

## I. Review

Last time we were together in Psalms 34, I told you it was a Psalm of David. There are a number of things in it. It is a picture of David getting out of fellowship with God, and Saul is after him. He is running from Saul and has allowed the circumstances to pull him out of any kind of relationship with the Lord. I showed you how he runs from God. He is scared, he is afraid, and he has no weapon. So he goes down to the priests and asks them if they have a spear or a sword. Amazingly, they had Goliath's sword. I showed you last week how happy he was to get that sword. **He had come to the place in his life where he had forgotten that the sword of Goliath, which is a picture of the world, can never preserve you; it can never take care of you.** Case in point: it didn't work well for Goliath, and it won't work well for David. It is a picture of how we too, at times, can get out of fellowship with God, and we actually think that something in the world now is better than what we had with God.

Then we saw that when David comes to his right mind and he comes back to God, he begins to lay out some great biblical principles that all of us can use, look at, and apply in our lives. First off, he talks about blessing the Lord at all times—that's in the good times and in the bad times. He talked about boasting in the Lord—that's talking to people about the wondrous works that God does. He talks about how our defense certainly won't be the sword of Goliath, but he talks about the angel of the Lord being camped round about him. We talked about how if you're saved, the Holy Spirit of God is camped out inside you. We talked about that Thursday night, too. He talked about tasting the good Word of God and that your spiritual diet is what you want to put into your spiritual body. He talked about there being no want for a child of God when you walk with God; that He not only supplies all of your needs, but He understands the wants that we have in our life. We learned four aspects of the fear of the Lord: how to better understand it and how God never takes His eye off us; He is always seeing us.

I don't have time to get into it this morning. Sometime, maybe if somebody asks a little deeper question about it, but in the Bible, God never blinks. He never blinks. And a blink can just be a split millisecond, but God never blinks. But God does wink. And when you wink, you always have one eye open. The aspect that God never blinks comes right back to this: that not even for a millisecond of a blink will God take His eyes off of you. It's an incredible concept, one of those things that is actually laid out in the book of Psalms. Sooner or later we'll get to it, but it's an incredible thing: God never takes His eyes off of you. The last thing was through God's redemption, there's no desolation for the child of God who walks with Him. Eight incredible principles that you can really apply to your life.

## II. Psalms 35

Now today we're going to get into Psalms 35. This Psalm will be classified as a Messianic Psalm, dealing with Christ as Israel's Messiah and His death on the cross. These are some of these Old Testament scriptures that prophesy about when Christ came to Israel and was crucified on the

cross. However, this Psalm also will run from the doctrinal Messianic back to the historical David and his life and his issues, and then inspirationally to all of the issues that we have in our lives.

There are some great parallels between Christ's suffering on the cross, David's suffering in his life, and you and I going through the sufferings of this life. You'll find laid out here through the types four areas: you'll find David in his trouble, Christ and His persecutors at the crucifixion (First Coming of Christ), you'll find Israel going through their persecution and the Tribulation, and then you'll find you and I going through our times of troubles. All this, in a general sense, in Psalms 35, will be a Tribulation Psalm.

Now we're going to break this Psalm down into two sections. Then we'll go back and lay the first section out, and then next week we'll look at the second section. Let's read Psalm 35.

*Psalms 35:1-13*

- 1. Plead [my cause], O LORD, with them that strive with me: fight against them that fight against me.*
- 2. Take hold of shield and buckler, and stand up for mine help.*
- 3. Draw out also the spear, and stop [the way] against them that persecute me: say unto my soul, I [am] thy salvation.*
- 4. Let them be confounded and put to shame that seek after my soul: let them be turned back and brought to confusion that devise my hurt.*
- 5. Let them be as chaff before the wind: and let the angel of the LORD chase [them].*
- 6. Let their way be dark and slippery: and let the angel of the LORD persecute them.*
- 7. For without cause have they hid for me their net [in] a pit, [which] without cause they have digged for my soul.*
- 8. Let destruction come upon him at unawares; and let his net that he hath hid catch himself: into that very destruction let him fall.*
- 9. And my soul shall be joyful in the LORD: it shall rejoice in his salvation.*
- 10. All my bones shall say, LORD, who is like unto thee, which deliverest the poor from him that is too strong for him, yea, the poor and the needy from him that spoileth him.*
- 11. False witnesses did rise up; they laid to my charge [things] that I knew not.*
- 12. They rewarded me evil for good [to] the spoiling of my soul.*
- 13. But as for me, when they were sick, my clothing was sackcloth: I humbled my soul with fasting; and my prayer returned into mine own bosom.*

### III. The Lord Jesus Christ is Our Defense

Now, in verse one, he said, "*Plead my cause, O LORD.*" That is a legitimate prayer for any child of God in any dispensation. The root for this for the New Testament Christian, you with me, would be Romans 8:35. One of the great promises in the Bible, yet great principles in the Bible, where it says, "*Who shall separate us from the love of Christ?*" Of course, he lists the things that ultimately will pull us away from Christ, when in actuality they never should: tribulation, distress, persecution, famine, nakedness, peril, or the sword. In reality, what he's telling us, "O Lord, plead my cause," is that nothing in this world, in this life, will separate you from God. It will be us that separate ourselves from God, but He'll never separate Himself from us.

