Exodus 1 to Exodus 12. The absolute incredible miracles, the power of God to bring them out of Egypt. They were helpless, they were absolutely powerless. Egypt was the most powerful nation on the planet, and they are completely consumed, they are slaves down in Egypt. When you read Exodus chapter 1 through Exodus chapter 12, Pharaoh is really putting them under a bondage, just like the world was putting you under bondage.

But you know what happened in chapter 12? God sent them a deliverer. That deliverer was Moses, and Moses had them put the blood over the door on the side posts, and God brought them out of Egypt that night. Do you know what that is a picture of? It is a picture of the day that you and I were held captive by the world, and God sent us a deliverer. That deliverer was the Lord Jesus Christ. He came down, and through you putting the blood in your life, God brought you out of Egypt, the world, just like He brought the nation of Israel out.

Now here we are, many years later. Israel has been through some things. Where God brought Israel out in Exodus chapter 12, now the world reclaims them in 606 BC. Where God brought

them out of the world, now the devil sucks them back into the world. It is just like a lot of God's people. God delivered you from the world. Why would you allow the world to reclaim you? Why would you give into a system that wants to put you under bondage, put your children under bondage, put your whole life under bondage, and then at the end, destroy everything that God had for you? Just like so many of God's people today, Israel was reclaimed by the world system. The world system will reclaim you if it can.

To complete our picture here, of you and me and our captivity, I want to look at a verse that will go right along with this passage today. It is found in the book of Psalms. I want you to come over to Psalms 137. Four verses will be adequate.

Psalms 137:1-4

*By the rivers of Babylon, there we sat down, yea, we wept, when we remembered Zion.*

*We hanged our harps upon the willows in the midst thereof.*

*For there they that carried us away captive required of us a song; and they that wasted us required of us mirth, saying, Sing us one of the songs of Zion.*

*How shall we sing the LORD'S song in a strange land?*

Wow, that is some incredible passage. There is Israel in the captivity of the world system again. God once delivered them. He brought them out of Egypt, the type of the world. Then in a period of time, years later, they get sucked back in, and now here they are. The chosen nation of God, the chosen people of God, the people that God chose in the Old Testament to bring salvation to the earth through, now reclaimed by the world system.

There are God's people who, just like Israel, God saved you for a purpose, God saved you for a reason. God intended through you to reach the world. He intended to get you saved, bring you out of the world, grow you up, give you everything that you need to be everything that God wanted you to be. What happened? We got reclaimed by the world system.

Verse 1 says, "By the rivers of Babylon." They are completely now out of the land that God had for them. The land God had for them was the Promised Land. It is called the Promised Land because of the fact that you have got to keep the promises of God to stay in that land. Obviously, they have not kept the promises of God, so God rooted them out. It is called Canaan's Land. It is called Canaan's Land because if you go way back in history, that was the land that the Canaanites had. When David, through God, kicked them all out, it became known as Canaan's Land.

It is known as Beulah Land. Beulah means "married wife." Beulah Land is a picture of the relationship that God had with Israel as Israel being like the wife of God. It is called the Land of Milk and Honey. It is called the Land of Milk and Honey, the Land of Plenty, because they had everything they wanted there. Milk and Honey to this day is synonymous with blessings and happy and fruitful and having everything, the Land of Milk and Honey. That is the land God gave them. Now, they are gone from that land. There is no more Promised Land for them. There is no more Canaan's Land. Forget Beulah Land. No more Land of the Milk and Honey. Now,

they are down there in the middle of this godless system, the most godless system, pagan system in the history of the Old Testament.

It says they were sat down and they wept. They wept when they remembered Zion. I have got to stop here and talk to you for a minute. Let me tell you something. When you get into that foreign land, the world reclaims you and it pulls you out from what God has for you, and you lose the land and the blessings and the milk and the honey that God has for you, both a type and the Word of God, I want to tell you something. There will come a time in the midst of your drunken parties. There will come a time in the midst of your New Year's Eve feast. There will come a time in your life when you are doing everything that you have that God will get you alone. You will have that private time, and you will stop, and for maybe just a moment of time, maybe just a glimmer of a minute, you will feel and understand what you really lost.

