

Road Signs

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Most of us, at least in the U.S. here, when we were growing up and when we got to our teen years, one of the first things we wanted to do was drive. In the U.S. we can legally get a permit when we're 15 but we have to be with an adult to supervise and make sure we're safe. Then at 16 we can get a license. Country kids here—we grew up in the hills of Southeast Washington and most of us learned to drive on all the dirt roads all over the desert. In high school then we had Driver's Ed and of course that was one of our favorite classes. It was so much better than History or English Composition. The point is that whenever we learn to drive the first thing we can think of is the independence—I can drive! I can get out on my own!

Going back to when we first learned to drive. One of the first things we learn in class and hopefully, if an adult is teaching us, is how to identify the rules of the road. Those are depicted in the road signs. We have speed limit signs but the most important ones are the warning signs we have. I'm not sure about other countries but in the U.S. the background color for a warning is yellow with black letters or symbols. Danger is a red background, for stop signs. There would be something on there telling us what the danger is or what we need to be cautious about. For example, we have a lot of signs around now, especially in the Tri-Cities, for round-a-bouts. We'll have a warning sign that a round-a-bout is coming up. We should have another one that says "Stop Texting". I say that because that's evidenced here because of all the car parts—the broken lenses, the bumpers; bumpers aren't steel anymore, they are plastic. So you see all that stuff lying around the round-a-bouts. We've had one here that is especially bad. It's seemed like it has taken us a long time—Americans aren't used to round-a-bouts, other countries are. We've been to different places like Australia where they drive on the wrong side of the road.

When I was in the navy, most of the traffic in foreign countries is just chaos and you go along with it and hope to survive from point A to point B. One thing they do here to make us feel better about the round-a-bout, usually in the center they will have a sculpture of some kind. Sometimes they put big boulders to keep people from driving across the middle of the round-a-bout. We have a few metal sculptures here and I always think how many actual state workers did they have to lay off to pay that artist to build that thing. Then I wonder why they don't just go to a scrap yard and build a sculpture out of some fenders, a couple of steering wheels, some hood ornaments and all that. That would be kind of neat.

One of the common ones that we'll see—getting to the point where we should pay attention when we see these warnings—is seeing a sign that says "Dead End". If you have your foot on the accelerator and are doing 70 miles an hour, you should probably let off the gas. Or there might be another warning sign that says "Bridge Out—Grand Canyon dead ahead". You might really want to pay attention to that one. We have an intersection—no humor in this one—near our home at a very busy cross street with two stop signs with a warning below the stop sign that says CROSS

TRAFFIC DOES NOT STOP. Tragically, there was a lady killed there, she blew right through that stop sign and was killed.

My title for today is:

Road Signs

I'm using that metaphorically of course in the things I'm going to talk about. I picked Road Signs as a catchy title—it seems like some of the titles lately (I won't look at where these titles are coming from) are longer than my introductions. Where did I get that idea about warning signs? If you would, turn to Matthew 16 because Christ is talking to His disciples and by extension to us too. Mathew 16:5-12 and I'm using the New King James.

Matthew 16:5 *Now when His disciples had come to the other side, they had forgotten to take bread. [We're familiar with this incident.]*

6) *Then Jesus said to them, "Take heed and beware of the leaven of the Pharisees and the Sadducees."* (NKJV)

He's warning them. Remember that word *beware* because it's used three times in this particular section.

7) *And they reasoned among themselves, saying, "It is because we have taken no bread."*

8) *But Jesus, being aware of it, said to them, "O you of little faith, why do you reason among yourselves because you have brought no bread?"*

9) *Do you not yet understand, or remember the five loaves of the five thousand and how many baskets you took up?*

10) *Nor the seven loaves of the four thousand and how many large baskets you took up?*

11) *How is it you do not understand that I did not speak to you concerning bread? —but to beware of the leaven of the Pharisees and Sadducees."*

12) *Then they understood that He did not tell them to beware [third time that word is used] of the leaven of bread, but of the doctrine [or the teaching, especially the hypocritical behavior] of the Pharisees and Sadducees. (NKJV)*

For my points today—I'm only going to use three—I would like to hone in on that one word, *beware*. It's used three times and if you like the index numbers it's, #4337. It's not a complicated Greek word; it means "to take heed, pay attention, be cautious". Just like the warning signs that we all learn when we first begin to drive. We have to be alert. We can think of it in that way.

So I'm going to address three points that are built around that single word, *beware*, which means "to pay attention, be cautious, take heed". The whole idea is a warning implied. I am using the road signs metaphorically. To qualify these three points I'm going to use, I would like to say right off that we can't really characterize them per se as leaven or sin, but they are areas that are loaded with pitfalls where we could easily fall into sin. I'm going to try and articulate whether they are good or bad just by their nature as we get into them.

