

Are You Coasting into the Kingdom?

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Back in the mid 1980's when I was single, I was the Head of the local congregation's singles and young adults and planned many of the activities. At the time, we had around 1,800 members in the Houston area, and we had a vibrant group of single men and women, numbering around 150.

Every summer, we would plan a canoe trip down the Guadalupe River at New Braunfels, Texas near San Antonio. We did this trip for about six years in a row. In five of those six years, we rented canoes, and we all had a great time padding and steering the canoes. In a canoe and with paddles, we could steer and navigate the rapids and go where we wanted to go. In some cases, with enough paddling and effort, we could even paddle back upstream, because for most of the trip, the current wasn't that strong and the water was just lumbering along and not moving very fast.

But one summer in the late 1980's, instead of renting canoes, we rented innertubes and went tubing down the Guadalupe River. Tubing down a lumbering river is very relaxing. In fact, many other groups were also tubing down the Guadalupe River that Sunday morning. Most of the tubers also had a floatable cooler full of beer tied to their innertubes.

The experience floating down the Guadalupe River in an innertube is entirely different to in a canoe. First of all, we did not have a paddle. Second, we were just sitting in the innertube with part of our bodies actually in the water. When we went tubing, we were totally at the mercy of the current in the river. We could steer a little by putting our hands in the water, but not too effectively. We just sat back, relaxed, and let the flow of the current take us downstream. We put forth no effort like we did when we were paddling in our canoes.

Brethren, there is a spiritual counterpart in our spiritual lives to floating downstream in an innertube, just letting the current take us at the speed and direction of the river flow.

A good friend of mine recently told me that he had had a conversation with a friend of his in another church. His friend made the comment that he had the understanding and the truth that he needed, and that he just needed to coast from here on out toward the Kingdom.

Today, brethren, in my sermon entitled "Are You Coasting Toward the Kingdom?", I want to discuss the subject of our journey toward the Kingdom and whether we are striving with great vigor and energy, becoming more and more like our elder brother, Jesus Christ, or whether we are coasting toward the Kingdom, putting forth minimal effort in a slow easy

journey. How we make this journey is crucial, because one way will lead us to the Kingdom and our eternal salvation and the other way will lead us to another destination. I would like to explore this important subject through four points.

Are You Coasting into the Kingdom

The first point concerning the subject of our journey to the Kingdom is:

1. There is no easy way to our Father's Kingdom

Brethren, the truth of the matter is that we have never been promised by our Heavenly Father or by Jesus the Anointed One that the way to the Kingdom would be easy.

In Acts 14, we will a record of the subject message of the preaching of Paul and Barnabas in Asia Minor, and that they taught that there is no easy way to the Kingdom.

Acts 14:21 *And when they [Paul and Barnabas] had preached the gospel to that city, and had taught many, they returned again to Lystra, and to Iconium, and Antioch,
22) Confirming the souls of the disciples, and exhorting them to continue in the faith, and that we must through much tribulation enter into the kingdom of God.*
(KJV)

So, brethren, we must endure much tribulation (not just a little here and there), but much tribulation on our individual journeys to our Father's Kingdom.

In Matthew 7. Jesus commanded us to enter through the strait or small gate. The world enters through the wide and easy gate which leads to destruction and not to the Kingdom.

Matthew 7:13 *Enter ye in at the strait gate: for wide is the gate, and broad is the way, that leadeth to destruction, and many there be which go in thereat:
14) Because strait [small] is the gate, and narrow is the way, which leadeth unto life, and few there be that find it.* (KJV)

So, brethren, we are to enter through the narrow gate which is much harder to pass through than the wide-open, easy gate. Jesus warned His disciples (which includes us today) that we will have to endure persecution, because Jesus Himself endured wrongful persecution.

John 15:18 *If the world hate you, ye know that it hated me before it hated you.*

19) *If ye were of the world, the world would love his own: but because ye are not of the world, but I have chosen you out of the world, therefore the world hateth you.*

20) *Remember the word that I said unto you, The servant is not greater than his lord. If they have persecuted me, they will also persecute you; if they have kept my saying, they will keep yours also.*

21) *But all these things will they do unto you for my name's sake, because they know not him that sent me. (KJV)*

So, we will have to endure persecution! Do we really believe that?

