

What therefore God hath joined together

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For anyone who has attended a wedding in any of our churches, it's very probable you will have heard these words pronounced at the end of the marriage ceremony, "Therefore, what God hath joined together let not man put asunder." They're found here in Matthew's gospel chapter 19 and also in Mark's gospel chapter 10 and verse number 9. I want us to look for a few moments at the context of this verse and it's interesting to note in these verses and in particular in verses number 4 through verse number 6, the Lord declares some foundational truths regarding marriage.

You will notice that at the end of verse number 2, "great multitudes followed him and he healed them." There had been a time of great blessing as the Lord had entered into that area. There had been a time of great healing. Lives have been changed. Souls have been transformed by the Lord Jesus Christ and yet in the midst of blessing, there were those who wanted to hinder the work of God. Yes, it was a time of great blessing, a time of great moving of the Lord, yet there were those that wanted to hinder the work and that's where we read in verse number 3, "The Pharisees came or also came unto him, tempting him." They came tempting him. It was the religious men of that day, the so-called leaders, spiritual leaders of the nation that came to the Lord Jesus Christ. They wanted to tempt him. They were testing and scrutinizing him and their desire was to prove that he was not the Son of God.

Have you ever stopped to ask the question, why were these religious men so taken up with trying to catch the Savior out, as it were, trying to trick him into saying something where they could accuse him and make accusation against him? What was their motive? Well, I believe it was because their teachings did not correlate with his. The teachings that the Lord Jesus Christ was proclaiming were much different from the teachings that they were proclaiming and in scripture, several times we read of them coming together in a group and trying to catch the Lord out with some question that they had concocted. You see, if what the Savior was teaching was true, then their teaching was false. If the Lord was right, then these men were wrong.

Now we do know of at least two Pharisees who came and put their faith and trust in the Lord Jesus Christ as their Savior; of course, Nicodemus and Saul of Tarsus later known as the Apostle Paul. But it appears that the majority of the Pharisees, certainly during the time of Christ's ministry, were against him. You see, we read verses such as Matthew chapter 12:14, "then the Pharisees went out and held a council against him, how they might destroy him." And that word "destroy" in the original has the idea of destroying fully, causing to perish, causing to put to death. They want to get rid of Christ. They didn't want to tolerate him. They wanted him out of their land.

We read in Mark 3 verse 6, "and the Pharisees went forth and straightway took counsel with the Herodians against him, how they might destroy him." Read further in Mark's gospel, chapter 11, verse 8, "and the scribes and the chief priests heard it, and they sought how they might destroy him, for they feared him because all the people was astonished at his doctrine."

One final verse, I just want to lay before you, Luke 11:53, "and as he said these things unto them, the scribes and the Pharisees began to urge him vehemently, and to provoke him to speak of many things, laying wait for him and seeking to catch something out of his mouth that they might accuse him." That word, "accuse," it means to charge him with an offense, to charge him with an offense. Interestingly, that idea of laying wait for him was exactly what they were trying to do to Paul. If you remember, in the reading this morning in Acts chapter 25, verse 3, they were laying in wait for him. Why? To kill him. They wanted to get rid of him as well.

So rather than consider what the scripture was actually teaching and to see if the Lord was indeed the Messiah prophesied by the prophets of old, rather than seeking to investigate and genuinely come before the scriptures and see if the Lord truly was whom he claimed to be, they chose to declare him a fraud and get rid of him. You know, that reminds me of so many people today. They hate to hear of the Bible. They hate to hear of the gospel. They hate to hear of the Savior because if these things are true, if the gospel is true, if Christ is true, if this word is true, then they're wrong. But rather than come to the word of God and consider the word of God and the scriptures, they seek to try and get rid of the Savior, as it were, to close their ears to the word of God, to go away from anywhere where the gospel might be proclaimed. They will not listen to those who are Christians. They will not read the Bible. They will not even tolerate people expressing their faith. And there are people today, even in our province in Northern Ireland, and they're intolerant of churches expressing the teachings of scripture. We can see that. We see that the attack is on. We see that they want to bring laws to pass that would actually make it difficult or make it illegal for people to preach the whole counsel of God. That's an attack of hell. It's an attack of the devil.