The Holy Spirit of God inside you will be so grieved. The Holy Spirit of God inside you will be so overwhelmed by Him having to live in a temple that He wanted holiness and glory and praise, and He gets booze and drugs and the filth of this world. You cannot tell me that they sat down by the river, and when you have a quiet moment and you remember Zion, you will ask yourself, "How in the world did I get in this mess?" You will ask yourself, and you remember what you have lost, what you have given up. It is a picture of the reality of our walking away from God. Seeing now what you lost that you did not care about when you were in the pleasures of sin for a season. Reality at some point, maybe just for a moment of time, reality begins to set in now.

You realize what you gave up. You realize that you lost your marriage. You realize that you have lost your son or your daughter, your family. You realize that you have lost your ministry. You realize in some cases you have lost your health. For what? For what? For the world system. You took the Promised Land, Canaan's Land, Beulah Land, the Land of Milk and Honey, for what?

Verse 2 says, "We hung our harps upon the willows in the midst thereof." Harps once used to sing the praises of God. Harps once used to give honoring glory to God and praise Him. Now because you are in a strange land, you hang those harps by the river of Babylon, the world system, on the willow trees, from which to this day, based on this, we call it the weeping willow. Gone, gone, gone is the joy, joy, joy, joy down in your heart. Gone is standing on the promises that cannot fail. Gone is glory to His name. Gone is "How Great Thou Art." Gone is "It Is Well With My Soul." The reality of what and who you once were and what you had. Now in 2019, just like in 606 BC, the reality sets in. This is what I lost. This is what I had, and I gave it up.

If you are sitting out there this morning and find yourself in that situation, let me just tell you something. There is plenty of company for you because there are literally hundreds of thousands of men and women who are saved and on their way to heaven, who got reclaimed by the world system.

Look at verse 3: "For these that carried us away captive required of us a song. And they that wasted us required of us mirth, saying, Sing us one of the songs of Zion." Not only does the world system take you, reclaim you, destroy you, ruin your life, ruin everything about you, then when you are down by the river, held firmly captive by it, now it makes fun of you. That is some system you are serving, friend. At the end of your life, when you have given it everything and

you have forsaken God and you got reclaimed by the world and you are down there on your deathbed or you are down there and you are sick and you need help and you need this and you need that, all the world is going to do is turn their back on you and make fun of you.

"For these that carried us away captive required of us a song. And they that wasted us." That is a great 2018, 2020 thing. "What did you do this weekend?" "Oh man, I got wasted." That is what the world does. The world will waste you. The world will waste your life, it will waste the salvation that God gave you, it will waste your family, it will waste your marriage, it will waste your health, it will waste the truth that God gave you. It will waste your relationship with God, it will lay you waste and take everything from you that God gave you. Then when it does, sit there, when you are in the ash heap, down there in the river by Chebar of Babylon, having lost everything and you are feeling the weight and you are remembering what you gave up, then it will mock you and say, "Why do not you sing me one of them old songs of Zion?"

Hank Williams was a great country singer back in the 50s, long before you were born. I was born in the 50s, so I was three years old when he died. He died on January 1st, 65 years ago this year. He was 29 years of age. Hank Williams made famous the song, "I Saw the Light." Great song. All around the country he went, and everybody that listened to him thought that he was such a Christian, that here he was, an entertainer that sang about the great light. He was the biggest dope head, boozier, fornicator you ever saw in your life. He died on January 1st, 1953, in Steubenville, Ohio. They picked him up in a cab to take him to some performance, and he was found back there. He was driving along, and the cab driver looked back and he saw he had Hank Williams, and he says, "Hey Mr. Williams, will you sing me some of that song, 'I Saw the Light'?" Do you know what the great man who made that song famous said? Do you know what the man that made that song and sang it all across this world said? He looked up at the last breath of his life before he went to hell and he says, "There is no light." Thank you for that testimony, brother. They found him dead in the back of that cab, January 1st, 1953.

That world will waste you. It will take everything from you. It will strip you of everything that God gave you. Then when you are destitute, lost down there, just hanging on by a thread, it will not be the world that helps you. Praise the Lord that no matter how far we get from God and how many stupid things we do and what dumb stuff we do, God is always willing to bring us out of that captive land if we are willing to come. The problem is, as we talked about Thursday night, you get so deep into it, it becomes a stronghold in your life, and you just do not break it.