As we explored in my last sermon, our calling of “Lekh akharai – Come after me – Follow me” is one of complete and total surrender to our Heavenly Father and to His Son.

Mark 8:34 *And when he had called the people unto him with his disciples also, he said unto them, Whosoever will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow me [Lekh akharai – come after me – follow me].*

35) *For whosoever will save his life shall lose it; but whosoever shall lose his life for my sake and the gospel's, the same shall save it. (KJV)*

Brethren, are we willing to lose our lives in order to ultimately save them by entering our Heavenly Father’s Kingdom? In Matthew 10 Jesus foretold and warned His disciples that He did not come to send peace but to send a sword.

Matthew 10:34 *Think not that I am come to send peace on earth: I came not to send peace, but a sword.*

35) *For I am come to set a man at variance against his father, and the daughter against her mother, and the daughter in law against her mother in law.*

36) *And a man's foes shall be they of his own household.*

37) *He that loveth father or mother more than me is not worthy of me: and he that loveth son or daughter more than me is not worthy of me.*

38) *And he that taketh not his cross, and followeth after me, is not worthy of me. He that findeth his life shall lose it: and he that loseth his life for my sake shall find it.” (Luke 9:23) (KJV)*

Jesus warned us that our path toward the Kingdom will not be easy. It will be filled with trials, tribulations, disagreements, and deprivations. Should we and do we except otherwise?

In 1 Peter 4. The Apostle Peter addresses this concept of a difficult journey toward the Kingdom.

1 Peter 4:12 *Beloved, think it not strange concerning the fiery trial which is to try you, as though some strange thing happened unto you:*

13) But rejoice, inasmuch as ye are partakers of Christ's sufferings; that, when his glory shall be revealed, ye may be glad also with exceeding joy. (KJV)

Brethren, are we surprised when we undergo trials or tests or suffering for righteousness' sake? We all want an easy life, an easy path, a comfortable path. Our Heavenly Father never promised us that. The easy path is not part of our calling and of our unconditional agreement to follow God Our Father and His Son. So, when we face fiery trials and tests, when we are suffering wrongly, when we are enduring sickness and disease and discomfort, when we are enduring seemingly endless hardships and pain in our lives, let us not be surprised! Again and again, we are warned that there is no easy way to our Heavenly Father's Kingdom.

The second point concerning the subject of our journey to the Kingdom:

2. We are being judged on what effort we are putting forth

Brethren, how much effort are we putting forth into our spiritual lives? How much effort do we undertake in our prayers to our Heavenly Father, in our daily Bible study, in our meditation on the topics that we've been studying? A good friend of mine recently stated that he's had to listen to sermons sometimes two or three times to understand the message. My answer to him was "What's wrong with that?" Why not listen to sermons two or three or four times to glean the depth of the messages that have been prepared?

The historical culture of the Churches of God has been one of passive complacency. We attend services, listen to the messages, fellowship, and then go home to live another week of life. In the past, the grand majority of the church membership never listened to a sermon more than one or twice. The culture in the past was one of not digging into the Bible, but reading prepared "proofs" of doctrines in booklets and publications instead of studying deeply into the scriptures ourselves.

If we do not understand a concept in a sermon, do we just let that concept go by unexamined any further in our studies? How deeply are we interested in more deeply understanding Biblical concepts and doctrinal proofs? Are we tired of learning? Are we tired of growing? Or do we adopt a culture and practice of coasting with the knowledge that we already have? We have a warning from the Apostle Peter concerning our judgment.

1 Peter 4:17 *For the time is come that judgment must begin at the house of God: and if it first begin at us, what shall the end be of them that obey not the gospel of God? (KJV)*

Brethren, our judgment is on us now. Our Heavenly Father has called us to Jesus, His Son, His Anointed One. Each of us, individually, responded to and accepted that calling,

and all that comes with it. We are being judged now on how well we fulfill our responsibilities in our own personal lives. Do we develop a close personal relationship with our Heavenly Father and with Jesus Christ, to overcome our sins and faults and weaknesses? Do we follow and imitate our Lord Jesus Christ by following closely in His footsteps? Do we develop more and more of the character of God Our Father and Jesus Christ and show that character in the way that we treat one another?

We will read a parable that Jesus gave in Matthew 25 concerning the three men and the talents or money that were given to them by their master.