We know people like this. The only time they enter in through the door of a church building is to a wedding or to a funeral, and they do so with great reluctance, with great rebellion, and with great irreverence, and I say to you, if that's you tonight, if you hate the things of God and you hate the gospel and you have no regard for the word of God or Christ the Savior, if you're not in agreement with him, and with his word, where he's

called you to repent from your sin and calling him for salvation, then you're in great danger tonight. You're at great peril tonight because you're a sinner in the bondage of your sin. You're separated from God by your sin. You are an enemy of God. Your death will result in your soul being lost in the torments of hell for all eternity. My friend, you can disagree with scripture, and that's exactly what the sinner is, someone who disagrees with God, someone who's in rebellion against God. You can do that, but it will cost you your soul in a lost eternity.

What did the Lord Jesus Christ do with those who did not believe on him? What did he do with those who did not agree with him? What did he do with those men who came to him this day trying to tempt him, trying to trip him up, trying to catch him out? What did he do? He turned them to the Bible. Look what it says in verse number 4, "he answered and said unto them, Have ye not read." Have ye not read? He turned them to the word of God, those powerful words, those living words. What is the Bible? It's a revelation of the message of God to his creation, to you and to me. It's God's message to man.

What can we learn from such a verse? Well, he said in this verse, "Have ye not read, that he which made them at the beginning made them male and female?" Well, we learn several things from this very short verse that the Lord Jesus Christ spoke unto them. First of all, we learn that the Lord Jesus Christ held Genesis and the early chapters of the book of Genesis to be scripture. He held it up to be scripture, to be true, to be the word of God. There are churches today throughout this world and they're so afraid of offending sinners that they've tried to change scripture to fit in with what society believes is true. There are people today and they will stand on pulpits and say, "Well, Genesis isn't literal. It's a poem, it's an allegory, it's a little story that people had that don't have the knowledge that we have today. You can forget about those chapters or you can interpret them in this way and that will fit in with what you believe." Friend, this word has been given, all scripture has been given by inspiration of God. This is the completed revelation of God to man. and it stands as a whole and it falls as a whole. You can't come and pick little bits of the Bible that suit you and leave the rest.

This is God's holy, living, inspired word and we see it happening today over province, over land. Oh, God is love and they take this little statement out of the word of God and they literally take every other verse of scripture and throw it away. "God is love and therefore that means I can do whatever I want and God smiles upon me." No, "God so loved the world that he gave his only begotten Son that whosoever believeth in him should not perish but have everlasting life." Friend, the God of scripture, the God of this Bible, your Creator does not smile upon the sins of his creation but he sent his Son to die as a substitute for sinners that you might be saved from your sin. The love of God delivers sinners from their sin, not smiling upon them as they engage in their sin and in their immorality.

Oh, the subtlety of the devil. Why are the opening chapters of the Bible under attack? Why are the first 11 chapters of Genesis so under attack today? Because if they're not true, there's no God. There's no such thing truly as right and wrong. There's no such thing as sin. There's no need of a Savior. And you see anybody who denies the opening verses

of scripture or the opening chapters of scripture, they're doing the very work of the devil, no matter what title they give to themselves. God is not the author of confusion. What God says, he means. Notice also it says, he made them in the beginning. God created man. That deals with every theory that's brought against the origin of life because God spoke and it was so.