Clearly, when you get into the book of Ephesians chapter 6, you can see that our defense is certainly the Lord Jesus Christ, the Angel of the Lord. The prayer of the true soldier of Christ, locked in the spiritual battle of this world, will simply be, "Lord, fight against them that fight against me." Then we see in verse two, he says, "*Take hold of shield and buckler, and stand up for mine help.*" Standing up for you against your enemies. For David, for Israel, and for you and for me, the thing that I take great rest in is the fact that no matter what the circumstances of life, no matter what you find yourself in, no matter who tries to persecute you or who your enemies are, as long as you're doing what's right with God, God will always have your back. That's the great key.

### IV. A Tribulation Passage to Israel Doctrinally

Now from verse three on, we clearly see how this is a Tribulation passage to Israel, doctrinally.

In verse 3: "*Draw out also the spear, and stop **the way against them.***" The way is the antichrist; them is the nation of Israel. In verse 4: "*Let them be **confounded**, ...let them be turned back and brought to **confusion.***"

#### ➤ Two Key Words are Confounded and Confusion

Now, I'm going to show you a little unknown thing in the Bible, and you'll want to get this into your Bible at some point. The two key words here will be the words "confounded" and "confusion." Now, this being an antichrist prophetic doctrinal passage here, in the last three and a half years of the Tribulation period, when the antichrist actually goes after the nation of Israel (Daniel's 70th week, the Great Tribulation), you'll find that toward the end of that, right before which leads into the Battle of Armageddon and the Second Coming of Christ, the antichrist comes down to Jerusalem to attack and to wipe out in the final phase of the eradication of the Jews off of planet earth. You'll find in Ezekiel chapter 21:18-23, a passage that exactly tells you about how God is going to confound them and confuse them.

*Ezekiel 21:18-23. The word of the LORD came unto me again, saying,*

*19. Also, thou son of man, (**watch it!**) appoint thee two ways, that the sword of the king of Babylon may come: both twain shall come forth out of one land: and choose thou a place, choose [it] at the head of the way to the city. (**Jerusalem**)*

20. *Appoint a way, that the sword may come to Rabbath of the Ammonites, and to Judah in Jerusalem the defenced.*

21. *For the king of Babylon stood at the parting of the way, at the head of the two ways, to use divination: (witchcraft) he made [his] arrows bright, he consulted with images, he looked in the liver. (These are all things that through a witch and witchcraft that somebody would do to try to get the right answer in something. When you look in the liver, it was based on spots you would find in the liver. The arrows bright deal with which way the arrows are pointing are the direction you would go.)*

22. *At his right hand was the divination for Jerusalem, to appoint captains, to open the mouth in the slaughter, to lift up the voice with shouting, to appoint [battering] rams against the gates, to cast a mount, [and] to build a fort.*

23. *And it shall be unto them as a false divination in their sight, to them that have sworn oaths: but he will call to remembrance the iniquity, that they may be taken.*

That is exactly what you have here. The antichrist, when he comes down to attack Jerusalem, stops, and he's got two ways to go. Like Saul with the witch at Endor, a type of the antichrist, he consults with the familiar spirits for them to tell him which way to attack Jerusalem. God intervenes like He did with Saul and sends him down the wrong road. You know who he meets down that road? The Lord Jesus Christ. It's the Second Coming of Christ in the Battle of Armageddon. That's what you have here. That's the historical picture of confusion and desolation as God destroys the antichrist as he comes against the nation of Israel.

In verse 5: "*Let them be as **chaff** before the **wind**.*" There it is. That's what happens when he gets the wrong course and he comes down to Jerusalem. He becomes the chaff before the wind. Chaff will be the antichrist and all of his armies with him; the wind will be the Holy Spirit of God from the Angel of the Lord, which is defined in Ezekiel 1:1-4, as a great whirlwind at the Second Coming of Christ.

➤ There's no Traction in Life if it's not done God's Way

In verse 6: "*Let **their way** be dark and slippery.*" Now again, this will be the enemies of the Jews, the antichrist getting all the wrong information. As he tries to wipe out the Jews, he gets no traction. He gets no light on the way to do it. Yet, if you look there, it says "*their way*." He's following the counsel of man versus God's way, the counsel of God. You know historically that's what happened in the Old Testament. Doctrinally, that's what will happen in the future in the Tribulation. But for you and for me, it's the same thing, inspirationally. If there's no God's way in your life and my life, then there's no traction in life. **The Bible calls it backsliding.** You slip, you slide backwards, and you can't find your way. It's endless. Life for you is just like that little rat in the maze, just trying to find the cheese at the end, and he runs through all the things to try to get there. That's the life for most of God's people. The cheese is heaven, and you just bang your head against every dead-end street until you get there. We'll call it: life is a dead-end street. You go through life one disaster after another. You have a bad marriage, which you didn't have to have, not as a Christian. Then you have another bad marriage, and then another bad marriage. You lose

your kids. You lose your kids because you cared nothing about training them up in the way they should go. Then after that happens, it compiles the heartache, then the anxiety, then the depression, then the Prozac, and then the meds. Then it's your therapist, it's your psychologist, it's your psychiatrist. But all the time, it's nothing more than "*let their way be dark and slippery.*"