Matthew 25:14 *For the kingdom of heaven is as a man travelling into a far country, who called his own servants, and delivered unto them his goods.*

15) And unto one he gave five talents, to another two, and to another one; to every man according to his several ability; and straightway took his journey.

16) Then he that had received the five talents went and traded with the same, and made them other five talents.

17) And likewise he that had received two, he also gained other two.

18) But he that had received one went and digged in the earth, and hid his lord's money. 19) After a long time the lord of those servants cometh, and reckoneth with them.

20) And so he that had received five talents came and brought other five talents, saying, Lord, thou deliveredst unto me five talents: behold, I have gained beside them five talents more.

21) His lord said unto him, Well done, thou good and faithful servant: thou hast been faithful over a few things, I will make thee ruler over many things: enter thou into the joy of thy lord.)

22) He also that had received two talents came and said, Lord, thou deliveredst unto me two talents: behold, I have gained two other talents beside them.

23) His lord said unto him, Well done, good and faithful servant; thou hast been faithful over a few things, I will make thee ruler over many things: enter thou into the joy of thy lord.

24) Then he which had received the one talent came and said, Lord, I knew thee that thou art an hard man, reaping where thou hast not sown, and gathering where thou hast not strawed:

25) And I was afraid, and went and hid thy talent in the earth: lo, there thou hast that is thine.

26) His lord answered and said unto him, Thou wicked and slothful servant, thou knewest that I reap where I sowed not, and gather where I have not strawed:

27) Thou oughtest therefore to have put my money to the exchangers, and then at my coming I should have received mine own with usury.

28) Take therefore the talent from him, and give it unto him which hath ten talents.

29) For unto every one that hath shall be given, and he shall have abundance: but from him that hath not shall be taken away even that which he hath.

30) And cast ye the unprofitable servant into outer darkness: there shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth. (KJV)

In this parable, the first two men returned a 100% increase to their master from the original investment given to them by their master. They put forth effort, and they worked hard. However, the third man did nothing. He coasted. He didn't even put the money in the bank to draw interest. He put forth no effort. There was no growth, no increase, and no return on the investment. The third man was useless to the master.

In Matthew 11 there is a very difficult and misunderstood verse.

Matthew 11:11 *Verily I say unto you, among them that are born of women there hath not risen a greater than John the Baptist: notwithstanding he that is least in the kingdom of heaven is greater than he.*

12) And from the days of John the Baptist until now the kingdom of heaven suffereth violence, and the violent take it by force. (KJV)

To begin to understand the verse, let's review the time frame. Jesus said this in a discourse concerning John the Baptist to a multitude which had gathered around Him. So, this was said during the first year of Jesus' ministry. Thus, from the days of John the Baptist to "now" was at most only a year or two, depending on how long John the Baptist had been preaching.

Secondly, the Greek verb translated as *suffers violence* is βιάζω – *biázo* Strong's 971 which, according to HELPS Word-Studies, means "to advance forcefully." This verb is used only twice in the New Testament, and both of these occurrences are for the same account in Matthew 11:12 and Luke 16:16, and both occurrences have a positive, not negative connotation in the Greek.

The word for *violent* in the last part of verse 12 is βιαστής -- *biastés* Strong's 973 which is a noun form of the verb βιάζω – *biázo*. This noun means "one who has positive assertiveness or forcefulness."

So, Matthew 11:12 could be better translated as:

And from the days of John the Baptist until now, the Kingdom of Heaven has been advancing forcefully, and forceful people are claiming it.

This verse shows that, as the called-out ones" of our Heavenly Father, we must be forceful in claiming our Father's Kingdom. This takes force. This takes effort. This takes work and dedication. This is not coasting. This is not drifting. This is not resting. This definitely is not relaxing and being content in where we are.

In Jeremiah 29 Yehovah is talking about the Jews returning to Jerusalem after 70 years in captivity by the Babylonians and the Medes and Persians.

Jeremiah 29:13 [Yehovah, our Heavenly Father, says:] *And ye shall seek me, and find me, when ye shall search for me with all your heart.* (KJV)

Brethren, seeking and searching for our Heavenly Father with all of our heart, and soul, and might takes effort. Are we willing daily to put for that effort, always striving, always searching, and always being on guard? Or, brethren, do we coast?