Not only that, we see something else in this verse, God made them male and female. This is a declaration of our Creator. Now I know this idea that two genders, that there are two genders and that is evident from birth is being challenged today. People are offended whenever you express truth. But here is truth, God made them male and female and the sad reality is this, we are living in a society where there's more concern in the public arena about a person's gender than about their soul. Than about their soul and what people think about me and how people treat me rather than how God sees me and how I stand before a holy God. Friends, you can call yourself anything you want. You can label yourself to be anything you want. But if you're not saved tonight, you're a sinner before a holy God on a course to hell and you need to be saved. You need to be delivered from your sin.

And then we come to the first 5, "For this cause shall a man leave father and mother, and shall cleave to his wife: and they twain shall be one flesh?" There we deal with the confusion, so-called, around marriage. Marriage defined in scripture is a man leaving his father and mother and cleaving on to his wife. That's the matter and that we don't need to debate it. We don't need to discuss it. We declare what God says. You shall know the truth and the truth will set us free. Let's not get burdened down with nonsense going on in this world today. This is the truth of God's word.

"Wherefore they are no more twain, but one flesh." And here's our text tonight, "What therefore God hath joined together, let not man put asunder." And here we read, as I said, about the basis, the biblical basis of marriage. It's a union that's centered under God. God created marriage. Marriage speaks of God. The love of a husband as for his wife is a picture of the love of Christ for his bride. In fact, in the book of Ephesians, we are told that the husband is to love his wife as Christ loved the church and gave himself for it. The wife is to submit to her husband as the church ought to do so to their Lord and Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ. It's a marriage union, commanded by God and in this little text, it teaches us that what God has joined together, man is not to put asunder. In other words, no one ought to put their hand upon another person's marriage and divide it. There are times whenever people through temptation, through lust, through many things, seek to divide a marriage. Friend, that's wrong. It's very dangerous. And the basis of why it's dangerous is because God has joined the two together and for you to put your hand upon someone's marriage to create trouble, to create division, is for you to put your hand upon and to harm the work of God.

Individuals can do it. Our society is doing it as a whole, the entertainment industry, they present multiple marriages and loose living as something that's normal, something to laugh at, something that's entertaining. God has joined the man and the woman together. It is a great blessing from God, but it's gone to great attack today. We need to pray for our

marriages. We need to pray for the marriages of God's people. We need to pray for Christian homes. The devil doesn't care what he destroys or who he destroys. And we pray that Lord will bless the marriages, those that have been conducted recently in this congregation, those that are decades old, may the Lord protect them and strengthen them and use them as testimonies in this world even as living illustrations of the reality of the gospel of the Lord Jesus Christ.

But as I thought about this and a number of weeks ago I was looking at this passage, I considered that little statement, "what God hath joined together, let not man put asunder," and we use it in the context of marriage and rightly so because that's the context in which it's given. But do you know, whenever we think about that, marriage and the man and the woman are not the only things that God has joined together. There are things in scripture that God has joined together, that God has brought together, and I want us to think of four simple things tonight that the Lord has brought together and we dare not part, or we dare not separate, or we dare not put asunder, or we dare not try and interfere with.

Here are the things that I believe God has joined together. First of all, the word of God. The word of God has been joined together by the Lord. He's brought it together. What you hold in your hand is a revelation of God to man. The word of God is quick and is powerful and sharper than any two-edged sword. We read in 2 Timothy chapter 3 and verse number 16, these wonderful words, "All scripture is given by inspiration of God." All scripture. All scripture is given by inspiration of God. In Isaiah chapter 40, we read, "Should heaven and earth pass away, the word of the Lord shall stand forever." That means it shall abide, it shall endure, it shall remain. And God has given every word of scripture, sometimes he gave it through prophecy, sometimes it was a record of events by eyewitnesses, sometimes it was a revelation of events that had taken place, sometimes it was the very hand of God that wrote the words as with the giving of the Ten Commandments. We know in 2 Peter, holy men of God were moved by God. They were given the word by God. So what we have is a word from heaven given through the instrument of man, 40 men over a period of 1,500 years given the word that we hold in our hands today. There are no contradictions. There are no mistakes. And it all points toward the work of redemption, the work of the Savior upon the cross of Calvary shedding his blood to set men free from their sin.