How many times I've seen God's people make some of the biggest, most blunderous mistakes in their life. I'll be honest with you, never one time in all those years and years and years of people making bad choices and getting themselves in some of the biggest messes you ever saw in your life, never one time did anybody tell me, "Well, Bob, I know I'm not doing what's right, and I'm just going to go do my own thing, and you know what, this is what I want to do." Never, never, never. Never. You know what they all say? "God's leading me to do this. I feel the Lord wants me to do this." For years I tried to talk them out of it. I don't try to talk anybody out of anything anymore. Now, if you and I are really close and you do something stupid, you know. But for the most part, I am sick and tired of telling God's people what they need to do when they don't want to do it. I'm okay. Do it. You'll tell me today God is in it. Two years from now, a year from now, when your life is upside down, you've lost everything, and your life is an absolute cesspool, "God changed His mind." What happened to God in your decision? The answer is simple: He was never there to begin with. I've seen a lot of God's people fall into that. Their way becomes dark and slippery. There's no traction with God. It's darkness. There is no light. They can't see anything, and now they just make one bad choice after the other, pass it on to their kids. They make bad choices one after another. They pass it on to their kids, and the cycle is complete.

## V. Psalms 35 is a Messianic Psalm in Verses 7-12

Now all this doctrinally will be Israel in the Tribulation period. Inspirationally, it'll be you and me in life. But when we get into verse 7 through 12, we now see, and we'll break this down, and next week we'll really see it too because it continues on. We see this will be about Christ on the cross and His persecution doctrinally, which makes this what we call a Messianic Psalm.

### ➤ They Came to Him *Without Cause*

In verse 7: "*For **without cause** have they hid for me their net [in] a pit, which without cause they have digged for my soul.*"

You'll note in verse 7 that it shows you how clearly it was Christ because it says they came to Him "*without cause.*" If you don't have that reference already in your Bible, it'll be Psalms 119:161. You'll notice the pit that is dug for Him to fall into. That pit will be dug by the scribes, the Pharisees, and the Sadducees—traps they set for Christ. We saw this last week in Matthew after the rejection, how they're relentless in going after Him. He says, "*digged for my soul.*" That's to dig a grave to kill Him and to bury. Remember the soul and the body are used interchangeably.

### ➤ God Will Judge Those That Persecute Christ

In verse 8: "*Let destruction come upon him at unawares; and let his net that he hath hid catch himself: **into that very destruction let him fall.***"

Verse 8 says God will judge those that persecute Christ. The way that they do that, if you come on down through this chapter, is that the pit that they dig for Christ, the trap that they set for Him, the net that they spread for Him, they fall into it themselves. It's incredible.

### ➤ Christ Secured our Eternal Security

In verse 9: *"And my soul shall be joyful in the LORD: it shall rejoice in his salvation."*

Verse 9, certainly it's Christ on the cross rejoicing in His dying for me and for you. This will be Hebrews 12:2 if you don't have the reference, where it says, *"Looking unto Jesus the author and finisher of our faith; who for the joy that was set before him endured the cross, despising the shame, and is set down at the right hand of the throne of God."* He secured for you and me our eternal security.

### ➤ The False Witnesses were Against Him

In verse 11: *"False witnesses did rise up; they laid to my charge [things] that I knew not."*

Verse 11 says that the false witnesses were against Him. That again will be the Jewish leaders, the scribes, the high priest.

### ➤ They Rewarded His Good with Evil

In verse 12: *"They rewarded me evil for good [to] the spoiling of my soul."*

Now, I want to stay on task and move through here today in a good, timely manner, but let me just say this to you: that is one of the greatest principles for you to understand if you're going to work with people. Christ is the only man that I know of that came to this earth. He never hurt anybody. He never shot anybody, never killed anybody. He never did anything to anybody. But nobody wanted anything to do with Him, and they rewarded His good with evil.

I'm going to tell you something: one of the things that you must have if you're going to work with people—you're going to have some tough skin. Working with people in the ministry is no place for thin-skinned people. All the good that you try to do to people, you're going to invest your life into people. You're going to teach them the Bible. You're going to get them out of some of the biggest messes you ever saw in your life. You're going to, in their life, do nothing but good for them. And they are going to turn on you. **I'll tell you right now, when it comes to the ministry, learn this: no good deed will go unpunished.** They'll do to you what they did to Him. You'll invest your life in somebody trying to help, and they'll turn on you just like they turned on Him. And they'll return the good that you did to them with evil. The quicker you learn that, the better off you're going to be in doing two things: one, stay out of the ministry if you can't handle it; two, understand that just like they did it to Him, they're going to do it to you. It's a thing where, in both cases, God always has your back. That's the key.

I tell people in ministry, the number one thing in ministry—I don't care if you're a pastor, I don't care if you're discipling, I don't care if you work with people—the number one thing: never take it personal. Never. When you take it personal, then you lose your perspective. When you lose your perspective, you lose your purpose. You can't ever take it personal. He didn't take it

personal in spite of all that they did to Him. He still died for every one of them. When you go over in 1 and 2 Peter, it'll clearly tell you that He died for the men that hated Him. Never take it personal. Always see the big picture. That's hard for some of God's people. I get that.

We see all of this is an account of His crucifixion that you find in the four Gospels, making this a Messianic Psalm.

## VI. Definitive Verses and Definitive Passages

Now we come to verse 13. This is where we're going to spend the rest of our message today. As far as I'm concerned, this is where the message really is. We see now one of the greatest defining verses in all of the Bible on one of the most misunderstood, misapplied doctrines in all the Bible. **I make no secret about the importance of definitive verses and definitive passages. I am telling you right now, they are the absolute key to you understanding your Bible.** You'll notice, if you stick around here any length of time, that I'm always pointing them out to you. I'm always telling you to mark them. Here today, you're going to get two more. He says in verse 13, "*I humbled my soul with fasting.*" Today, we're going to look at from the Bible, the doctrine of fasting, one of the most misunderstood, misapplied, laughable things in Christianity today that makes God's people really look stupid.