It appears to me that, for many in the Churches of God, keeping the Sabbath, attending services, being involved with the Church, etc. have devolved into a ritual that is just repeated week after week after week. The truth becomes “old hat” and spiritual life just becomes a repetitive set of actions. Little effort is needed to just keep the status quo, to hang on unto the end, to coast to the finish line at the Kingdom. It is important that we remember that we are being judged on what effort we are putting forth in our spiritual lives.

The third point concerning the subject of our journey to the Kingdom:

3. There is no collective salvation

There are examples in the Bible of collective physical salvation. A primary example of collective physical salvation is the nation of Israel, where God Our Father miraculously and definitively physically saved the Israelites from their slavery in Egypt and during their years of wandering in the wilderness.

However, brethren, there is no such thing as collective spiritual salvation. Spiritual salvation comes through a personal and individual relationship with our Heavenly Father and not through being part of a collective association or collective group. There is no secret handshake. There is no secret Church badge or Church robe that we can wear which gives us entry into our Father’s Kingdom.

The Apostle Paul discusses the work that God Our Father is performing in us and through us and that He will see that work is completed in us.

Philippians 1:3 *I thank my God upon every remembrance of you,
4) Always in every prayer of mine for you all making request with joy,
5) For your fellowship in the gospel from the first day until now;
6) Being confident of this very thing, that he which hath begun a good work in you will perform it until the day of Jesus Christ:* (KJV)

We know from John 6:44 that it is God Our Father who draws us to Jesus and begins that good work in us—and work takes effort.

Again, spiritual salvation is a very private and personal matter. Our spiritual salvation depends on our individual relationship with our Heavenly Father and with Jesus Christ.

Our spiritual salvation does not depend on someone else's relationship with God our Father. There are no coat tails on which we enter the Kingdom. Ultimately, we are being judged on what we do or don't do and not on what other people do or don't do. They themselves will be judged for what they do or don't do.

Philippians 2:12 *Wherefore, my beloved, as ye have always obeyed, not as in my presence only, but now much more in my absence, work out your own salvation with fear and trembling.* (KJV)

The Greek verb for *work out* is *κατεργάζομαι* *katergazomai* Strong's #2716 which means "to effect by labor, to achieve, to work out, to bring about, to do that from which something results." So, we are to labor and to work out to bring about our own salvation. Our salvation is a personal and individual work which we work out and bring about with our personal and individual relationship with God Our Father and Jesus Christ. We cannot earn our salvation. Salvation is a gift from our Heavenly Father. But we must do our part, we must put forth effort, and we must respond to our Father's will and do our Father's will.

Paul continues this concept of individual salvation and the individuality of that salvation.

Galatians 6:4 *But let every man prove his own work, and then shall he have rejoicing in himself alone, and not in another.*
5) For every man shall bear his own burden. (KJV)

Brethren, each of us must prove his or her own work and each of us will bear his or her own burden. This, in the end, is individual-based and not collective-based.

In Revelation 22, we read of a prophecy about Jesus Christ and of what will happen at His return and at the First Resurrection.

Revelation 22:12 *And, behold, I come quickly; and my reward is with me, to give every man according as his work shall be.* (KJV)

Again, Jesus Christ is coming with our reward, and He will give every man according as his work shall be. This is not a collective reward for collective work. This is a personal and individual reward for personal and individual work.

From Matthew 25, let's make reference to and summarize the Parable of the Talents, which we read previously. It is important to note four significant points in this parable:

a) Verse 15 shows that the talents were given out individually and not given out collectively. Different amounts of talents were given individually to the servants.

b) Verses 16 through 18 show that the talents were used and were increased individually by the individual servants. They did not pool their talents together in some sort of partnership.

c) Verses 20 through 30 show that the rewards for the individual efforts of the servants were given by the Master to each individual servant. The rewards were not collective in nature.

d) Verse 28 shows that the one talent which was given to the wicked and slothful servant was taken away from him. The Master did not ask the other servants to collectively give any talents to the slothful servant to add to his one talent. In fact, the opposite occurred. Verse 28 shows that the one talent that the slothful servant had was to be taken away from him and given to the servant who had ten talents. How different is that approach from the thinking of the world today where everyone receives a participation medal! In fact, the slothful servant was punished, and he did not enter into the Kingdom, the joy of his Lord.

Brethren, there is no collectivization of group actions, group attitudes, group obedience, group righteousness which count toward an individual's personal spiritual salvation.