It is an eternal word. It cannot be altered. It is God's word. God has given this to us and God has brought together a word that is necessary for our salvation and for our walking with him. It's good news. It's a message of salvation. It's a message of hope. It's a message of grace. It's healing for those who will heed and obey. It's precious. It's life-changing. It's the only message of salvation that we have in this world today. It is God's word and in 1 Peter chapter 1, if you want to turn there, because there's a very interesting statement about the word of God. 1 Peter chapter 1 and verse number 25, "But the word of the Lord endureth for ever. And this is the word which by the gospel is preached unto you." Friend, you hold in your hands tonight the gospel. It's by this word we receive the good news of eternal life through Jesus Christ, our Lord.

Do you know there are several times in scripture that there are warnings given for those who will seek to add to or take away from the word of God. Turn with me to Proverbs and the chapter number 30 and here we have the middle one, it's also Deuteronomy chapter 4 and verse number 2, also Revelation chapter 22, verses 18 and 19. But in Proverbs chapter 30, we read in verse number 5, "Every word of God is pure: he is a shield unto them that put their trust in him. Add thou not unto his words, lest he reprove thee, and thou be found a liar." What is this teaching us? It is teaching us that we do not seek to explain away truth. We do not apologize for truth. We do not dilute truth. We do not change truth.

Sin is still wrong and it's still dangerous today. God is still holy and just today and calls men to repent and turn from their sin. We will all stand before him. These are truths that we cannot add to or take away from. In fact, it says here "lest he reprove thee and thou be found a liar." Friend, there are those today and they've added to the word of God, some have taken away from the word of God and they're popular before men because it's an easy message to listen to because they've taken truth away but they're guilty of great wickedness before God because he will expose them as liars. He will expose him as liars and that's exactly what anyone is who takes away from the word of God or he adds to the word of God. Friend, we've been given a perfect word. We have been given a word. Praise God it was he that can save your soul and lead you in the paths of righteousness. And we dare not tamper with it. "What God has joined together, let not man put asunder."

Wasn't too long ago, we had a court case, did we not, against one of our churches. What was the offense? The word of God. The word of God. And friend, this is God's word and if it offends you, that's evidence of your sinful nature that needs to be changed because you need to heed this word that you might be saved. The second thing that God, I believe, has joined together in his word that we ought not to put asunder is faith and repentance. Turn with me to Mark chapter 1, Mark's gospel and the chapter number 1, and here in Mark's gospel chapter 1, we read of the first message that the Lord Jesus Christ preached in Mark's gospel. "Now after that," John, verse 14, "John was put in prison, Jesus came into Galilee, preaching the gospel of the kingdom of God, And saying, The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God is at hand: repent ye, and believe the gospel." Repent ye and believe the gospel. The very first message that Christ preached in the book of Mark was a message of repentance and a message of faith and you'll find that every other message in the scripture will speak of either repentance or faith and presupposes that the other is there also.

But here we have both the words used, "repent ye and believe the gospel." Now what is repentance? Repentance is not about feeling sorry. It's not a feeling. Repentance in its strict interpretation of the word is a change of mind. It's a change of direction. It's a change of behavior. Yes, we're grieved over our sin and that conviction and that grief may well lead to repentance, but that's what repentance is. We know many times a child will say, "Oh, I'm so sorry. I'm so sorry. I'm so sorry," and then go and do the same thing again. Not sorry for what they were doing, sorry they were caught. My friend, repentance is a change of mind, a change of direction, and a change of behavior. There is a change in

the lives of those who have been saved, who have turned from their sin and trusted in Christ.

What's belief? Well, belief is acting by faith upon truth. In other words, if you are going to believe the gospel, it's not just being in agreement with it because we know that the devils believe and tremble, but this is saving faith. This is saying, "I believe that Jesus saves and therefore I'm calling upon him to save me and calling on him to save you." That's what true faith is, it is action upon what you believe.