Israel's answer is classic. It is so absolutely true for us today. Verse 4 says, "How shall we sing the LORD'S song in a strange land?" One more time from last week, you cannot, because you cannot mix the holy things of God with the ungodly things of the world. The majority of God's people today are in that same place. The majority of God's people today are in that strange land. That is why you cannot or will not sing the great hymns of the Philadelphia Church Age. You will not rock it out and sing it out, "Power in the Blood," because you have an NIV that they took the blood out of. You will not stand up and sing, "Am I a Soldier of the Cross," because you are a conscientious objector. You could not sing "Holy, Holy, Holy," because your life is about the farthest thing from a holy life that you could have. You can never sing "Have Thine Own Way." You are a Burger King Christian, you act to have it your way. You would never be able to sing

"Victory in Jesus," because there is no victory in your life. I want to tell you, it is hard to sing "It Is Well With My Soul" when you are living like hell within your soul.

Yes, I am in full preaching mode at this point. So I will tell you what they do in Christianity today. You bring in a Christian rock band. You bring in a big praise band. You bring in the worldly system to God's church, because you cannot sing the Lord's song in a strange land. So you bring the music of the strange land in the church to make you feel better. That is not called a platform anymore, it is called a stage. They move the platform out, that should be in the middle, because for hundreds of years, the pulpit was in the middle of the platform, because it focused the center of that church was the preaching of the Word of God. Now we move it aside so the guy breakdancing will not hurt himself smashing into it. Now you have the singers, the dancers. Now you have the smoke coming up from behind. Now you have fire shooting up. Oh, a precursor to the great white throne judgment. I saw a guy one time breakdancing on the platform, stage, excuse me.

They do everything the world does, do you know why? They do everything the world does, do you know why? Because they have to replace the songs of Zion with the godless filth of the world system. Do you know why they do that? Do you know why they have to do that? Because it is impossible to sing the Lord's song when you are living in Babylon.

Let me just show you this. The key to any church and its spiritual temperature, and I know there are a lot of things that you look at, but to me there are always two main things that I always look for. One is the book that they preach and they believe and that they love. The other one is the songs in their heart, the way they sing.

Psalms 40:1-3

*I waited patiently for the LORD; and he inclined unto me, and heard my cry.*

*He brought me up also out of an horrible pit, out of the miry clay, and set my feet upon a rock, and established my goings.*

*And he hath put a new song in my mouth, even praise unto our God: many shall see it, and fear, and shall trust in the LORD.*

That is the day you got saved. I want to tell you something, the day God brought you out of Egypt, it all should have changed. It changed so much for the nation of Israel in Exodus chapter 12 that God up to that point counted the beginning of their year at the Feast of Tabernacles. Now He changed that, and in 12:1-3, it becomes that Passover begins again. Do you know what that is significant of? It is significant that when God brought them out of the world system of Egypt, it all changed.

When God brought you out of that horrible pit, do you remember those days? Do you remember when that horrible pit had a hold on you? Remember when the miry clay wanted to suck you down into the lake of fire? Do you remember those days? You were crying, you called out unto God, and He inclined unto you. He did not have to. He could have said, "Burn in hell." He could

have said, "You messed me over all these years. I tried to help you, you are on your own." He could have done that. He should have done that. Praise God He did not.

Do you know what He did? He brought you and me out of that horrible pit. It was a horrible pit out of the miry clay. Then do you know what He did? He set my feet upon a rock. That rock is the Lord Jesus Christ. It is an unmovable rock. It is the rock of God, and God put my feet upon it. Do you know what He did when He puts your feet on your rock? I will tell you what, He established your goings because you were going the wrong way. He did not just give you a direction. He established you.

Verse 3 says, "He put a new song in my mouth, even praise unto our God: and many shall see it, and fear, and shall trust in the LORD." The day you got saved, it all changed. Or it was supposed to. Out of that horrible pit of that miry clay, and He sets your feet upon a rock. He put a new song in your mouth, even praise unto God. You got a new birth. You got a new nature. You got a new name. You got a new heart. You got a new song.

This is why in most churches you go to today, the song service is a joke. I have been in some churches, brother, that the song service, they lift the roof off, man. I mean, I am sitting up there ready to preach, and I mean, they are singing "Power in the Blood." They are singing, I mean, they are just lifting the rafters. We do not have a choir. We were going to have one, but we chose the choir and the baptistery, and the baptistery won out. Though, if we ever get a bunch of Church of Christ people, I guess they could be in here and be the choir.