In the beginning of this same chapter of Matthew 25, we will read another very well-known parable that Jesus Christ taught to His disciples – The Parable of the Ten Virgins.

Matthew 25:1 *Then shall the kingdom of heaven be likened unto ten virgins, which took their lamps, and went forth to meet the bridegroom.*

2) *And five of them were wise, and five were foolish*

3) *They that were foolish took their lamps, and took no oil with them:*

4) *But the wise took oil in their vessels with their lamps.*

5) *While the bridegroom tarried, they all slumbered and slept.*

6) *And at midnight there was a cry made, Behold, the bridegroom cometh; go ye out to meet him.*

7) *Then all those virgins arose, and trimmed their lamps.*

8) *And the foolish said unto the wise, Give us of your oil; for our lamps are gone out.*

9) *But the wise answered, saying, Not so; lest there be not enough for us and you: but go ye rather to them that sell, and buy for yourselves.*

10) *And while they went to buy, the bridegroom came; and they that were ready went in with him to the marriage: and the door was shut.*

11) *Afterward came also the other virgins, saying, Lord, Lord, open to us.*

12) *But he answered and said, Verily I say unto you, I know you not.*

13) *Watch therefore, for ye know neither the day nor the hour wherein the Son of man cometh. (KJV)*

This parable demonstratively shows the individuality of our spiritual salvation. Note that in verse 8 there is no collectivization and sharing of oil for those who did not have any oil. What was the answer that the five wise virgins gave to them? Verse 9 states: "Not so, lest

there not be enough for us and you.” The five wise virgins understood what was at stake and were concerned that they may not have enough for themselves if they gave any oil to the five foolish virgins. Again, there was no pooling of resources so that all could achieve the goal. Each of the virgins was judged on an individual basis. The five wise virgins had enough oil and were allowed into the wedding. But the door was forever closed to the five foolish virgins. Collective resources could not save what they individually had not done.

In Exodus 20 our Heavenly Father gave the Israelites the Ten Commandments.

Exodus 20:2 *I am the LORD thy God, which have brought thee out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of bondage.*

3) *Thou shalt have no other gods before me.*

continuing in verse 4)

4) *Thou shalt not make unto thee any graven image.*

5) *Thou shalt not bow down thyself to them, nor serve them:*

Continuing in verse 7

7) *Thou shalt not take the name of the LORD thy God in vain;*

8) *Remember the sabbath day, to keep it holy.*

Continuing in verse 12

12) *Honour thy father and thy mother: that thy days may be long upon the land which the LORD thy God giveth thee.*

13) *Thou shalt not kill.*

14) *Thou shalt not commit adultery.*

15) *Thou shalt not steal.*

16) *Thou shalt not bear false witness against thy neighbour.*

17) *Thou shalt not covet ... (KJV)*

An interesting and important observation about the Ten Commandments is that the King James Version uses the word “Thou” in each of these commandments. The pronoun “thou” in Old English was just the singular form of “you”, just like in most other languages which have a singular “you” and a plural “you”. Many centuries ago, the singular form “thou” was dropped and the plural form “you” was adopted for both singular and plural in English.

Just as in the majority of other languages, the Hebrew language has a singular form of “you” which is different than the plural form of “you”. Of importance is that the Ten Commandments were written using the singular form of “you” in the Hebrew.

Therefore, when God Our Father was writing the Ten Commandments, He was addressing each and every single Israelite individually and personally, not to the Nation

of Israel as a whole. This agreement was between Yehovah and each and every single Israelite.

Similarly, the Nation of Israel itself was not circumcised. All the individual males of Israel comprising the nation of Israel were circumcised individually. As a spiritual counterpart, the Church itself was not baptized. All of the called-out members comprising the called-out ones of our Heavenly Father were baptized individually. Our relationship with our Heavenly Father is a personal and individual relationship. We do not enter our Father's Kingdom because we belong to a certain church. Wearing a church robe of this church or that church is not a "Get into the Kingdom Free" card. No one enters the Kingdom on someone else's coattails. It just doesn't work that way. Our spiritual salvation is personal and individual. There is no such thing as collective spiritual salvation.

