

# The Christian's Warfare Part 2: From Prejudice to Sound Judgment

*The Christian's Warfare*

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**Bible Text:** 2 Corinthians 10:1-6  
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Please turn with me in your Bibles to the second epistle of Corinthians 10. 2 Corinthians 10. We're reading the same text we read last time, verses 1 to 6. It's an important passage that continues our discussion of the Christian's warfare. The Christian's warfare. Let's read the word of God together.

1 Now I, Paul, myself urge you by the meekness and gentleness of Christ-- I who am meek when face to face with you, but bold toward you when absent! 2 I ask that when I am present I need not be bold with the confidence with which I propose to be courageous against some, who regard us as if we walked according to the flesh. 3 For though we walk in the flesh, we do not war according to the flesh, 4 for the weapons of our warfare are not of the flesh, but divinely powerful for the destruction of fortresses. 5 We are destroying speculations and every lofty thing raised up against the knowledge of God, and we are taking every thought captive to the obedience of Christ, 6 and we are ready to punish all disobedience, whenever your obedience is complete.

I've chosen this passage because we are trying to address issues that are confronting us in the world and these issues in the world, it's always the state of reality as Christians in a fallen world, that the issues in the world, the circumstances in our lives, the enemies of our soul, the world, the flesh and the devil, are continually trying to press us into something different than what Christ wants us to be and so we come this morning looking again at the subject, "The Christian's Warfare." The Christian's warfare. I want to ask you to pray with me and ask you to pray that all of us will have open hearts, humble hearts, that he will help us to put ourselves under his word and that he will help us to think his thoughts after him, that he'll grant me grace in the way that I say what I need to say.

Let's pray together.

*Our Father, we come this morning grateful that You are the living God and that You are our God, that You have sought us out when we were not seeking You, that You have opened the eyes of our hearts to see and behold the beauty and glory of Jesus Christ and*

*to see in Him all the riches of wisdom and knowledge and righteousness. We thank You that You have made Him to be sin for us that we might become the righteousness of God in Him, and that now justified we are in the process of being made more like Him. We pray that You would further Your purposes in every life today, every heart, those that belong to you would be more and more conformed to the image of Christ, and those who don't yet belong to You, may today be the day of their salvation. Lord, grant us wisdom. Pour out Your grace upon us. We know how needy we are, how much we need Your power to change us. And we pray these things in Jesus' name. Amen.*

So this morning we're continuing in the study of warfare which we started some time back, spiritual warfare, how God intends his people as we try to build his kingdom and we find that we are going to be under attack, that we're going to need his grace to help us stand against the spiritual forces of wickedness which oppose us. And so we began looking last week at this passage, the title "The Christian's Warfare," and we saw that what Paul is dealing with here is he's saying that essentially the way that we fight the spiritual warfare that needs to happen in our lives, happens, first of all, in our thinking; that we are to bring into conformity to the word of God every thought captive to the obedience of Christ; that all of us have strongholds in our lives. The imagery of the passage is powerful. It's military imagery. It's siege warfare is the picture. You can imagine one capturing a walled city, an army surrounding a walled city trying to capture it and they work at demolishing the walls, the foundation point of that which protects that city. They tear down the ramparts and they're able to win the victory.

Paul's using that kind of forceful imagery when he talks about the divinely powerful weapons that destroy fortresses. We're destroying speculations. The word there means "to tear down, to demolish. And so what he's talking about, though, is that we have fortresses in our own hearts, in our minds, in our thinking that have been built and erected by the world system, our flesh, and the devil. We have formulated thought processes, conceptual frameworks. We've reasoned ourselves to conclusions. We've accepted things that were offered to us from the world and these rational ways of understanding our lives are actually like fortresses in the same way a fortress governs an area. You know, like I mentioned that Paul's using this imagery that he says in verse 5, we're destroying every lofty thing raised up against the knowledge of God, that the Corinthian church to whom he writes, the city of Corinth was known for its elevated fortress, the Acropolis at Corinth, a massive bulwark that was used to protect Greece from the invasion of foreign armies, the isthmus there controlled by this one fortress. This one fortress of soldiers garrisoned could be called upon at any moment to address an invading army to stop them in their tracks and Paul says we have in our own hearts, in our own minds, in our thinking, we have fortresses, wrong ways of thinking that are like that, that actually stop the invading army but the invading army he's talking about is the army of God, the knowledge of God, that God wants to bring more and more of our hearts into conformity to his will and his word is being sown into us. But he says these strongholds are like massive fortresses, ramparts, bulwarks, that stand against the knowledge of God. So he says, "I'm coming and spiritual warfare that I'm going to be about when I come to you is we're going to demolish these fortresses. We're going to tear them down so that you can

be set free, so that you can know the freedom of the liberty of the sons of God." Jesus said, "You shall know the truth and the truth shall make you free."