I think most of us can agree that when we were converted and we started on this path that God called us to, we developed kind of a spiritual radar. I don't know if that works for everybody else the same as it has for me. What I mean by that is, when we get in certain situations or circumstances, God's Spirit helps us to register that something is wrong. We get a ping or blip on our radar. For example, you're going down the road and something causes you to react in a negative way—a traffic offense—but God's Holy Spirit comes into play and says, "You have to put a damper on what you're thinking now. What you're about to say, what you're about to do and how you're about to react".

You don't want to do something you're going to regret and have to repent of. All of these points are kind of like that; they seem innocuous on the surface. When we are put in different situations where we have to make a choice, hopefully we do that in a way that will please God—not to disappoint the Father—we don't want to do that. Remember we need to be aware and heed the warnings in these areas and points that I'm going to discuss.

We can easily get distracted spiritually and before you know it, we can be in trouble and not even realize it. In the example I told you about with the lady who was killed at the intersection close to our home, the "STOP" sign was clearly marked that she blew through—no one knows what she was thinking—but it took only a second or two to get distracted and she lost her life. She was 65 years old—we learned that later from a news article. I was hoping she wasn't someone who had just retired, looking forward to the rest of her life and got killed.

1. Beware of compromise.

I know we've heard full sermons about compromise—compromising this and that and how that all happens. The standard definition of *compromise* just means it's a settlement of differences where each side makes concessions. Basically, a combination of one or the other or both giving in, sort of an in between with whatever issue there might be between people. In that sense, compromise can be a good thing. In many ways it can be a good thing. You think about marriage—without compromise you're going to have a lot of problems in marriage. We're going on 60 years of compromising. I mean that in a right way. We have brethren who have unconverted mates and that's a real challenge for them in their lives, in their marriage. It can be very challenging keeping the peace. You can't always have your way. There's a whole host of problems keeping the peace—we see that in and out of the church. James says, *where is all this fighting and quarreling coming from?* He's talking to the church—there's no peace there.

The spiritual area in our lives is where compromising pitfalls leading to sin can come into play—it can happen to us. I'm obviously talking about circumstances in our lives where there is pressure on us to compromise our beliefs and values. The principles that we all agreed to live by when we came up out of that water at baptism—we agreed to follow everything that God told us. Especially those principles and things, that if violated, can keep us out of God's Kingdom. We don't compromise those. In those cases, compromise is not good—it doesn't work, we don't want to do that.

I can't relate to everybody else, only my own experience. When you talk about the pressure to compromise your beliefs, I spent the last 25 years of my life working for a very large corporation—we had like 1800 employees—and I counted that up just doing simple math and that's 1300 Sabbaths. They worked some weekends; it was a nuclear power plant so they run 24/7, 365 days, they don't stop for anything and they expect the employees to work whenever they wanted them to. Then I added up the Holy Days and there are roughly 14 a year—give or take, depending if a Holy Day falls on the Sabbath. So that makes the total about 1650 days. If my math is off, someone can call me on it. The point is, many times during all of those years, when you had to stand your ground on your beliefs, you get pressure. "You can fudge just a little bit, can't you?" "Just work a couple hours into the Sabbath?" "Do you really have to go on your vacation at this time of the year?" That was just the 25 years there. I had 20 years before that where I worked construction and I dealt with the same thing. I never added those up, all the various contractors I worked for. You talk about pressure, when you are working for a contractor, there's no give and take with those folks. If they want you to work, they expect you to be there. Lots of opportunity to compromise.

We're supposed to have freedom of religion from the Civil Rights law of 1964. But employers will circumvent that in any way they think they can get away with it, and trust me, it happens all the time. Although sometimes, after a while depending on if you are a good employee or a bad employee, they just give up and relent and they give you the times off you ask for. Obviously if we obey God, keep God's Holy Days, the Sabbath too but especially the Holy Days because they fall during the week, if you do that in a respectful, non-offensive way, then you can do it. In a right way is what I'm trying to say. It got to be in the corporation I worked for, every year they would ask me where I was going on my vacation that year because that's when I take my long vacation. I would come back and they would ask me how my trip was, how was my flight to Australia, or Fiji, or the Caribbean or wherever I happened to go that year. You can do that in a right way. The point being, the pressure is there all the time.

We have a number of Bible examples where compromise comes into play. There's a really good one in Daniel, we don't need to turn there. You remember when Daniel and his friends were taken captive—3 friends so there were 4 of them all together—taken captive by Nebuchadnezzar? Nebuchadnezzar told his chief guy—I like the way the New Living says *the chief of staff*—he was the boss man. Daniel did not want to defile himself with the food from the king's table. Evidently it was really bad. When I read that account in Daniel, you know what I think of? I think of one of those Indiana Jones movies. I can't remember which one it was, but it was where Indy and his companions were taken captive and they were being served a meal at this table and the food was brought out in platters with a cover on it and they pull the cover off and one of them was monkey brains. The head was still there with the top cut off. Another was "eyeball" soup and another was bugs—that's what I think of. It must have been really gross for Daniel. I'm sure God intervened on his behalf because they reached a compromise and they were given a vegetarian diet and so they were able to get around it. It was a good one in that case.