And friend, here the Lord Jesus Christ calls to repent and to believe. This has always been the message of the New Testament church. This has always been the message of the Old Testament dispensation. In Ezekiel chapter 33 verse 11, "As I live, saith the Lord, I have no pleasure in the death of the wicked, but that the wicked would turn from his ways and live. Turn ye, turn ye from your evil ways, for why will you die, O house of Israel?" The message is the same today. Dear sinner in this meeting, God's word calls you to turn. The message from heaven is to turn to repent from your sin. Change the direction you're traveling. Change the way you think about the things of God and the way you even think about yourself. Change your mind. Change your behavior. Repent ye therefore and be converted that your sins may be blotted out, Acts chapter 3, verse 19. And that word "be converted" could be translated "turn to God; flee to God."

Repent therefore and be converted. Turn from your sin and turn on to the Lord and the result is a blotting out of sin. And friend, if you've never turned from your sin, if you've have never repented of your sin, if you've have never trusted in the Lord Jesus Christ as your own personal Savior, then your sin is still before you. Your sin still marks you. Your sin is still recorded against you. God looks upon you and he sees the wickedness of your heart. He sees the sinfulness of your being and tonight he sees you as one who's estranged from him and on your way to a lost eternity.

You know, there's some people think, "If I just say a little prayer and ask the Lord to save me, I don't have to change anything," and they treat the gospel like some type of insurance policy. "I've said the prayer, but there was no change in my life." My Bible tells me that if any man be in Christ, he is a new creature, old things are passed away. Behold, all things are become new. Friend, if you're truly saved by the grace of God, there's going to be a change. There's going to be a change. And then we've others who they try and try to live the best life they can and try to clean up their life and try to turn away from their sin, but they never actually call on the Lord to save them. What do we need to do? We need to come humbly before God, acknowledging that we are sinners and we can do nothing to save our souls and praying that the Lord will save us from our sin and give us grace to live according to his word and walking in the direction that he calls us to go.

Faith and repentance are needed. Faith and repentance, that's the gospel. Repent and be converted. Believe or repent ye and believe the gospel. Then turn with me to Luke chapter 2. We've thought about the word of God. We've thought about faith and repentance. Then Luke's gospel chapter 2, and here we are in Bethlehem, in the fields, on

the night that the Lord Jesus Christ was born, and the shepherds have seen the angels, verse 10 says, "And the angel said unto them, Fear not: for, behold, I bring you good tidings of great joy, which shall be to all people. For unto you is born this day in the city of David a Saviour, which is Christ the Lord." And here we have our Savior, and our Lord, our Savior and our Lord, and as a true mark of a believer that having been saved from their sin, they make submission to Christ. They follow him. They obey him. Their desire is to serve him. Look what it says, our Savior. The word means deliver. It means Christ. It's from a word which means to deliver, to protect, to heal, to save, to make whole. And that's what the Lord does for us. Spiritually, we need to be delivered from the bondage of our sin. Oh, we need to be healed from the sickness of our sin. We need to be saved from the punishment of our sin. We need to be made whole because spiritually we are dead in trespasses and sin. We need to be made alive and Christ can do that and through his finished work on the cross of Calvary, he gives eternal life to those who believe but, friend, he is not just our Savior, the Bible says he is our Lord, and that word Lord means one who is supreme in authority, one who is master.

And this is such an important matter. This is a really important matter because if we are going to live a life that brings glory and honor to our Savior, we must obey him as our Lord. There is no division here. He is our Lord and our Savior. If you turn to 2 Peter chapter 3, you'll see the importance of this. 2 Peter, chapter 3 and verse number 18 and it says there, "But grow in grace, and in the knowledge of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ. To him be glory both now and for ever." Here's how important the matter is, as we worship him, we worship him as our Lord and our Savior. As we come to this word, we come to seek the will and the teachings of our Lord and Savior. As we pray, we pray to our Lord and to our Savior. How important it is that we are submissive to his will, that we are surrendered to his will, that of course says, there is no peace, no joy, no thrill like walking in his will. For me to live is Christ and to die is gain.