Do you know why I will not have a choir? Do you know why I do not need a choir? Because you are the choir. We are not here to entertain you. We are not here to give you a laugh or a smile, though some of the stupid things I do does require laughter at times or you will hurt my feelings. I get that. But we are not here to entertain you. We are here to give glory to God, praise His holy name together. In most cases and in most churches, nobody sings. They are all in the back talking. You will find in most churches, the deacons who ought to be the ones that are in it all are the farthest ones from it. They are all there talking about this, talking about that.

Let me tell you something. When this group gets together to lift up a song, it is based on a new song in your heart. You ought to lift the rafters in this place. Do you know why we do not? Hard to sing the Lord's song in a strange land.

Colossians 3:16

*Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly in all wisdom; teaching and admonishing one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing with grace in your hearts to the Lord.*

Psalms, hymns, spiritual songs. A new song in your heart based on the Word of God in your heart. Boy, when you as a child of God or I as a child of God are living in a strange land, it means nothing to us. Act like the Bible, it means nothing to us anymore. Do you know what happened? I will tell you what happened, brother. I will tell you what happened, sister. You will hang your harp on a willow tree. As the world says, when it came to God, Christianity, what God did for you, you just hung it up.

## VI. The Garment and the Heavy Heart

Our text today, come on back to Proverbs 25. Our text today, he uses two examples. I had to give you that first before this made any sense to you. He uses two examples in our passage today to illustrate this truth: a heavy heart and a song. Boy, are they great examples.

First of all, he says, "As he that taketh away a garment in cold weather, so is he that singeth songs to an heavy heart." In life, there is nothing worse than being cold and being not able to get warm. Somebody taking your garment, your coat, and it is cold outside, you are sitting there, standing there, shivering. Like when you get into your car to go someplace and it is 15 degrees out, and it takes your heater an hour and a half to heat up. You are sitting there, freezing to death, five minutes seems like five hours, and you just shiver no matter what you have got on.

My kids are famous for this. My grandkids, they never take enough coats anywhere. I have in the back of my truck, I have four, five jackets back there just for them. They wear shorts when it is February. They wear T-shirts when it is snowing outside. We will have an outside activity, and they will wear some thin little jacket that a mosquito could fly through and not break his wings. There it is, grandpa, dad, always looking ahead, and in the back of my truck, as we speak, there will be three or four jackets back there. People say, "Why do you buy so many jackets?" Because I give them to my kids and they never give them back. I do not know what happens to them.

In life, there is nothing worse than being cold. Someone taking your garment and then you shivering and freezing and having no warmth to cover you, to keep you. When we get that heavy heart from losing our fellowship, and we lose the warmth and the comfort of God's Word against that icy blast of the wind from the world through the world, the flesh, and the devil, it will leave you in the most miserable condition ever. You will be like our first illustration here. Somebody takes your garment.

I want to say this to you, trained eye. That is not only a reference to you losing the warmth of the Word of God, which you will see here in just a moment. It is not only a picture of that, but it is also, because in Psalms 19:6, the Word of God, the Bible and God, are likened to heat. It keeps you warm, because the world is likened to the cold. The Word of God warms you up in this whole world and keeps you there and puts a garment around you. Over there in Isaiah, it is called the garment of salvation. But also over there in Revelation 16:15, you are told that nobody takes your garment. That garment is not only a reference to you losing the warmth of God's Word down here and being cold and destitute. It is also a picture of the coming judgment seat of Christ where you have no garment.

Haggai 1:6-7

*Ye have sown much, and bring in little; ye eat, but ye have not enough; ye drink, but ye are not filled with drink; ye clothe you, but there is none warm; and he that earneth wages earneth wages to put it into a bag with holes.*

*Thus saith the LORD of hosts; Consider your ways.*

Boy, if that is not the world's system today. You sow much, but you are bringing little. When it comes to God, your banker counts full, your pantry is full, your garage is full. Everything you have in life is filled up and full. But when it comes to spiritual things, you have worked so much, you have sowed so much, but you are bringing little. Do you know why? Because you sowed the wrong things.