So that's what Paul is getting at here. He's trying to deal with, he says what must happen and this is really a picture of what sanctification is, this is true for every one of us. There are things, every sin area, especially areas of, you know, regular failing in your life, they are areas where your soul, if you've been born again, if you come to know the Lord Jesus Christ as your Savior, you have a new heart and yet you're struggling and falling in certain areas of your life because of these strongholds, areas where you have accepted and I have accepted wrong thinking.

And he gives some very clear descriptions also, not just of the military imagery, we get the mental imagery. Look at we're destroying speculations, verse 5. Speculation. This is the word "logismos." It's related to the word "Logos." Our word "logic" comes from it and here it means "calculation." We're destroying calculations, computations, another way you could say it, calculation, computation and inference. It's like you study something, you think about it, and you draw a conclusion. He says, "We are demolishing these conclusions that you have and I have in our hearts." We've observed reality, we've experienced our lives, we've heard people, we've been receiving information all throughout our life. Every day you receive information. We're continually receiving information. We live in the information age, right? I mean, isn't it amazing how much information you receive on a daily basis? Your phone tells you that you've got more information. I hate those notification things. On my computer, I cannot turn them off. If somebody knows how to turn them off on an Apple computer, please after church minister to me by helping me do that. You know, I'm on a Zoom call and I've got, ding, coming, some email came in or something. I don't want to know that right now. I'll check on that when I'm done with this meeting. We're bombarded with information.

Well, that's really been true even before the computer age. It's true for every human being. In fact, God made us to be consumers of information. He made us not only to be consumers of information but to be interpreters of information. When you receive something, you interpret it. You were made to do that by God. We'll talk about that a little more in a moment. But the problem is what's happened is, as unbelievers we had no access to the Spirit to help us understand things as they really are. The world system, our flesh, our sin nature, and the devil himself were basically putting in bad programming into the computer of our mind and then as Christians, but you now have a new heart. If you've come to Christ, you've come to understand that Jesus died in your place for your sins, that he rose again, and that you have surrendered your heart to him in faith and you're now his child. You've been born again. Old things have passed away, behold all things have become new. There's a radical transformation and yet what you find is this new man still indwells a body that is racked by sin, and you still have a brain, the human brain that you had before you were saved is still there and a lot of bad programming in the computer that you have in your head, patterns of thought, patterns of action, of speech, and these things continue to exert influence on your life and they continue to hinder the work of God in our hearts. God wants to be doing transformation in us and these strongholds, these conclusions, these reasonings, as it says, speculations, as it says

in the New American Standard, are standing up like a massive castle, like the Acropolis at Corinth, to stop the advancement of the word of God in your life. And when you see that, this is paramount. This is of the highest importance to be addressing those things in our lives. This is what God calls us to.

So that's true in a number of areas. He goes on to say, other words he uses here, we're destroying every speculation, we said first of all, that raises up against the knowledge of God, and we're taking thought, taking every thought captive to the obedience of Christ. Every concept, the Greek word there "thought." Every belief. We're bringing them all into obedience to Jesus Christ. This is spiritual warfare in its essence and in its awesome intensity so that what's happening when you are working out the word of God, when you are meditating on the Scripture, when you are trying to bring your thoughts captive to the obedience of Christ, what's happening is like enemy armies are battling. When you're sharing the word of God with another believer and you're helping them try to address strongholds in their lives and ways of thinking that are hindering them, it's like enemy armies have come together on the battlefield with, you know, steel and blood all around spiritually. This is what God is talking about here and so this is what the Christian is called to. As we saw in a previous series, if you are a believer, you have no choice, you are at war. Satan is determined to destroy you. You must be sober and vigilant because your adversary is like a roaring lion seeking whom he may devour, Ephesians 6:10-18 which we looked at a few weeks ago over a number of weeks. Be strong in the Lord and the strength of his might so that you can stand firm against the enemy, the spiritual forces of wickedness in the heavenly places.

So today's message, the Christian's warfare. Last week, we talked about from pride to humility. So we tried to look at how pride and how the way we think about ourselves needs to be brought into conformity to the word of God, into submission to Christ. Today, we're going, the subtitle is "The Christian's Warfare: From Prejudice to Sound Judgment." From prejudice to sound judgment. We're talking this morning about prejudice, the tendency, really it's an innate sinful tendency of fallen man to prejudge. That's what prejudice is. It is to make a judgment without adequate information. It is to make a judgment based on preconceived notions rather than the facts of the situation. And so prejudice happens in every area of our lives but particularly we have heard so much and see so much affecting our culture today when it comes to racial prejudice which we also call racism, the idea of one race looking down upon other people because they're not of the same race. They have different color skin. They have different physical characteristics, different hair, different eyes.