My friend, to submit to the will of God and to surrender to the lordship of Christ is to say, God knows best. His ways are perfect. My friend, that's what we need to do as the people of God. That's what we need to do, we need to go God's way. We need to obey his word. We need to obey his will. Sometimes people think, "Well, I'm saved. I can do what I want. I can go where I want. I can listen to whatever I want to listen to." Friend, they're going here, there and yonder and they're hearing all different types of teachings and doctrines and they're swept about with all the winds of doctrine. There's no stability in their life. Why? Because they have failed to surrender to the Lord in this matter. They failed to obey the Lord and what he has told them to do, forsake not the assembling of yourselves together. They go here, there and everywhere and they don't know what they believe or who they belong to.

Friend, if we obey the Lord, there's great blessing in our life. There's great stability in life. Grow in grace and in the knowledge. Friend, if we're going to grow in grace and in the knowledge, we must do so with Christ as our Savior and as our Lord. You see, if there's a matter in your life to which you're saying no to God tonight, there's a major problem. If there's something in your life that you're saying no to God and as a Christian, there's a major problem. God must be first. We must seek first the kingdom of God.

Oswald J. Smith gave an illustration of a preacher who was preaching one time along the lines of seek first the kingdom of God, put him first, surrender to him, and at the close of the service, he was approached by a young woman who was a Christian. She'd been greatly stirred. The tears were rolling down her face. "Why don't you yield," the preacher said. He knew she was holding something back. "Well, I'm afraid that if I yield it to the Lord, I'm afraid that if I went and obeyed him and gave him full control of every single aspect of my life, I'm afraid that he would cause me to leave the thing that I love, the job that I love, and he would send me to a place that I do not want to go to." How many Christians are like that, with this attitude, "You know, if I truly obey God in all aspects and I seek his will in every area of my life, I'll end up going somewhere I don't like to be in, or living somewhere I don't like to be in, doing something I don't want to do. I'll be miserable effectively." Friend, God's ways are the best ways. God's ways are perfect. God's ways are the blessed ways and you know what that preacher did? He turned that lady to Acts chapter 10, and you turn to Acts chapter 10, verse number 14, and he showed what what Peter said to the Lord in Acts chapter 10 verse number 14. Well, verse 13. "And there came a voice to him, Rise, Peter; kill, and eat. But Peter said, Not so, Lord." Not so lord. Is there someone tonight in our meeting, some believer and God has been speaking to you, God has been calling you, God has been commanding you, and your attitude has been to say, "Not so, Lord?" And the preacher said, it's impossible to use the word "Lord" after the words "not so." And he said, "I'm going to leave you with that verse and I want you to cross out either the words 'not so' and leave the word 'Lord,' or cross out the word 'Lord' and say 'not so.'" What a challenge. What a challenge, dear believers, the Lord working your life, calling you into a work, calling you to do something for him, laying someone upon your heart that he wants you to reach with the gospel and your attitude has been, "Not so, Lord." The reality is you're saying not so. May tonight you be given grace to say the word Lord. And that lady struggled for two hours in that hall and then he heard the tears and the sobs and he came over to her and he looked over her shoulder and he saw a tear-stained page and the words "not so" were crossed out and the word "Lord" was left. "Lord, I will." That night, she honored the Lord as her Savior and as her Lord.