Then it goes into here, "You eat, but you have not enough." You cannot get enough, because there is no satisfying the flesh. So you eat, you never get enough. You are drinking, you are never filled. He says that you get clothes, you can buy all the clothes that you want, but you cannot get warm. There is not anything physical on this planet that ever will take the place of the spiritual coldness in your life when you lose your relationship with God.

Then he says, what a telling verse, "He that earneth wages, earneth wages to put it into a bag with holes." All your life, you are going through life, making all kinds of money, buying all kinds of things, doing whatever you want to do. Possessions is the name of your game. You have got this bag, and you are putting it in. "Oh, I got this, oh, I got this, oh, I want four of these, get this. Oh, I got this, oh, I got this, oh, I got this, oh, I got this." Now when you get to the judgment seat of Christ, you hold that bag, and everything you put in that bag is gone because that bag had holes. That is a life without God. A life without God is like a bag with a hole in it. Everything you put in it falls out. At the end, you have nothing. God's people are just like that. They are cold, they are miserable, they are destitute. Today they depend on somebody else for their spiritual well-being. It is just that simple.

## VII. Vinegar, Nitre, and the Savor of Christ

Now the second illustration is this: "As vinegar upon nitre, so is he that singeth songs to an heavy heart." The first one was somebody takes your garment and you cannot get warm against a cold blast of the world. As I said, Isaiah 61:10, that garment is called the garment of salvation. It is a picture you get in saved. Now here we have the illustration of vinegar and nitre.

Vinegar we know is a byproduct of apples. It is used in cooking and other situations, raspberry vinaigrette, or vinegar, whatever. We use it that way. The nitre here, the word nitre, is the old Latin word. Our word today would be nitre, or it is a potassium nitrate or sodium nitrate. It is a chemical that when you mix it with vinegar, it will foam up and give an absolutely putrefying, terrible smell. You say, "Well, what has that got to do with the Bible?" I am glad you asked, here we go.

In the book of Song of Solomon, the church, you and me, and our relationship with Christ is likened unto a flower, a garden. It is likened to perfume. It is like an ointment and spices that give off a great aroma. In fact, if you would come through the Song of Solomon from chapter 1 and chapter 8, you would see this. You would find it in 1:3, 1:13, 1:14. You would find it in 2:1-3, 3:6, 4:12-15, 5:1, 5:5, 5:13, 6:11, 7:13, 8:14. Through the whole book, chapter by chapter, verse by verse, our relationship with Christ is likened to a pleasant smell, an aroma given off like flowers, spices, cinnamon, things that give off an aroma that is pleasing and pleasant.

Let me take it one step further. Turn over to 2 Corinthians chapter 2, verses 14 through 16. This is the great passage. If you do not have this marked in your Bible, you need to put this in here and give you the notes here that I am about to give you.

2 Corinthians 2:14-16

*Now thanks be unto God, which always causeth us to triumph in Christ, and maketh manifest the savour of his knowledge by us in every place.*

*For we are unto God a sweet savour of Christ, in them that are saved, and in them that perish:*

*To the one we are the savour of death unto death; and to the other the savour of life unto life. And who is sufficient for these things?*

Do you know what he is saying? He is saying that because you are saved, and I am saved, and Christ is living in us, and we have the relationship in Song of Solomon that is likened to a perfume, or an ointment, or something, a garden, or flowers, what he is saying is that every time you open up your mouth and talk about the Lord Jesus, every time you, through that relationship you have with God, talk about the Lord, it is a sweet savor in the nostrils of God.

I want you to see, it is not only a sweet savor if the person gets saved, I want you to see that. He says it is a sweet savor to them that are lost, and to them that are saved. It is not just that God gets a sweet savor in His nostrils when that person gets saved. God wants everybody saved, God is not willing that any should perish, and there is rejoicing in heaven. But I want you to know that your personal relationship needs to be a sweet savor in the nostrils of God, and it is when you have the right relationship. To God, it does not matter if the person gets saved, or they stay lost, that is on them. What matters is, when you speak of Christ's death on the cross, and His glorious resurrection, and the price that was paid, it brings up in men, God's remembrance, the sacrifice that God made, and it is sweet in His nostrils.