Now, let me back up a minute. When you lose your Bible, and I'm talking about a King James 1611 Authorized Version, you will ultimately lose the seven key concepts found in the Bible for your Christian life. In the front of my Bible, I'll show them to you sometime if you want to see them, I have them laid out so I will never forget them. If I have to teach them, they're right there. But a couple of years ago, I found an eighth one, and I've had to squeeze that into my notes. I think this eighth one is probably the most destructive one of all of the seven when it comes to you losing your Bible with what you lose.

### ➤ The Wise Man and the Foolish Man

**Your Bible, King James 1611 Authorized Version, will be God's complete and total revelation of Himself to man.** No question about that. The Bible will be the textbook of life on planet earth for the child of God. You remember in the book of Proverbs, as the book of 3 John, was written about just two men: one was a wise man, and one was a foolish man. In the book of Proverbs, you'll find the wise man finds God's truth and he lives it, so he's wise. The other, the fool, rejects the truth of God, and he deceives himself throughout life, and he becomes the fool. You'll find it again in Matthew chapter 25, where it talks about the 10 virgins: five were wise and five were foolish. It all goes together. But you need to understand this: the Bible, in one book, actually 66 books, will contain everything in God's mind. Your familiar passages, 1 Corinthians 2:16, Philippians 2:5, "*we have the mind of Christ,*" "*let this mind be in you, which was also in Christ Jesus.*" That's how He instructs us with His mind. All our Christian life and the success in it will simply come down to just this one thing: letting this mind be in you, which was also in Christ Jesus.

### ➤ Make your Way His Way

You and I are told in Isaiah 55:8-9 that God's thoughts are not my thoughts, God's ways are not my ways. God will think a certain way, which I won't think. God will do things in a certain manner that I wouldn't do. **The value of having the Word of God, which is God's mind, when I understand that His ways are not my ways and my thoughts are not His thoughts, is the fact that through that book, God will define things the way He wants you to understand them.** You know what getting God's mind is? We think, "Oh, it's reading the Bible." No, no. **Getting God's mind really is you getting God's definition on everything in life and then making it your definition.** It's just that simple. It's not complicated. There's no Bible college involved, no Greek and Hebrew involved, no Bible scholars involved. You simply recognize and understand that that Book is the mind of God, and when you let this mind be in you, which was also in Christ Jesus, you look at things one way, you see things one way, you do things one way; He does it another way. Make your way His way. You do that by defining it.

### ➤ Find out the Bible's Definitions and Make Them Yours

When you lose your Bible, you lose your definitions. You can have your Bible, the right one, and not spend any time in it and still lose your definitions. In our bookstore over there, we probably got 40 or 50 or 60 King James Bibles. None of them will do you any good if you don't get in it and find out the definitions and make them yours. Having one in your house means absolutely nothing other than the fact, congratulations, you got the right Bible. If all the dust would be blown off all of the King James Bibles in God's people's houses today, there'd be a dust storm that would smother the crops.

The Bible will be filled with what I call definitive verses, places in your Bible where God will show you the definition of some truth. When He does that, that sets the context and the understanding of that truth. Along with the seven key areas you lose when you reject the Word of God, you will lose how God defines things. When you lose God's definition of things in the Bible, you're losing the real definition of things. Getting God's mind will simply be getting how God will define everything in life. When you don't do that, when you don't see that, when you don't make that a goal of your life, you lose your definitions.

### ➤ The Number One Goal for Every Child of God Should be How to Make His Mind Your Mind

Based on Isaiah 55:8-9, the goal of every child of God in this room under the sound of my voice, number one goal: how to make His mind your mind. When you see life, circumstances in life, situations in life, people in life, you have to make decisions. You make those decisions on defining the circumstance you find yourself in. You better have the right definition, or you're going to become like the church today that's defined for you in Revelation chapter 3, the church of Laodicea. You know how God defines that church? The church of the closed door. Now that church is made up of people. That church has lost the definition of everything in the Bible. The church of a closed door is made up of people with a closed mind.

## VII. Pagan Holidays and Lost Definitions

You know, on the three holy days of Christianity, it's a joke around here. If you came here this morning expecting an Easter message, I hope you're not disappointed. But yet I'm afraid to admit to you, this is going to probably wind up being an Easter message. I didn't plan it that way. God did. You know, I wonder sometimes. In fact, I wonder a lot. I wonder what God thinks of us today, His church, you and me. In the last couple of weeks, as we came through Psalms, we saw how that He never takes His eye off His children. Song of Solomon chapter two makes that very clear. Boy, does it ever. Now I'm a mess. Ain't nothing spiritual about me. So, I don't even want to pretend it today. But I try every once in a while, to stay God-conscious. I know a little bit about God. I mean, you could put it into a thimble compared to the knowledge of God that's in that Book. But over the 50-some years of my life, I've learned a little bit about Him. I know a little bit how He thinks. I know just a tad of how He does things. I know what He looks for. I understand in a little greater way the purpose of Him coming and dying for every one of you and me here, why He died for the whole human race. I know a little bit how that fits into the overall plan. I just think too many times how disappointed He must be when He looks down at you and me, the body of Christ, His church.