Friend, if you're saved, your call is to be obedient to him, to be obedient to him, to serve him with all of your heart, to give him all that you can while you can, to work while it is yet day, for the night cometh when no man can work. What God has joined together, let not man put asunder. We've thought about the word of God. We've thought about faith and repentance. We thought about Savior and Lord. The final one, happiness and holiness. Happiness and holiness. Oh, and there's a real misconception today and even within the Christian church but you read the word of God and you will find that happiness and holiness cannot be separated. They cannot be separated. In Leviticus chapter 19, verse number 2, as the children of Israel were preparing to go into the Promised Land, the Lord gave them this command, "Speak unto all the congregation of the children of Israel, and say unto them, Ye shall be holy: for I the LORD your God am holy." That's not just an Old Testament word, but we read that also in the book of 1 Peter, "as it is written, be ye holy as I am holy."

Now what was the purpose of the children of Israel living in holiness and obedience unto the Lord? And holiness effectively was to surrender to Christ as Lord and to obey the word that he had given. So what was the purpose of it? Well, first of all, I believe that there would be a testimony in the land. There would be a testimony in the land that they were different. They were not to be like the other nations that were found in the land of Canaan, the other people groups. They were not to be the same as them. They were not to marry into them. They were not to take their customs. They were not to take aspects of their religion. They were to be holy, set apart unto the Lord. But if you read the word of God, you'll find that if man and the children of Israel obeyed the commands that God gave, they would be blessed. They would be greatly blessed, and the word blessed means happy. It means happy and sadly today, there are some Christians, and their idea is that, "Well, I'm saved, but I need this to make me happy, and I need that to make me happy," and you know what? They're really miserable because they haven't that satisfaction that there is in being obedient unto the Lord and living in holiness. They're going here and there and yonder, trying to find something more. The answer is in the word of God. Go through with God, yield to the Lord. Be obedient. Seek to be holy by the grace of God, by the power of the Spirit of God. Be obedient to the word of God and the Lord will richly bless you.

You know who the happiest person is in this church tonight? The man or the woman who is in the place where God wants them to be, doing what God has called them to do, obeying the word that God has revealed onto them. And on the other side of that, with people today who somehow have this idea that holiness means you must be absolutely miserable, absolutely miserable, and the more holy I am. Nothing of scripture. We have to be reverent, of course, in the house of God. We have to worship in a respectful way and an appropriate way. And I'll tell you, if you are a person who is living in obedience to the Lord, the joy of the Lord, the joy of the Lord will be found in your heart.

Turn to Proverbs chapter 29, verse 18, and we can see this. We can see this explained for us. It says, "Where there is no vision, the people perish: but he that keepeth the law, happy is he." He that keepeth the law, happy is he. The word vision means revelation. Where there is no vision or revelation, of course, we can apply that to the word of God, and friend, where there's no teaching of God's word and the gospel of the Lord Jesus Christ, the people will perish in their sin. And friend, you close the book and you avoid every gospel preaching house and every gospel campaign and every gospel meeting and you try and shut your mind, anything you know of the word of God, then you will perish because the word of God will lead you to him.

But he that keepeth the law, and the word keepeth there means to take heed, to attend to, even to preserve. Happy is he, the word happy means how blessed. Now interestingly, and I think this is a wonderful thought, he that keepeth the law, happy is he. That word in the original Greek comes from a word, the word happy comes from a word which means to be straight, to be honest, and to go forward. And friend, the happy person, the blessed person, the person who knows the joy of the Lord is straight in that they are walking according to the word of God. They are honest before God and before man, and they are

going forward with God at God's command, following in the steps of their Savior. That's where happiness is found, true happiness, true joy, true blessing.