But when we are of a heavy heart, because we are a captive of Babylon, the world system, when we have filled up the holy things of God in our lives with the filthy, godless garbage of this world, through the world, the flesh, and the devil, being in a strange land, now that sweetness of God in our lives, that warmth of God's Word, has become a stinking mess. It is now a stench in the nostrils of God, and it grieves the Holy Spirit of God. Why? Because the very vessels that God gave you, the precious promises, the principles that God put in your temple, you, like Belshazzar last week, took those things out, filled them with the filth of this world, and instead of being a sweet savor in the nostrils of God, we are now a stench.

## VIII. Grieving the Holy Spirit by Our Smell

I probably heard 500 messages on grieving the Holy Spirit of God in my time. I do not think I have ever heard one of them that was really biblical. Ephesians chapter 4, verse 30 says, "Grieve not the holy Spirit of God, whereby ye are sealed unto the day of redemption." Every message I ever heard preached about the fact that you grieve God's Holy Spirit by the things that you do. That is not true. That is not down to the lowest common denominator yet. You do not grieve the

Holy Spirit of God by the things you do. You grieve the Holy Spirit of God by the way you smell. Every morning, He gets His first whiff of you.

This is why, please do not take this wrong, there are a lot of things we can learn from this. This is why women, type of the church, always wear perfume. Somewhere along the line, men realized they stunk too, so they put on cologne. But it is always women. It is Chanel No. 5, Midnight Passion, Halston. Any woman worth her salt, and I am not, this is not a criticism. I know there are a lot of churches that say that women should not fix their hair, should not wear makeup. Boy, it is not me. I am with old Bob Jones Senior, brother, if the barn door needs paint, you go ahead and paint that sucker. I mean, you do not want to get carried away. You do not want to look like a raccoon hunter in possum season. But it is okay. It is like hair cream, a little dab will do you.

A woman will sit there, she will fix her hair, she will put her makeup on. I will tell you, guys, I get it. Guys do the same thing when they work on cars in their body shop. Same system. They will put it all on there, get that stuff just right, so it blends with their face, that it does not look like a clown, but it does not, you are not dead, you have rosy cheeks, and you put the lipstick on, and you get different colors. There are more colors of lipstick on the planet than there are languages. You get those things. I knew a girl one time had her eyebrows tattooed. Imagine that going into the guy. He has got a big old biker, got a little mama on his chest, and anchors all over here, and "I love Jesus," and the calcoms. She says, he says, "What can I do for you, little lady?" "I would like to get a tattoo." "Well, we have a whole bunch of them over here. How would you like one over here? This one over here, or this one here, or here is a heart one over here, and how about a Jesus cross? They are really popular today." She says, "No, I would just like to have my eyebrows tattooed. Make them look like they are real." Well, that would be a job. I am telling you, man, I better go get my mustache done that way.

This is always popular, like really petite women do this. That is how you go out to meet the guy, and you have got Midnight Passion on. You are under a clear blue sky. You have got Obsession. You sell any of these, Gail? No, you sell Halston though, do not you? What is that? Is it Halston? I thought it was Holstein. Holstein is a cow, is it not? Anyway, you want to smell good. I get it. Guys do the same thing. They buy clothes, but my point is this. We do not like our natural smell. We try to, from a world standpoint, take the natural smell away and put on a smell that has been created someplace to make us smell good. So when you get close to somebody, they, "Oh, I am obsessed, Obsession."

My, I do not know, and I probably should not say this, but I can say it because I am a mom. My mom was 70, 80 years old. When a woman hits 70 or 80 years old, they all buy the perfume at the same place. Have you ever noticed that? It all smells the same. My mom has been dead five or six years, and I thought, sure, she was in a drugstore the other day. "Mom!" She was not. I will tell you what. In Christianity, we try to do the same thing. I want to tell you something, you can go out and buy all the perfume in the world and smell good, and I am all for that. I think guys and gals that look best smell the best. I get it, I understand it. I am not fighting it. I am just kind of having fun with it.

Bottom line is this, you cannot fake that with Christianity. You just cannot. The smell is the smell. You can always tell when somebody is out of fellowship with God. The smell is not right. It is just something, we say it all the time, "Something does not smell right here." "It is all rotten in Denmark." I do not know what Denmark has got to have anybody being rotten, but that is what they say. Something is not right. You can just tell. Because, when you have the joy, joy, joy down in your heart, everybody knows that. When that joy is gone, everybody knows it. I will go up to somebody and say, "Hey, I have not seen you for a while. Where have you been?" "I have not been here." "Master of the obvious, are not you?" It is just the way it is.