The fourth point concerning the subject of our journey to the Kingdom:

4. Our calling is not an entitlement

Brethren, we live in a world and society which has an attitude of entitlement. During the past decade, more and more people are feeling entitled. They feel that society owes them something, or that the government owes them something. The historical American can-do attitude and self-reliant mindset has been transformed into a lackadaisical, dependent mindset which does not have the will to struggle to get ahead in life.

This lackadaisical and entitled attitude can invade our spiritual lives as well. Please turn with me to Revelation 3, and we will read a very well-known description and warning about an attitude which we can have as members of the called-out flock.

Revelation 3:14 *And unto the angel of the church of the Laodiceans write; These things saith the Amen, the faithful and true witness, the beginning of the creation of God;*

15) I know thy works, that thou art neither cold nor hot: I would thou wert cold or hot.

16) So then because thou art lukewarm, and neither cold nor hot, I will spue thee out of my mouth.

17) Because thou sayest, I am rich, and increased with goods, and have need of nothing; and knowest not that thou art wretched, and miserable, and poor, and blind, and naked:

18) I counsel thee to buy of me gold tried in the fire, that thou mayest be rich; and white raiment, that thou mayest be clothed, and that the shame of thy nakedness do not appear; and anoint thine eyes with eyesalve, that thou mayest see.

19) As many as I love, I rebuke and chasten: be zealous therefore, and repent.
(KJV)

The members in Laodicea were complacent, haughty, and spiritually lazy. They felt that they had it made. They were called by God Our Father. They felt that they were special, too special for their own spiritual health. They felt entitled. They were coasting. It was their spiritual downfall which had to be repented of in order to enter the Kingdom and receive salvation.

Brethren, do we ever find ourselves saying to ourselves—I am spiritually rich and increased with spiritual goods, and have need of nothing? Are we lukewarm in our spiritual lives? Do we feel entitled to receive salvation from our Heavenly Father? When people begin to feel entitled, they usually become very judgmental toward others. Nothing seems to satisfy them. Entitled people do not have proper vision and they exhibit blindness about themselves while they criticize and judge others. Jesus warned us about this condition.

Matthew 7:1 *Judge not, that ye be not judged*

2) *For with what judgment ye judge, ye shall be judged: and with what measure ye mete, it shall be measured to you again.*

3) *“And why beholdest thou the mote that is in thy brother's eye, but considerest not the beam that is in thine own eye?*

4) *Or how wilt thou say to thy brother, Let me pull out the mote out of thine eye; and, behold, a beam is in thine own eye?*

5) *Thou hypocrite, first cast out the beam out of thine own eye; and then shalt thou see clearly to cast out the mote out of thy brother's eye. (KJV)*

Please turn with me to 2 Corinthians 10. Incorrectly judging others leads to comparing ourselves with others. Nothing good comes from that. The Apostle Paul warned the Corinthian congregation concerning comparing ourselves among ourselves.

2 Corinthians 10:12 *Oh, don't worry; we wouldn't dare say that we are as wonderful as these other men who tell you how important they are! But they are only comparing themselves with each other, using themselves as the standard of measurement. How ignorant!*

13) *We will not boast about things done outside our area of authority. We will boast only about what has happened within the boundaries of the work God has given us, which includes our working with you.*

14) *We are not reaching beyond these boundaries when we claim authority over you, as if we had never visited you. For we were the first to travel all the way to Corinth with the Good News of Christ.*

15) *Nor do we boast and claim credit for the work someone else has done. Instead, we hope that your faith will grow so that the boundaries of our work among you will be extended.*

16) *Then we will be able to go and preach the Good News in other places far beyond you, where no one else is working. Then there will be no question of our boasting about work done in someone else's territory.*

17) *As the Scriptures say, “If you want to boast, boast only about the Lord [Kurios – Jehovah – God Our Father].”*

18) When people commend themselves, it doesn't count for much. The important thing is for the Lord to commend them. (NLT)

Verse 17 is a quote from Jeremiah 9:24 concerning Yehovah.

Brethren, we need to imitate Jesus and to be covered in His dust as we've explored in a previous sermon. Please turn with me to Philippians 2. Jesus gave up all His "entitlements" that He had had at the right hand of the Father to come to this earth as a humble human to die for us all. Paul wrote about this in Philippians 2.