### ➤ Staying Balanced

I mean, stay with me now. Stay with me. Don't turn me off just yet. Today is Easter, and I'm not fighting it, but I didn't preach an Easter message this morning. I never have. The joke around here is, and I got it last night at volleyball, "Well, tomorrow's Easter. You're preaching your Easter message on a letter from hell." I just laughed, yes, because you know, that's the way I am and the way I operate. I'm not fighting anything I'm saying. Honestly, and this is not even a criticism. You know why? I don't care. The main job of the pastor, number one, is to have his own life within the Word of God as balanced as it can be. Now, my own is a mess, so I'll just tell you that right out of the chute. But the second thing he does, he needs—listen to me—he needs to provide a balance for his church. In Christianity, you got the right-wing extremists. You got the left-wing extremists. Then you got to have those that are balanced in the middle. You see what's wrong with both, but you also see how you're supposed to do what God wants you to do in the midst of this cesspool called Christianity.

All across this country this morning, while we're here, churches are celebrating Easter Sunday. Saw it all over TV. The best thing about Easter Sunday for me was that I got to tape *The Ten Commandments* with Charlton Heston last night. I'm going to watch it tonight.

If I can be honest with you this morning, and again, I'm not fighting it, I want my church to be balanced. I'm going to show you how we use that balance. But Easter, in connection with Christ's resurrection, will be one of the most pagan holidays that you'll ever find in New Testament Christianity. We call it the word Easter. I drove to church this morning: Easter service, Easter Sunday, Easter this, Easter that. Easter is the word for Ashtaroth, which was the pagan goddess of fertility. It's talked about in Judges chapter 2. How in the world, I'm asking, how in the world did Ashtaroth, the pagan goddess of fertility, find its way into churches today across this country? I wonder what God thinks when He sees that. The day that we're supposed to celebrate

His resurrection, and the devil gets his goddess into the church—his church first, then our church second. God's people don't even know the difference. You know why? Acts chapter 12, verses 1 through 4, is the Bible's definition for the New Testament church on Easter.

➤ Easter Mixed with Christ's Resurrection is the Tradition of Men

*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.*

You see, in Colossians chapter 2, which by the way is the definitive chapter on the Laodicean church, your told to let no man deceive you or spoil you through philosophy, vain deceit, the rudiments of the world, or the traditions of men. I'm telling you right now, Easter brought into God's church, mixed and matched with the resurrection of Christ, is the tradition of men. No New Testament, Bible-believing church, the true church, ever celebrated Easter in church history. The Bible-believing groups, the Waldensians, the Albigensians, the Huguenots, you name them, they never did. The connection of Christ's resurrection and Easter comes into Christianity with Constantine, our old buddy, around 300 to 400 AD. Now, how did all this pagan stuff wind up in the church today? Easy. **You lose the Book. You lose the definitions of everything.** Ashtaroth, Easter, the goddess of rising light and spring. Originally, it was a pagan holiday, still is. It was held in the early month of April or May. It was a festival to celebrate the rebirth of earth after the dead of winter. So, it's celebrated with rabbits, who are very fertile. Don't believe it, just get two. The idea of colored eggs from a rabbit, that's Babylonian and Egyptian. In fact, Ashtaroth in the pagan folklore fell from heaven in a golden egg and hatched.

Did you ever notice, and I know this is just me and the Bible, with all the instructions that Paul gives the church in his writings (what to do and what not to do), how come he never mentioned an Easter service? Do you know the things he does mention and the things that he does talk about? And you know what the problem is? For those of you listening out there, and maybe some of you here, when I start talking like this, you get mad at me. You get upset with me; like I ruined your day. You're okay with the fact that you bring in a pagan goddess to connect with Christ's resurrection. You don't get mad at that, but you get mad at somebody that gives you the truth. You know what your problem is? You've lost your definitions.

There is a book in our bookstore that everybody ought to have called *Babylon Mystery Religion* by Ralph Woodrow. It lays out for you why the Friday before Ashtaroth is called Good Friday—because Christ was supposedly crucified on Good Friday from the Roman Catholic Church's teaching which is what Constantine started. It wasn't Good Friday; it was Bad Wednesday. How do God's people do that, with God looking down, when He died for you and me; when He agonized on that cross; when He rose again on the third day, and He sealed your salvation for all of eternity. I wonder what God thinks as He looks down on this mess called Christianity. You see, the Bible is the Book of God's definitions.

Paul never writes about us having a sunrise service. Some churches had sunrise services today and pretend like Christ came out of the tomb at sunrise. If you study your Bible, when they

came to the tomb at sunrise, he was already out. Did you ever notice and wonder why God never told you and me the exact time He came out of that tomb? Oh, yeah. Oh, yeah.

### ➤ Christ was Never in Christmas to Begin With

I don't go through a Christmas season and not think what God must feel about that. The idea that Christ was born on December 25. Are you kidding me? When Constantine started the Roman Catholic Church, 325-400AD is the beginning of it, he wanted to make his church grow; so he brought all of the pagans with all of their godless pagan festivals into his church. December 25 was not the birthday of Jesus Christ, but in history it's the birthday of Baal the sun god. He changes Baal's birthday to the birthday of Jesus when anyone with a Bible knows that Jesus was born during the Feast of Tabernacles in September—if you have the definitions. How does God look at that?