## IX. The Garden of God and the Virtuous Woman

Turning to the garden of God. I am going to tell you something else. There is a lot in here. When Adam and Eve were in the garden of God, Eden. That was a physical place. Did you know it was perfect? It was perfect weather. The animals were perfect. There were no wild animals. I can only imagine what the tropical forest garden must have been like. I know I have been offshore on some of the islands out there, and at night, you could actually smell the lotus blossoms coming off into the wind. I wonder what the Garden of Eden must have been like. Could you imagine going to sleep every night with that incredible fragrance? Waking up in the morning. The best we could get if we could hope for is scrambled eggs and bacon, and coffee brewing. Could you imagine waking up, going to bed at night, hearing the animals out there who would never hurt you, growling, running around? You all cuddled up knowing that nothing is going to hurt you. You would breathe in, oh, that fragrance of the garden of God.

Do you know how that all changed in Genesis chapter 3? You realize that night they had to build campfires to keep the animals away. That day when they went to pick a rose, that day pricked himself with a thorn. Everything changed. But I want to tell you, the first Adam brought death into this world, but the second Adam took death out. Just as physically Adam and Eve had a Garden of Eden, in a spiritual sense, your Christian life, my Christian life, ought to be the Garden of Eden. We live in a perfect world with God because this world does not matter. He takes care of every need. He brings everything into our life. The smell of the holy relationship of God is unbelievable. I do not have to go and pick my food. It is laying right on the ground in the Word of God. God just gives it to me.

Adam and Eve, when they got kicked out of the garden, the Bible does not say this. Adam and Eve, when they got kicked out of the garden, I guarantee you for the next, maybe the rest of their lives, they sat around at night and wept because the reality had set in of what they had lost. They would have given anything in this world to get back into that garden. Here it comes. God saved you, He puts you in that garden. You just want to do everything to get out of it. Go figure.

Upon the door, as you come into the church, Nancy's flower shop, of course, is up there. On the door is a little sign. Maybe you have seen it, maybe you have not. Probably have not. You have not got trained on it yet. But it goes along with her flower shop because she sells flowers, beautiful flowers. I saw that last year at some point, and I hope they never take it down because I enjoy it. But on that little sign coming in, it says this: "If I had a flower for every time I thought of you, I would walk through my garden forever."

That is our relationship with God. The garden of God in your life and my life goes on forever because it is a spiritual garden. It is our Garden of Eden. It is not the physical one that got trashed. It is the one that God reclaimed and gave us. You can walk through every flower, every promise, everything that God has given you makes up your garden, and the smell, the aroma from it is unbelievable. That is what a child of God ought to do. We ought to walk through the garden of God forever. Our fellowship with Him. The warmth of God's Word and my relationship with Him.

The virtuous woman in Proverbs chapter 31, a picture of us, the church, based on the wisdom that she got Proverbs 1 through 30, it says that she "seeketh wool and flax, and worketh willingly with her hands." That should be us. It says that she "riseth also while it is yet night, and giveth meat to her household." That should be us. Verse 16 says, "She considereth a field, and buyeth it: with the fruit of her hands she planteth a vineyard." That should be us. The Bible says in verse 20 that she "stretcheth out her hand to the poor." That should be us. Verse 21 says that she is "not afraid of the snow for her household: for all her household are clothed with scarlet." She made the right clothes for her. That should be us. It says "Strength and honour are her clothing; and she shall rejoice in time to come." The reference there is to the judgment seat of Christ.

That is a picture in Proverbs 25:20. Now you understand how those two illustrations fit going through those other verses. Our relationship with Christ should be that garden that every principle God gave us, everything that God put in our world makes a flower, and we walk through that garden forever. The sweet savor in the nostrils of God is our relationship with Him. But, oh no, no, no, we have to bring in the stench of the world. A sweet smell and a sweet savor in God's presence that will keep us warm like a garment through the coldest winter. That, my friend, is worth singing about.

Let us pray. Father, we do thank You and praise You for the Lord Jesus. We thank You for the time that.