I've explained this morning in my morning message, you know, I could get you depressed thoroughly in a few minutes by pointing you to the world, by pointing you to the problems in society, to pointing you to the disappointments from the top of government to the very depths of society. Of course we could. But friend, my joy and my happiness is not found in my land being perfect or my circumstances being perfect. My joy and my happiness is found in walking with Christ. Walking with him. Is there a believer tonight, and you have to be honest, you have not been walking with the Lord. You have not been walking with the Lord and this book has been a closed book and really you've been distant from the Savior. You see that line it says where there's no vision that people perish, the word perish can also be translated go back. And friend, whenever your Bible's closed, you go back. When your Bible's closed and you cease to worship and you cease to pray, you do not go on with God, you go back. Oh yes, you're saved and you're in your fellowship with God and in your joy and friend, the problem was whenever David sinned with Bathsheba, and one sin led to another, and he just snowballed. Why did he come to the stage he was in Psalm 51 where he prayed, "My sin is ever before me?" Because he closed the word of God, the principles of God's word. He knew what the Bible said and he closed it. He went back. But thank God he prayed, "Restore unto me the joy of thy salvation."

Dear believer, are you miserable tonight? Are you in disobedience tonight? Have you wandered from God tonight? Then the reality is your life is not what it ought to be, your joy is not what it once was and your testimony is not bright for Christ. Praise God, he will welcome the backslider tonight. Praise God, he will welcome you back and he restores you, the joy of his salvation, the years that the locusts have eaten. One more verse and with this we're through John chapter 13, verse number 17. And the Lord Jesus is speaking. He's in the Upper Room and he teaches them about servant hood and teaches them what it is to be a servant, and he says in verse 16, "Verily, verily, I say unto you, The servant is not greater than his lord; neither he that is sent greater than he that sent him. If ye know these things, happy are ye if ye do them." Praise God. There's joy and obedience, there's a blessing in obedience, friend, this world knows nothing about. Look at the Christian, they think they're missing out on so much but, praise God, we've been spoiled for the world. Our joy is to walk with God. Is there any greater joy than in the midst of life to come in the morning and open the Bible and read the word of God, the loving word of God, the manna of heaven to our souls, to read and to know that God is leading us and guiding us, to seek to ask the Lord to lead us today and to protect us today and to give us the wisdom and all that we need today, to come to the evening time and to get down on our knees before God and to thank him for every blessing. What joy there is even in the midst of the storms of life, even in the midst of tragedy, bereavement, sickness, disappointment, hurt, confusion, to open your Bible and to hear the word of the Lord, "This is the way walking in it."

We have a wonderful Savior. We have a wonderful shepherd who will lead his people. And I trust for God's people that the word of god, faith and repentance, Savior, Lord,

happiness and holiness, these things that God has joined together, let us view them very highly, let us seek to promote and present them to all that we come in contact with. But before I leave tonight, I want to speak to the sinner. Friend, God has given you the word of God and for you to neglect it is to neglect the need of your soul and to close the door on your opportunity to be saved. God has declared that faith and repentance is the way that we must be saved and therefore for you to put it aside, to neglect it, is for you to turn your back on your only hope of salvation. God has presented the Lord Jesus Christ as our Savior and as our Lord and, friend, that's how you must take him. You must come to Christ and ask him to save you, but you must come submitting yourself to him and, praise God, there will be happiness and holiness whenever you're walking with the Lord. I know there are people tonight and you're looking for that thing that satisfies, you're looking for the meaning of life, you're looking for what life is all about, friends, people have done it for centuries, this is life, this is life that you might know him. Do you know him tonight? Praise God, you can be saved. For you sitting in this meeting, call on the Lord for salvation. For you sitting in this meeting, repent from your sin and calling on him to save you. Praise God, he has promised that whosoever shall call upon the name of the Lord shall, shall be saved. Amen.

Let's bow our heads in prayer and with our heads bowed and our eyes closed, we do make ourselves available to you. I will be at the door here. As you leave, if you would like to speak about your soul, please come speak to us. If you have trusted the Lord as your Savior during this meeting, please come and let us know. We would love to show you from God's word how to go on with the Lord, give you some literature to help you in your walk with God. Maybe there's a backslider tonight and the Lord's calling you back to himself. Too many years have been wasted. Too many blessings missed and you know that you're not where you ought to be. Well, may God give you joy tonight as you come and repent of your backsliding.