Santa Claus is also called Saint Nicholas. That's the Roman Catholic patron saint for children. He's also sometimes called Kris Kringle— "Christ Child." In Europe, you'll see pictures of Santa Claus with the pope's mitre hat on. The Bible believing crowd never celebrated Christmas. The devil simply brought his pagan celebrations with him into the Catholic Church, which is his church, and then the Catholic Church, through the traditions of men, brought them in. Not one time does Paul say, "Celebrate Christmas. Get your Christmas card with the manger and the star over that and the three wise guys showing up." No, no, no, no. The reason I take the middle ground position... Oh, I'm not fighting it. I don't care. Balance is my job. Because in the book of Colossians, a definitive book on that, in the book of Colossians chapter 2, verse 16, for the child of God in the New Testament church, in verse 16, it clearly says the New Testament Christian is not to have respect to any holy days. Now, is it my fault you can't read? The three main holy days for the Christian, or two holy days for the Christian, are Christmas and Easter. You have got people who are against Halloween. I'll just tell you right now, Christmas and Easter are much more demonic than Halloween ever was on its best day.

A guy asked me one time, years ago, he says, "You're a pastor." I said, "Yeah." He says, "I want to open a bar." I said, "Well, okay, I won't be drinking there, but okay." He said, "No, no, no. I got to ask you a question. I'm trying to get a sense of feeling in your neighborhood where you live." He was Catholic. He said, "Would you rather have a bar in your neighborhood or the Catholic church in your neighborhood?" Oh, I said, "Oh, that's easy." "What is it?" I said, "I'd rather have the bar." "Really? Why is that?" I said, "Because I know what goes on in a bar. The Roman Catholic church hides it all under false religion." **You see, I want you to know the truth. I want you to have a balance.** I don't care what you do. I don't care. I just want you to know I'm not going right. I'm not going left. I'm in the middle. I have to be in the middle, and I'll show you why in a minute. Hang with me. No holy days.

### ➤ The Days of the Week and Months of the Year are Named after Pagan Gods

Now, the most comical aspect will be the stupidity of self-righteousness of God's people off either the far right or the far left. You know, "I'm against Halloween, but I'm for Christmas and Easter." I'm against all three of them but let me explain it in a minute. I'll show you how stupid people are. Not any of you people. You're all smart. Except that one guy sitting in the back. But

anyway, you're all smart people. But let me explain something to you. What is today? In unison, what is today? Today's Sunday. Why in the Bible does God never refer to this day as Sunday? Why? Why in the Bible is Sunday never called Sunday, but the Bible always calls it the first day of the week? Now, why is that? Maybe somebody knows something we don't know. The word Sunday is connected with Baal worship. That was his day. He's the sun god. Sunday was his day. When the Roman Catholic church came into power, they have Sunday mass. Their big mass is at 12 o'clock. That's when the Baal worship was because the sun god, the sun, is at the highest part of the zenith. See, you thought zenith was a TV.

"Well, I'm against Halloween. I'm against—" No, but you'll tell me you're going to be in church on Sunday. What about Monday? What about Tuesday? What about Wednesday? I know it's hump day. What about Thursday? What about Friday? What about Saturday? They're all named after pagan gods. Do you know why the Catholic church doesn't eat meat on Friday and eats fish on Friday because Friday is Freya. The half-goddess who was a fish, like a mermaid. So they worship her, and it's called Friday. You know why they want Christ crucified on Good Friday? Well, you figured that one out. All those. And you're okay with that? Today it's April, but there's January, February, March, April, May, June, July, you know, January, February have 31 days, and grandma rides a bicycle, something like that. All those months? They're pagan gods. Now, how can you be okay with that and not okay with the other pagan holidays? The answer to that is no definitions. It's all pagan. Everything is pagan. It's all pagan. **You know, when you lose your Bible, you lose your definitions.**

#### ➤ Using the Things of the World Against Itself

My take on all of this, my job is to reach my culture in the day and age that I live in. For me, how to do that in the midst of all this paganism? See, exonerating yourself from it and not dealing with it is not the answer. Going all full in is not the answer. You have got to find yourself in the middle. That's what Paul did. In Acts 21, Paul defined how I am to navigate through Halloween, Easter, and Christmas, or whatever holy days that Christianity put up and have nothing to do with the Bible. **Paul in Acts 21 is the model for you and for me reaching our culture today in the midst of all the paganism that's going on around us. He shows you what you can do, shows you what you should do, but then he shows you what you can't do.** That's the key. I don't care. I'm in this world, but I'm not of this world. My job is to use the things of this world against itself. Paul said, "I became all things to all men, that I might by all means save some." I'm in it. Pushing it away and not dealing with it will not get anybody saved. You must know how you use it. Bob Jones Sr. said one time, he said this in 1920, he said that if the devil is going your way, ride him. There is a lot of truth in that. We have the devil going our way all around us. **If you're going to reach your culture, you're going to have to use it. But you're going to have to define it.**

Over there in 1 Corinthians chapter 8, I could just see this. You know, the church in Corinth is such a picture of where Christianity is today. They are the most screwed up, messed up church you have ever seen in your life. Chapter by chapter, they are messed up on everything. In chapter 8, the spiritual crowd is upset. Why? Well, some of the people in the church went down to the market today after the pagan ceremonies and sacrifices of all those animals to all the phony gods.