Later on, what happened? When it comes to bowing down to the golden image that Nebuchadnezzar made, they refused. Nebuchadnezzar even tried to give them an out. But they wouldn't take it, they said

“No, we will now bow down to that image, no matter what you do.”

They put their lives on the line. No, idol worship is a big one. That's a first commandment—no other gods. That is quite an example to me when you think about that. There's a compromise—a workable one and sometimes we do that. That's just people skills, that's all that is. There are other cases where you simply stand your ground and do not compromise. You don't negotiate or bargain it away.

I would like to turn to Deuteronomy 5 because God clearly says that He does not condone compromising His commands. Gordon talked about that in the sermonette. What happened to the Israelites? They wouldn't obey God and were even told not to be like the nations around them. That's what they wanted. We have the record of that. Deuteronomy 5:32-33 and again, God makes it clear that we are to obey Him. For these scriptures I'll be using the Literal Translation. Yehovah is directing Moses to command the Israelites before they go in and possess the land that He has promised to them.

Deuteronomy 5:32 *And you shall be careful; take heed to these words [He's warning them] to do as Yehovah your God has commanded you. You shall not turn aside to the right or the left. (LT)*

Gordon read similar scriptures to that and God repeated that many, many times to the Israelites.

33) You shall walk in all the ways ... (LT)

It means you can't pick and choose—people try to do that.

33 continued) ... which Yehovah your God has commanded you so that you may live and that good may be to you and you may prolong your days in the land you possess. (LT)

Over in Psalm 119, we know that entire Psalm is about obeying God. The longest scripture in the Bible actually. I'll be using the New Living Version for this one.

Psalm 119:1 *Joyful are people of integrity, who follow the instructions of the Lord.*

2) Joyful are those who obey his laws and search for him with all their hearts. [Not for ways around things, but for obedience.]

*3) They do not compromise [this translation uses the word *compromise*, I don't think it's in the King James] with evil, and they walk only in his paths. (NLT)*

We made that commitment whenever we left that broad way to follow God's path and it's a narrow path.

- 4) *You have charged us to keep your commandments carefully.*
5) *Oh, that my actions would consistently reflect your decrees!* (NLT)

That's a big one for most of us to be consistent throughout our lives with everything. We have our ups and downs, don't we?

- 6) *Then I will not be ashamed when I compare my life with your commands.*
(NLT)

We compare our lives to the way Christ lived, to follow the example that He left us.

- 7) *As I learn your righteous regulations, I will thank you by living as I should!*
8) *I will obey your decrees. Please don't give up on me!* (NLT)

Almost like the Psalmist knew that sometimes it gets hard—sometimes it does. When it comes to obeying God's laws and living by every word of God, we don't weaken when the pressure is on to compromise. We don't negotiate, bargain or compromise those principles. Of course, the temptation is always there, the tempter is always there. He is fanning the flames of that fire you could say. He uses every device he can, to get us to compromise just a little—a little here, a little there and pretty soon we are in trouble. That temptation is always there because of our human nature—it's wired into our DNA.

I was talking to Rick not too long ago about human nature. I guess it was believed at one time that Adam and Eve—the first two human beings—that human nature was neither good nor bad. We don't really know that. My thought is—just a theory—when Satan entered the picture and convinced Eve to obey God, something triggered the genome in man's genes and it got passed down to all of us because we all have it. Human beings are the only ones that have human nature. No other species on earth has it. We have a dog—we've always had dogs—and that dog has a dog nature. We're people, we have people nature, we have a human nature.

So that brings us to point 2.

2. Beware, pay attention, take heed to our own human nature.

It seems like sometimes our biggest problem is just being human. Sometimes it's just hard being flesh and blood human beings. It gets downright depressing at times. Just look at the suicide rate. No other species that I know of does that. I'm not suggesting that's any kind of a solution to anything. If someone is to that point in their life—that depressed—and I have suffered from clinical depression years ago when the church was breaking up. I had to learn some things. The point is, if someone is really depressed and having serious problems, they need professional help.

Another thing about human nature, people will say, "I just did this or that because I'm human and I can't help it". That has to be at the top of the list for excuses. Job did that. If you would, turn to Job 3. Job was lamenting in the throes of his suffering saying, "I wish I had never been born". Job 3:11, New King James.

Job 3:11 *Why did I not die at birth? Why did I not perish when I came from the womb? (NKJV)*

Over in Job 10:18, he's complaining to God. "Why have you made me thus, why have you made me a human being for all this misery?"