Philippians 2:5 *Let this mind be in you, which was also in Christ Jesus:*

6) Who, being in the form of God, thought it not robbery to be equal with God:

7) But made himself of no reputation, and took upon him the form of a servant, and was made in the likeness of men:

8) And being found in fashion as a man, he humbled himself, and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross. (KJV)

Jesus' example is not one of entitlement. On the contrary, He left us a wonderful example of perfect obedience to His Father's Law and perfect humility before His Father. How closely do we live our lives daily following His perfect example?

In the temptation of Jesus by Satan, Satan tested Jesus in His entitlement. Let's read this in Matthew 4 starting in verse 5.

Matthew 4:5 *Then the devil taketh him [Jesus] up into the holy city, and setteth him on a pinnacle of the temple,*

6) And saith unto him, If thou be the Son of God, cast thyself down: for it is written, He shall give his angels charge concerning thee: and in their hands they shall bear thee up, lest at any time thou dash thy foot against a stone

7) Jesus said unto him, It is written again, Thou shalt not tempt the Lord [Κύριος – Kurios without the "the" – Yehovah – God Our Father] thy God. (KJV)

Jesus had divine protection during His life and ministry until it was time for Him to suffer and die. Jesus knew this, and Satan knew this. Satan tempted Jesus with this knowledge to treat the protection as an entitlement and to treat that protection flippantly. Jesus countered Satan by quoting Deuteronomy 6:16 – "*You shall not tempt Yehovah – God Our Father.*"

Brethren, our Heavenly Father has called us out of this world and is working with us. We are very special to Him, and He wants to be very special to us. But brethren, do we find ourselves acting as if this calling is an entitlement not needing to strive or to overcome? Do we find ourselves feeling so entitled that we start thinking – "Well, God will understand if I sin." or "I'm so special and I'm in a special category where God will always just discount my sin."?

Our calling is not an entitlement not to progress, not to strive to overcome, and not to take our calling seriously. We read an exhortation and a warning from the Apostle Peter concerning our calling.

2 Peter 1:10 *Wherefore the rather, brethren, give diligence to make your calling and election sure: for if ye do these things, ye shall never fall:
11) For so an entrance shall be ministered unto you abundantly into the everlasting kingdom of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. (KJV)*

Brethren, are we being ever diligent in making our calling and election sure? Or do we begin to feel that as called-out ones by the Father, that He owes us salvation and that our salvation is just “in the bag”? All we have to do is hold on and coast. On the contrary, our calling is not an entitlement.

In today’s sermon, we have discussed four points concerning our journey toward our Heavenly Father’s Kingdom.

1. There is no easy way to our Father’s Kingdom. Our journey toward the Kingdom is not the broad easy way. It is the difficult narrow way, full of trials, tests, and suffering. We are just kidding ourselves if we truly believe that we are on an easy path toward the Kingdom. Our Heavenly Father has to know that we will be like Him and like His Son before He gives us eternal life in His Kingdom. That is His goal and that is His desire. If we have a wonderful physical life, but we don’t enter His Kingdom, what has been accomplished? Coasting is taking the easy path.
2. We are being judged on what effort we are putting forth. Are we putting forth the effort to overcome our sins, to deepen our relationship with our Heavenly Father and His Son? Studying more and more to understand more about God Our Father and Jesus Christ? Reflecting their love in the way that we conduct our lives each and every day and in the way that we treat one another? Coasting does not take any effort.
3. There is no collective salvation. Just belonging to a Church organization does not give us an automatic entrance into the Father’s Kingdom. Our spiritual salvation is based on and judged on our individual efforts, our individual relationships with our Heavenly Father and His Son, and our individual progress toward the Kingdom. There is no progress in coasting.
4. Our calling is not an entitlement. Our calling does not entitle us not to progress in our spiritual lives. Are we developing an entitlement mentality in our spiritual lives? Are we becoming judgmental of others? Are we comparing ourselves with one another or with others in other groups and organizations? Feeling entitled leads to a feeling of contentment with who we are, and it leads to coasting which will not lead us to the Kingdom.

Brethren, where are we on our journey toward the Kingdom? Are we rowing hard and exerting effort each and every day to draw closer and closer toward the Kingdom and to our Heavenly Father? Or do we find ourselves coasting and even drifting downstream and away from the very Kingdom we want to enter?

As I do in many of my sermons, I leave you today with a very crucial spiritual question for you to contemplate and consider: "Are you coasting toward the Kingdom?"