You know what they did? They went down to the meat market. There in the meat market, roast beef, \$10 a pound. Roast beef left over from the sacrifice yesterday that was not consumed, \$5 a pound. Do you know what those Christians are doing? They're buying the meat that was offered to idols. They're buying demon-possessed meat. I just can't get that. "Oh, I would never be part of Halloween. Oh, I'd never be part of Easter. Oh, I'd never be part of Christmas. I would never buy that meat." And what Paul said, he said, "You're an idiot." He says, "Do any of you believe that there's anything real about those dumb gods?" If you get a better deal on the meat, buy the meat with the best deal. Because you know what? All that stuff should mean nothing to a Christian. Oh, God's people. I am not kidding you.

## VIII. The Doctrine of Fasting

Now having said all that, we have lost the definitions. It is no more evident—I had to say what I had to say to get where I'm at now—in verse 13. Wow. Now in chapter 35, in verse 13, you will have one of the two definitive verses that show you what fasting is, how it works, and how God views it. If you're getting definitions, this is one you better get.

### ➤ Most of God's People today Use Prayer Time Like an Amazon Order Line

Now we live in a Christianity that, let's face it, doesn't want to get God's mind on anything, but rather change God's mind to the way of their thinking. The Bible tells us in Romans chapter 8, verse 26 that we don't know how to pray. Prayer defined in your Bible is defined in four different ways. We talk about that in Discipleship one. I would safely say this: today 99% of God's people's prayers go right out the window. New Testament Christian prayer is one of us telling God what He needs to do. "Because I'm not happy with the way it's going, God. And You need to do something. You need to do this. Change this. Fix this. Heal me. Do something. Because God, my comfort zone, has been violated."

Most of God's people never learned that in our prayers, there are some things you can ask God to do, and there are some things you cannot ask God to do. **The key will be us being so in tune with God's mind, the Holy Spirit of God.** You're defining that will allow Him to use you however He wants. You pray to better see and understand how you can be part of what He's doing, not to change it. Maybe He'll change it. Maybe He won't. God's people today use their prayer time like an Amazon order line. You tell God what He needs to do, what He needs to change, the way you want it to go. Then you say, "Now you get on the stick and fix it!" We're always telling God what we want Him to do for us. We never consider what He's trying to do. It's the mark of the Laodicean church. You know, the defining moment for every child of God today is simply this: what do you expect from God when you get on your knees and pray to Him? We'll get to that in a moment, too.

### ➤ Fasting in Prayer has Never Been about Changing God's Mind

We see the same concept in fasting today. The idea of fasting today is simply this: "I have something I want God to do. I'm praying so hard that He'll fix it, that He'll change it, and I've not had the answer to my prayer. So, okay, God, now I'm going to quit eating. God will see me

hungry, and He'll answer my prayer. God doesn't want me to starve to death. He'll fix it, so I'll start to eat again. He'll see how committed I am, that I'm willing to give up food, deny myself, do a Christian hunger strike. If I can't change God's mind by prayer, then I'll do it by denying my food. God will feel sorry for me, and He'll answer my prayer."

Fasting today has become the Christian form of self-mutilation. It's what the Catholic Church does, still does, where they whip themselves, cut themselves, beat themselves, hoping that God will answer their prayer. Martin Luther, before he got saved and kicked the Catholic Church into the pit of hell, he had no peace with God, and he wanted that peace. He crawled up the cathedral stairs, 500 steps, till his knees were bloodied so God would answer his prayer. God's people are just watered-down Roman Catholics. Fasting in prayer has never been about changing God's mind. You got the wrong definition. The idea of my denying myself food, "Well, God will see how serious I am, and then He'll come down, and He'll deliver me, give me this, give me that," whatever the case may be.

### ➤ The Bible's Definition on Fasting

Now, let's do a terrible thing. Let's get a Bible definition on fasting. First off, let me say this. Fasting will be a New Testament concept. There's no question about it. You find that in Acts 14, Acts 27, 1 Corinthians 7. But I want you to look at 2 Corinthians 11:27. We'll pick it up in verse 26. I think you need to see this. Look what Paul said:

*2 Corinthians 11:26-27. [In] journeyings often, [in] perils of waters, [in] perils of robbers, [in] perils by [mine own] countrymen, [in] perils by the heathen, [in] perils in the city, [in] perils in the wilderness, [in] perils in the sea, [in] perils among false brethren;*

Now watch this...

*27. In weariness and painfulness, in watchings often, in **hunger and thirst, in fastings often, in cold and nakedness.***

Food and thirst have nothing to do with fasting here. It's listed separately in its own category. Now, what do you do with that? In your Bible, you will have two definitive verses on fasting. I'm not saying you don't do it. I'm saying to do it and not know what you're doing is pretty stupid. Now, here's our first one where we're at, Psalm 35:13. Now watch this:

*Psalms 35:13. But as for me, when they were sick, my clothing [was] sackcloth: I **humbled my soul with fasting; and my prayer returned into mine own bosom.***

Then the second one is Psalm 69:10. The only two verses that define it in the Bible.

*Psalms 69:10. When I wept, [and **chastened] my soul with fasting, that was to my reproach.***

**Now, do you see that? That's the Bible's definition on fasting. There isn't one thing in either one of them about getting any prayer answered.** Not once. Not one time. Psalm 35 says fasting humbled your soul, and Psalm 69 defined humbled by fasting, chastening your soul to your reproach.