Job 10:18 *Why then have You brought me out of the womb? Oh, that I had perished and no eye had seen me!*

19) I would have been as though I had not been. I would have been carried from the womb to the grave. (NKJV)

He was obviously at a really low point in his life and his suffering. His human nature was telling him to just quit, throw in the towel, I want to die. I have heard this before unfortunately, sometimes people will even go so far in regard to human nature and say that God isn't fair. I wish they weren't standing so close to me when they accuse God of not being fair. What people are saying is, God wants so much from me and He gives me a nature that is counter to everything that He commands and wants—that's just not fair.

Over in Psalm 103, God knows what He's doing.

Psalm 103:13 *Like as a father pitieth his children, so the LORD pitieth them that fear him.*

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

I like the way the New Living puts this.

13) Jehovah is like a father to his children, tender and compassionate to those who fear Him.

14) For He knows how weak we are; He remembers we are only dust. (NLT)

We are only human, God knows that. So being human with the accompanying human nature is just a fact. In Psalm 139, you don't need to turn there, as a reference, David marveled at how intricately he was made as a human being. Somewhere in the DNA that human nature was part of that. We can't escape human nature; we are going to live with it our whole lives, we're going to die with it. Paul understood that, turn to Galatians 5 and look at it from Paul's point of view, this thing called human nature. From the New King James.

Galatians 5:1 *Stand fast therefore in the liberty by which Christ has made us free, and do not be entangled again with a yoke of bondage. (NKJV)*

In some translations, unfortunately mainstream Christianity tries to twist this into saying that the bondage is that battle of law. That was the bondage and has been done away.

2) Indeed I, Paul, say to you that if you become circumcised, Christ will profit you nothing.

3) And I testify again to every man who becomes circumcised that he is a debtor to keep the whole law.

4) *You have become estranged from Christ, you who attempt to be justified by law; you have fallen from grace. (NKJV)*

There's a problem in the Galatian church, if you go back to the first part of the chapter and it introduces that.

5) *For we through the Spirit eagerly wait for the hope of righteousness by faith.*

6) *For in Christ Jesus neither circumcision nor uncircumcision avails anything, but faith working through love.*

7) *You ran well. Who hindered you from obeying the truth?*

8) *This persuasion does not come from Him who calls you.*

9) *A little leaven leavens the whole lump. (NKJV)*

It creeps in; it can be a doctrine, a teacher, or whatever we run into. Pretty soon it corrupts everything just like the leaven does. It expands.

10) *I have confidence in you, in the Lord, that you will have no other mind; but he who troubles you shall bear his judgment, whoever he is. (NKJV)*

The scholars say that these are the Judaizers who were circulating around the early church insisting that circumcision was necessary for salvation.

11) *And I, brethren, if I still preach circumcision, [remember he was educated in Judaism, he was a Pharisee; he's saying he was a Pharisee of the Pharisees] why do I still suffer persecution? Then the offense of the cross has ceased.*

12) *I could wish that those who trouble you would even cut themselves off!*

13) *For you, brethren, have been called to liberty; only do not use liberty as an opportunity for the flesh, but through love serve one another. (NKJV)*

What is he saying? Using the word *flesh* is another way of saying "carnal, carnality—a self-serving human nature". It goes on to discuss that further in the context. He's saying whether to use the freedom you now have to serve others.

14) *For all the law is fulfilled in one word, even in this: "You shall love your neighbor as yourself." (NKJV)*

That's being quoted from Old Testament scriptures.

15) *But if you bite and devour one another, beware lest you be consumed by one another! (NKJV)*

You can destroy one another.

16) *I say then: Walk in the Spirit, and you shall not fulfill the lust of the flesh. (NKJV)*

The pull of the human nature if you will. There's a problem and a solution right there in one sentence.

17) For the flesh lusts against the Spirit, and the Spirit against the flesh; and these are contrary to one another, so that you do not do the things that you wish. (NKJV)

Paul has talked about that struggle with human nature over in Romans 7.

18) But if you are led by the Spirit, you are not under the law. (NKJV)

Then he gets into what he's driving at.

*19) Now the works of the flesh are evident, [this is how it operates] which are: adultery, fornication, uncleanness, lewdness,
20) idolatry, sorcery, hatred, contentions, jealousies, outbursts of wrath ... (NKJV)*

When we look around in today's world, don't we see that all the time. You talk about wrath, it seems like human emotions in this age have two settings, one is anger and the other one is rage. During the pandemic, maybe a year or so, I went into a local hospital and I've been in that hospital 100 times where you can just walk in. In fact, I think I was going in to see someone and during the pandemic they had security right there as you walked in the door with a sign that said, "No aggressive behavior or foul language will be tolerated". I've never seen that before. Evidently, where you enter the hospital is right by the ER and it was just full. That's where we are as a society. Satan is behind that of course. He is an angry being and is behind all of that.