And so we're going to look this morning at this important issue, the issue of prejudice and we're going to try to move from prejudice to sound judgment. You know, racism, racial prejudice is a reality in the fallen world wherever you go. It's a part of the human condition in every society. We know this because all men are sinners, but you find it in every society. In fact, I was talking with some of our brothers in our church, we have a number of families that are from Malaysia, and I think Boon was the first one to tell me about this, Boon Lau was telling me about growing up in Malaysia as a Chinese, ethnic Chinese person raised in Malaysia and all of our folks are from, their families originally,

their ethnicity is Chinese but their families moved to Malaysia during the time of the Communist takeover and so they grew up in Malaysia as outsiders, the Malay people being the dominant people. And he talked about the racism they experienced as children, young people, and that they still experience, the racial discrimination that happens in just interactions, and that's built-in and baked into the system.

So that is a reality in a number of places and certainly that's been much talked about. We've seen the heart of racism and even the way that it's affected our society even in some of the systems. We're gonna talk about systemic, the question of what really is systemic racism, is that really the way to understand it biblically. We'll talk about that more next time. We're gonna talk more about racism as a person as a heart issue which is really prejudice is more the biblical terminology. But in America we have a tragically flawed, tragic flaw in our history and that is the reality of racism. You think about America, a place built on an idea really, a country built on the ideals of human freedom, dedicated to the proposition that all men are created equal, that they are endowed with their Creator with certain inalienable rights. Inalienable rights, among those life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness. And yet still not living consistent with that and that when that was written, as lovely and wonderful as those ideas are and I think really in a sense inferred from the Scriptures the idea of the worth of each human being, and yet there was this tragic flaw, this inconsistency in the American experience where slavery, the awful blemish of slavery in our past; the fact that free men who believed in those principles and who left England because they had been oppressed in England. I mean, one of the things you see when you go back and you read medieval Western European history is about the feudal system and how the landowners oppressed the people that didn't own land.

And so many of the great ideas that came out in the American experience were from that sense of oppression and yet we did not apply it to those with different colored skin and that is one of the sad realities but that doesn't negate, of course, all of the good but it is a blight that must be acknowledged. The Civil War, the bloodiest war in human history, in US history, not the bloodiest war in human history, the bloodiest war in US history freed the slaves and yet racial strife and injustice, discrimination rooted in racism continued to affect our society in different ways, the legacy of segregation, Jim Crow laws continued well into the 20<sup>th</sup> century. And all of those things are realities, they're social realities, and in a sense as awful and ugly as they are, and as evil as they are because racism is evil, in one sense not surprising. As you study world history, you see this again and again and again. People oppress people but we should be willing as Christians to acknowledge that.

The great tragedy is not so much what's happened in society, the greatest tragedy to me as I look at American history is the failure of the church to speak with consistency and clarity on this issue throughout our history. There have been some, of course. The Abolitionist movement came out of the church and yet too often there were otherwise godly people who did not really unpack biblically the implications of the Scriptures as it related to slavery and for us, what matters is what happens in the church, not so much what happens out there but what happens in the church. So we want to try to think biblically. How does Scripture speak to this issue particularly today and what we should be about and how we should be conquering this issue of prejudice in our own hearts.

So 2 Corinthians 10. It's interesting that the Apostle Paul, I mentioned last time he's written two letters to the Corinthians, 1 & 2 Corinthians obviously but he's actually written at least two other letters to them that we know about that are referenced in these two letters, and he was dealing with a church that had a lot of problems. Four letters, multiple visits, the Corinthians were a high maintenance church. One of the issues that they struggled with was the issue of divisions. You see this in 1 Corinthians particularly. 1 Corinthians 1:10 Paul says I hear that there are divisions among you. He says the same thing in chapter 11, verse 18, there are divisions among you. Chapter 12, verse 25, God has fixed the body to have different spiritual gifts so that there will be no division among you. The Greek word is "schizmos, schism." We get the English word "schism" from this and it means "a gap; a breach." It comes from a verb which means "to tear" and so the idea is a division is a tear. It's used a number of times in the Gospels to speak of wineskins that are torn. So a schism in your wineskin means your wineskin's no good, pour wine in a skin with holes in it. A tear on a cloth or article of clothing ruins it.