➤ In Fasting, the Prayer didn't go to God; It Returns to Your Own Bosom

I look at verse 13. When I fasted, it made my prayer go to God? No! It made my prayer go to heaven? No! It made my prayer return to my bosom. Now, that's tough for Amazon Christianity that like to order God around. **In fasting, verse 13, the prayer didn't go to God. It came back to your heart.** Do you see that? **Fasting had absolutely nothing to do with you getting your prayer answered.** Do you see that? Your prayer, when it came back to your heart, became a reproach. **It humbled you and chastened your soul.** Not one thing about getting it answered. Fasting was never about God granting your prayer because you starved yourself to show God how earnest you were.

**So when you have something you're dealing with and you bring it to God, the fasting of your flesh will not get your prayer answered but will show you how weak and vulnerable you really are.** Just try it sometime. If there's anything that shows us the frailty of our flesh, it's what we eat. When you decide to miss one meal, one day of meals, you're like Esau. He gave his birthright, Genesis 25, when he missed one meal. He comes in and he says, "What good is this birthright to me? I'm at the point of death,"—one meal? That's our flesh. **Fasting will show you how much your flesh is really in control of you.** "Well, I'm not going to eat today." That's six o'clock in the morning. Eight o'clock, maybe a snack. Time to go to bed at night. If you don't eat anything, you think you're dying. You know what it is? Nothing more than your flesh. Eating and overeating is the plague of America today, obesity. What you stick in your mouth continually. It all comes back to the fact that if anything will show you how weak you are when you're praying to God to get your flesh out of the way, it's for you to fast. Now, you're praying and you're feeling terrible, and you're this, and you know that God, maybe this is why you can't give me what I need or can't help me understand it. My flesh is so in control of everything. You know what it does? It brings your prayer back to your bosom as a reproach.

➤ We have Three Infirmities

You're told, if you remember Romans 8:26, that we as Christians have three infirmities. Let me ask you a question before I get there. If you go to the doctor next week and get your checkup, he comes back and he says, "Well, I got some bad news for you. You have cancer or some other terrible disease." What would your first prayer to God be? Would your first prayer to God as you're walking down those steps and you got that news, would your first prayer to God be, "Oh God, do something. Oh God, I don't want cancer. Oh God, you know, please God, please. I'm sorry for whatever I did that You gave me cancer." Would that be your first prayer, or would your first prayer be, "God, use it however You need to use it in my life. You made the sacrifice for me. I'm willing to make the sacrifice for You." Whichever one you would say, that's your defining moment. **The Three Infirmities:**

- 1.) We don't know how to pray.
- 2.) Your flesh will always try to control you. (Romans 6:19)
- 3.) You forget God and what He's done. (Psalms 77:10)

## ➤ Prayer Must Start with the Right Source

**See, prayer has never been about changing God's mind but rather putting me in God's mind to accept what He's doing.** To be able to understand, to be able to see God's hand in my life, not to change it. Now maybe He will, and maybe He won't. I'm okay either way. Back in the Old Testament tabernacle, prayer will be represented for us by the burning of incense. You had seven pieces of furniture back there. Two of them had to do with prayer: the altar of incense and the censer. This is where the Bible says we don't know how to pray. You see this in Numbers 26, Exodus 27, Leviticus 16. That incense, it's a picture of prayer. It had to be lit with fire. It had to come off of the fire outside the tent from the brazen altar. Now that brazen altar is a picture of Christ dying on the cross. They took the coals off that brazen altar, the crucifixion, brought it in and ignited the incense that was a picture of your prayer life and my prayer life.

You'll find back in the Old Testament, Aaron's sons, Leviticus 10:1, these two boys went in to light the incense on the temple, and they got fire someplace else. They didn't get it off the brazen altar. They got the fire someplace else, and God killed them because they initiated prayer with the wrong source. Oh man, this place just got as quiet as a turkey farm day after Thanksgiving. It must start off the brazen altar. **Your prayer, whatever it may be, has to start not with what you're going through, but what He went through.** Then you put it into the context of what you're going through. Right there today, out the window goes 99% of God's people's prayers. They're offering strange fire.

## IX. Summary

You know what? When you just set one day a year that you celebrate the resurrection, or one day a year that you celebrate His birth, you'll forget about it the other 360-some days of the year. You know why I don't preach an Easter message about the resurrection? Because the resurrection should be on your mind every day of your life, 24/7. His death on the cross and His resurrection ought to be the starting point of every prayer that you offer to God. Before you start telling God what you want, what you need, and what He should do, you'd better stop and think of the price that God paid for you and start your prayer with are you willing to pay that same price for Him?

All prayer must start with God's sacrifice for you. Psalm 77, remembering what He did, the absolute importance of our never-losing sight of God's sacrifice for us. Through our willingness to sacrifice for God, whatever it is, and in fasting with prayer through the humbling and the chastising of your soul, bringing your prayer back to your bosom, your heart, bring it back to your reproach, showing us how weak we really are to get our flesh out of the way. Not that God will answer it, but the fact that God will put us on the same level of let *this mind be in you, which was also in Christ Jesus* to see and understand what God is doing. Our prayer through fasting will come back to our hearts. Fasting will bring you and me to the end of self, not to get the prayer that you want, but to let God be God in your life, to do what He wants to do with your life. He became a sacrifice for you. The question is are you willing to be a sacrifice for Him? That will be your defining moment. But it all starts with the cross. It all starts with what He did for you and me. My prayer and the burning of my incense that goes up to the nostrils of God, that fire must come off the brazen altar.