*20 continued) ... selfish ambitions, dissensions, heresies,
21) envy, murders, drunkenness, revelries, and the like; of which I tell you beforehand, just as I also told you in time past, that those who practice such things [in other words, lead a carnal life] will not inherit the kingdom of God.
22) But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, longsuffering, kindness, goodness, faithfulness,
23) gentleness, self-control. Against such there is no law. (NKJV)*

Another translation for *self-control* is "self-restraint". I know we have a responsibility to do that with God's Holy Spirit. I like the way one commentator put it in regards to human nature. It says we aren't responsible for having it. God wired it in and there is a purpose to that. We are responsible for the activities of that human nature. In other words, we are to exercise self-control and restraint. When we have those things crop up and our human nature—usually anger—flares, hopefully God's Holy Spirit says: "You better check that, you better put a damper on that and stop that. You better dial it back".

I don't know about you but I run into that a lot.

*24) And those who are Christ's have crucified the flesh with its passions and desires.
25) If we live in the Spirit, let us also walk in the Spirit. (NKJV)*

Be led by it; that's the key, not being solely led by our human nature. We can be if we allow ourselves to be. This might sound like a weird analogy. We bought a car a couple years ago—a Subaru Legacy and that thing has more gadgets, push buttons, a touch screen and 1000 little things it does, “bells and whistles”. The thing has two forward facing cameras and lane control. In fact, when I took the car home, the salesman tossed me the keys and said to go show it to your wife and tell me what you think. I drove almost 20 miles from the dealership to our home and this thing kept correcting me and I'm fighting the steering wheel. This thing is reading the lines and trying to keep me in the center of the lane. It was a maddening thing. The dealer finally showed me how to turn that off because it can drive you crazy. Then it has cruise control on it that will pace the car in front of you. I'll get a heads-up display on the windshield that tells me there is something in front of me. Hopefully it's a car and not a moose or a cow. It will pace that so if I have my cruise control set for 70 mph on the freeway and I come up on a car that is doing 60 and my car will slow down and pace that car in front of me. It has proximity sensors everywhere. 360 in a horizontal plane and I think at least 180 in the vertical plane. No low flying aircraft have come by and set off an alarm. It won't let you back into anything, it will put on the brakes. It has some kind of an AI—for older folks here that is Artificial Intelligence. The point I'm trying to make with that silly analogy is, our human nature is built the same way; it has a built-in function. Christ is steering you, driving you, where you don't want to go. That's just a fact—it's wired in and we can't escape it. Yes, Satan exploits that as a common human weakness anywhere he can and he has a million ways to do that.

Satan takes no prisoners. Back in the 4-mast spilling days of 200 years ago, piracy was a common thing on the high seas. When a pirate ship came on a merchant ship, which is very common too—even today 90-95% of all goods are transported on the water—in the old days a pirate ship would target a merchant ship and they would run up a black flag. That was to tell a crew on a merchant ship that if they didn't fight, if they surrendered, the crew would survive. You might be talking about 100+ crew members on that vessel. If they decided to fight, the pirate ship would run up a red flag and that meant no quarter—no survivors, everyone is going to die. Satan is like that; he always runs under a red flag. His purpose is always to kill and destroy. Remember the reference scripture in John 10:10 where it says the thief—that represents Satan and his minions—does not come except to steal, take away salvation from you and to kill and destroy, to take away your eternal life. Christ said,

I have come that they might have life and have it more abundantly.

Not to kill and steal, but to give it. That's what Satan does, he always kills. He will use that human nature. Going to point 3.

3. Another thing to pay attention to and be aware of is worldliness.

I know we have heard full sermons about worldliness before and actually scripture is full of that. You talk about beware and paying attention figuratively, this point could be loaded with warning signs. Getting back to the road signs and talking about an abundance of signs, we are a camping family and one of our favorite spots is in the Cascade Mountains which is west of Tri-Cities. Tri-Cities is mostly desert and we have hills, sage brush, jack rabbits, coyote, tumble weeds but when we start up into

those mountains we come to a two-lane road. About every mile there is a warning sign. There's a sign that says "Curves Ahead" and even "Some Hair-pin Curves". If you aren't paying attention and not watching those warning signs, if you're looking around, you might eat a guardrail, if you don't slow down. That's what those signs are telling you. If you're lucky you will hit a guardrail, if you're not lucky you might find yourself in the bottom of a canyon, upside down in a rocky river—that could happen.

Worldliness is kind of like that. It has all kinds of danger lurking and we need to be careful and take heed. Again, Gordon mentioned in the sermonette that the Israelites insisted on being absorbed into the countries and the nations around them with all of their idolatry, all their pagan things and they wouldn't stop doing that.

Just to digress a little bit, back to the observance of the Holy Days, you know we review yearly the Holy Days as picturing God's plan. We rehearse that every year and have done that again this year. We begin that process—picturing that plan of salvation that God shows in his Holy Days—in the first Holy Day season, the Passover and the days of Unleavened Bread we find all of that knowledge in Leviticus and Deuteronomy. The point to this wonderful plan—sure we can't prove salvation just from the Holy Days—but we do know they connect the dots. We won't turn there again but we find a fantastic prophecy in the book of Daniel where that rock—referring to Christ—grows into a huge mountain and that rock destroys all the kingdoms, Satan's systems of the world and takes over the entirety of the earth. This is the Father and Christ's future worldwide rule over the whole planet. Before all that, when all those great prophecies are fulfilled (we don't talk a lot about prophecy in Pacific but we realize we're there, we see the evidence of the things around us) we are here, the ecclesia, the called ones, a little flock that is stuck living in Satan's world. We rehearse at the Passover. Every Passover that I've ever done or sat in. Jesus prayed to the Father and told Him that, while we His people are in the world, we are not of the world. My wife and I were talking about that this morning. He prayed to the Father that He would keep us from the evil one; it's Satan's world. I have a reference scripture for this, 1 John 5:19. This is from the New Living.

1 John 5:19 *We know that we are children of God and that the world around us is under the control of the evil one.* (NLT)

And boy, isn't it? We see more and more of this society and how decadent it's becoming. It seems like we are striving for more godless things we can think of and incorporate into our society. Later on in scripture, we are admonished to come out of Babylon, that was created by Nimrod at the tower of Babel. That same Babylon is going to be around at the end times, as it says in Revelation and we are to come out of that Babylon. We're not to be partakers of their sins. Instead, we are to be obedient to God. That's why we continually harp on and learn that during these days, to remove the leavening and sin out of our lives. Coming back to the point of worldliness.

The Bible has a lot to say about this thing called *worldliness*. It gives us warnings about the pitfalls associated with worldliness. Because of the time I am only scratching the surface. The dictionary definition of *worldly* is, "relating to or devoting to the temporal world". It's pretty simple. It's a condition of being concerned with worldly affairs, especially to the neglect of spiritual things. The Bible has a great deal

to say about it, none of it good. In Mark 4, there's a familiar parable that Jesus gave His disciples and us too, to learn from. The parable of the sower. I'm not going to read the whole thing; I'm going to drop down where he explains the parable to the disciples.

Mark 4:15 *The seed that fell on the footpath represents those who hear the message, only to have Satan come at once and take it away. (NLT)*

There he is, he's always there. He never gives up and he's always the killer.

16) *The seed on the rocky soil represents those who hear the message and immediately receive it with joy.*

17) *But since they don't have deep roots, they don't last long. They fall away as soon as they have problems or are persecuted for believing God's word.*

18) *The seed that fell among the thorns represents others who hear God's word,*

19) *but all too quickly the message is crowded [choked some translations say] out by the worries of this life, the lure of wealth, and the desire for other things, so no fruit is produced. [No spiritual fruit]. (NLT)*

Over in 1 Corinthians 3, Paul warns us of the dangers of looking to worldly wisdom rather than looking to God. I'll be using the New Living again. The context we know, the Corinthian church is struggling, looking to and relying on wise leaders, thinking they had all the answers to get them into God's Kingdom. We still see that today.

1 Corinthians 3:18 *Stop deceiving yourselves. If you think you are wise by this world's standards [which they are measuring themselves by], you need to become a fool to be truly wise.*

19) *For the wisdom of this world is foolishness to God. As the Scriptures say, "He traps the wise in the snare of their own cleverness." [He is quoting Job 5:13]*

20) *And again, "The Lord knows the thoughts of the wise; he knows they are worthless." [He's quoting Psalm 94:11]*

21) *So don't boast about following a particular human leader. For everything belongs to you—*

22) *whether Paul or Apollos or Peter, or the world, or life and death, or the present and the future. Everything belongs to you,*

23) *and you belong to Christ, and Christ belongs to God. (NLT)*

Over in James 4, it continues this thought. I'll be reading James 4:1-8 again from the New Living.

James 4:1 *What is causing the quarrels and fights among you? Don't they come from the evil desires at war within you?*

2) *You want what you don't have, so you scheme and kill to get it. You are jealous of what others have, but you can't get it, so you fight and wage war to take it away from them. Yet you don't have what you want because you don't ask God for it.*

3) *And even when you ask, you don't get it because your motives are all wrong—you want only what will give you pleasure. [Compromising, human nature, desire, self-satisfaction, it's all there]*

4) *You adulterers! Don't you realize that friendship with the world makes you an enemy of God? I say it again: If you want to be a friend of the world, you make yourself an enemy of God.*

5) *Do you think the Scriptures have no meaning? They say that God is passionate that the spirit he has placed within us should be faithful to him.*

6) *And he gives grace generously. As the Scriptures say, "God opposes the proud but gives grace to the humble." (NLT)*

Isn't human vanity and pride the root of so many problems, both in and out of the church.

7) *So humble yourselves before God. Resist the devil, and he will flee from you. (NLT)*

We see that repeated in other places too. The devil, he is always there. I think it was a year or two back, Rick used that Essay from Paul Harvey—"If I Were the Devil"—I had a transcript of that many years ago. I won't quote the whole thing but I would like to requote the last paragraph; it fits so well with what James is saying here. Breaking in on that—you can find it online if you look it up. You can even find that sermon if you look on the website. Just put in the search field, Paul Harvey.

If I were the devil, I would convince the young that marriage is old fashioned, that swinging is more fun, that what you see on TV is the way to be [you could add the whole entertainment industry] and thus I could address you in public and lure you into bed with diseases for which there is no cure. In other words, if I were the devil, I would just keep on doing what he's doing.

58 years ago, as Rick pointed out. Six decades and look how far we've come or how low we've sunk. We've declined under Satan's way. Finishing up with verse 8.

8) *Come close to God, and God will come close to you. Wash your hands, you sinners; purify your hearts, for your loyalty is divided between God and the world. (NLT)*

Isn't that true—too many want it both ways. I recently came across a term that I wasn't familiar with before. Sometimes I'll look at things in the main stream Christian world; you can learn some things. I know some people avoid that and think everything is evil and they do have some things. They have some pretty savvy, smart people. The term I came across was "Cultural Christianity". I don't know if anyone is familiar with that but you can look into that. I don't want to get too far into that, it's a whole sermon by itself. I just want to quote an excerpt from that article that kind of describes this condition. That's a real concern in mainstream Christianity among the pastors because even they see the dangers and damage of people trying to be Christian and still be worldly in so many ways. A pastor is speaking:

There is little question in my mind in the community in which I live we have been much more concerned with making the gospel relevant to our lifestyle

than we have making our lives relevant to the gospel. Instead, we develop elaborate rationalization to support our disobedience, doing what the world does and out of this emerges cultural Christianity. Applications of Jesus which undergird and support our basic greed for lust and comfort. The accumulation of wealth, mostly for our own security, becomes a sacred creed. We spend an overwhelming proportion of our time, energy, and money mostly satisfying our own needs and desires and praise God for His preferential treatment of us. ["We're Christian, look at us, look at this big cross I have on."] We lead the world in the production and sales of weapons of destruction throughout the world and call ourselves a nation under God. These are the marks of cultural Christianity, the adaption of the gospel to our way of life.

The whole of that article is quite interesting because it tells us about a bunch of sign posts, if you will—it points them out. We live in a society that's degrading, we are in decline, there is no doubt about that. We have a couple of prophetic warnings about a degraded church coming down to our day that should scare the daylights out of us. I would like to quote two warnings, one from Paul and one from Jesus. Paul's is in 2 Timothy 3:1, again from the NLT. It's interesting the way the NLT puts this in a little clearer English for us modern thinkers.

2 Timothy 3:1 *You should know this, [that phrase know this carries the same meaning as beware, pay attention, take heed] Timothy, that in the last days there will be very difficult times. (NLT)*

We've heard that many, many times. It's usually presented as talking about the world. That's not the context of what Paul is telling Timothy here. He's warning about a situation in the church. He's telling them about the state of the church that reflects the state of the world that the church finds itself in.

2) For people will love only themselves and their money. They will be boastful and proud, scoffing at God, disobedient to their parents, and ungrateful. They will consider nothing sacred.

3) They will be unloving and unforgiving; they will slander others and have no self-control. They will be cruel and hate what is good.

4) They will betray their friends ... (NLT)

You see an echo there of Matthew 24:10—*many will be offended and betray one another and hate one another*, is what Christ said.

4 continued) ... be reckless, be puffed up with pride, [full of sin and leaven] and love pleasure rather than God.

5) They will act religious, but they will reject the power that could make them godly. Stay away from people like that! (NLT)

Over in Revelation 3 is a warning about worldly religion from Christ. Again, I'm using the NLT.

Revelation 3:14 *Write this letter to the angel of the church in Laodicea. This is the message from the one who is the Amen—the faithful and true witness, the beginning[e] of God's new creation:*

15) *I know all the things you do, that you are neither hot nor cold. I wish that you were one or the other!*

16) *But since you are like lukewarm water, neither hot nor cold, I will spit you out of my mouth!*

17) *You say, 'I am rich. I have everything I want. I don't need a thing!' And you don't realize that you are wretched and miserable and poor and blind and naked. (NLT)*

It seems like he's addressing a church—a degraded church. Kind of like what Paul indicated would happen in the latter times. Wallowing in worldliness, seems to have no bottom to the lows our society will go to and if we're not careful it will take us right along with it.

18) *So I advise you to buy gold from me—gold that has been purified by fire. Then you will be rich. Also buy white garments from me so you will not be shamed by your nakedness, and ointment for your eyes so you will be able to see. (NLT)*

That is talking about a dire need for Godly character—what the goal represents in the church.

19) *I correct and discipline everyone I love. So be diligent and turn from your indifference. (NLT)*

That indifference is brought on by being enmeshed in the world.

20) *Look! I stand at the door and knock. If you hear my voice and open the door, I will come in, and we will share a meal together as friends. (NLT)*

It's interesting that the picture is the image of Christ outside the church and presumably the Father too. The church is trying to operate on its own.

21) *Those who are victorious will sit with me on my throne, just as I was victorious and sat with my Father on his throne.*

22) *"Anyone with ears to hear must listen to the Spirit and understand what he is saying to the churches." (NLT)*

There are many more scriptures about worldliness and I could go on but for a lack of time. As we close out the spring Holy Days—this Holy Day season, the 50th for us—we reviewed in the messages and our own personal study, meditation, and prayer, the importance ridding ourselves of that ever-present leaven and sin that Paul said so easily besets us. And it does. In all these ways I talked about and maybe many, many more.

One of the best questions we can meditate on as we go forward is a simple one: Can I do better? Can I do better in the things that tend to compromise the principles and values that God gives me to live by? Can I do better in regards to my human nature? It's inherent, I can't escape it, it's there and present, it's there when I wake up and when I go to bed and there again when I get up the next morning. Does that drive me

in the way I conduct myself and live? Do I have control of it with God's Holy Spirit? Can I do better? Can I do better as I function and do my part in the world? Christ prayed to the Father that we wouldn't be taken out of the world, we have to live in it. We get some of its problems, we get affected by it. But can I do better in that? Do I let it overcome me? Or do I overcome it and its satanic influences, because they are everywhere? Satan is a killer. Do I reject the values of the world and embrace God's values and allow Christ to live in me? Can I do better in those things?

In closing here, there's an appropriate passage I would like to turn in Hebrews 12. Hebrews 12:1-17, we know that the previous chapter talks about people who survived, sometimes through horrible things. I'll be using the New Living

Hebrews 12:1 *Therefore, since we are surrounded by such a huge crowd of witnesses to the life of faith, let us strip off every weight that slows us down, especially the sin that so easily trips us up. [New King James says ensnares, traps, pitfalls—everything we're warned about] And let us run with endurance the race God has set before us.*

2) *We do this by keeping our eyes on Jesus, the champion who initiates and perfects our faith. Because of the joy awaiting him, he endured the cross, disregarding its shame. Now he is seated in the place of honor beside God's throne.*

3) *Think of all the hostility he endured from sinful people; then you won't become weary and give up.*

4) *After all, you have not yet given your lives in your struggle against sin.*

5) *And have you forgotten the encouraging words God spoke to you as his children? He said, "My child, don't make light of the Lord's discipline, and don't give up when he corrects you.*

6) *For the Lord disciplines those he loves, and he punishes each one he accepts as his child."*

7) *As you endure this divine discipline, remember that God is treating you as his own children. Who ever heard of a child who is never disciplined by its father?*

8) *If God doesn't discipline you as he does all of his children, it means that you are illegitimate and are not really his children at all.*

9) *Since we respected our earthly fathers who disciplined us, shouldn't we submit even more to the discipline of the Father of our spirits, and live forever? (NLT)*

Part of that discipline is what? Heeding the warnings that God gives us throughout His Word.

10) *For our earthly fathers disciplined us for a few years, doing the best they knew how. But God's discipline is always good for us, so that we might share in his holiness*

11) *No discipline is enjoyable while it is happening—it's painful! But afterward there will be a peaceful harvest of right living for those who are trained in this way.*

12) *So take a new grip with your tired hands and strengthen your weak knees.*

13) *Mark out a straight path for your feet so that those who are weak and lame will not fall but become strong.*

14) Work at living in peace with everyone, and work at living a holy life, for those who are not holy will not see the Lord.

15) Look after each other so that none of you fails to receive the grace of God. Watch out that no poisonous root of bitterness grows up to trouble you, corrupting many. (NLT)

In verse 16 he quotes an example of a person.

16) Make sure that no one is immoral or godless like Esau, who traded his birthright as the firstborn son for a single meal. (NLT)

If you've been following along, it shouldn't be lost on us, the story of Esau. That story embodies all the things we talked about. He compromised everything—his birthright—he threw away his inheritance. He could have been Israel. Of course, God didn't want it that way and worked all of that out. He satiated his carnal appetite and traded everything for a bowl of soup; all for a temporal existence—just for the now.

17) You know that afterward, when he wanted his father's blessing, he was rejected. It was too late for repentance, even though he begged with bitter tears. (NLT)

So, on top of all that, what did he do? A classic example of worldly sorrow. He was sorry, just not towards God. That wasn't genuine repentance. The scripture about that, just for a reference is 2 Corinthians 7:10.

As we go forward let's strive to let Christ live more and more in our lives. Let's just do that and ask ourselves, can we do better in that? Heed the warnings—can we heed the warnings and be more careful and cautious? The Father and Son give us those warnings in a loving and merciful way; we don't deserve that. Let's not be like Esau, he was rejected, but let us live so we will be welcomed into God's Kingdom.