So Paul is concerned about the Corinthians and the schisms that are happening among them and so that's a part of what he's dealing with, the tendency of even the first century church to be divided and so we want to work at understanding how prejudice plays a role in dividing us and how we need to think biblically about this important subject. So we're going to look this morning at this issue from prejudice to sound judgment under four points. We're going to try to look at the Scriptures in a broad way to look at what the Bible says about this important issue and, first of all, we're going to talk about, we're going to use the same outline as last time. I think it applies well to this point again today. The first point is our design. How do you move from prejudice to sound judgment? First of all, by understanding our design, how God made us.

One of the things we see in the Scriptures is that the Lord created us to be thinkers, in a sense to be judges. Now I say this, this is how he made us before sin entered the world. We're made to think, to evaluate. I mean, think about watching a little child as they, this hungering for knowledge. Little babies, you know, just studying, learning, sometimes putting things in their mouth, tasting, you know, just watching with such interest what's going on around them, and you're thinking as you watch that little baby, thinking, "What are they thinking? How are they processing this?" But they're learning. God made us to be learners. He made us to be interpreters. He gave us, he made us in his image, Genesis 1:26 and 27. In fact, you might want to turn back to Genesis for a moment. We're going to be there a little bit.

Now looking at this design, when God makes man he says in verse 26 of Genesis 1, "Let Us make man in Our image, according to Our likeness; and let them rule over the fish of the sea and over the birds of the sky and over the cattle and over all the earth, and over every creeping thing that creeps on the earth. God created man in His own image, in the image of God He created him; male and female He created them. God blessed them; and God said to them, 'Be fruitful and multiply, and fill the earth, and subdue it; and rule.'" So a part of the image is to subdue and to rule. It is to be a ruler like basically a prince appointed to rule over God's creation. Man, male and female, are made to rule. We're

made to serve as judges. We're made to manage God's world that he's made. In fact, it's interesting, Paul in 1 Corinthians 6:3 makes an interesting statement talking about, he's dealing with one of the aspects of division the Corinthians were having. Now they had division over all kind of things. They were divided over, you know, whose teaching they liked better, "I'm of Paul. I'm of Apollos." You know, they would say who their favorite teacher was like, "I'm of John MacArthur." You know, "I'm of Alistair Begg." This kind of thing, you know, and they were actually being divided over that. They were divided over the issue of whether you could eat certain kinds of meat or not, meat that had been offered to idols. They were divided over their spiritual gifts. They were proud of their spiritual gifts.

They were divided over their celebration of the Lord's supper was causing divisions among them. In chapter 6 they were so divided that Paul rebukes them for going to court to resolve their disputes. Christians in court against one another in the same church. It's like two of us going and not being able to resolve an issue and we take it to court. And Paul cannot believe it. He's appalled that they would take an issue, an in-house issue among the kingdom of God and take it and air the dirty laundry in the public court system, not only airing the laundry but asking the court system for help on how the house of God is to be run. And Paul essentially says to them, "Do you not know that you can handle things like this?" And he says this in 1 Corinthians 6:3, "Do you not know that we shall judge angels?" When you have been bought with the blood of Christ, you have been made, restored to what God made you to be originally, a ruler and a judge. He's given us this desire, this legitimate, if it's submitted to God it's a legitimate and beautiful thing. God has made man to be able to look at things, evaluate all the evidence, and make a judgment and this is how we are wired. This is why we find ourselves making judgments all the time. I mean, this is why people want to tell you how good their meal was after, you know, after they eat it. This is why they post up about it. They want to comment on something. They want to judge because God made them to judge. Sometimes you're like, "Really? I don't really care that you had this particular dessert for dinner." Although maybe, actually if you show me a dessert, I probably will care about that. But sometimes we do share things and not everybody is interested in or often not interested in.

But the whole point is, though, God made us to evaluate and to make judgments. We're to be like him. He made us to be image-bearers. God is like that. And this is really beautiful as you watch and you read the Scriptures, you see that God created us to be in his image and his likeness just like we read. Three times it says in the image of God, that is a replica, a reflection. The other use of this word "image" in the Old Testament is found in 1 Samuel where we're told the story about the ark of the covenant being taken by the Philistines in battle and when they send it back, they send it back with images in them, images of tumors and the rats that God plagued them with when they had the ark of the covenant. They made gold images, gold statues. And so the image of God means that we replicate God in some way, we're like a statue of God, and this is why he says in Genesis 9:6, he's going to use the same word "image" and he says, "Anyone who strikes out at man and murders man will himself forfeit his life because he has attacked the image of God."

The sanctity of human life is rooted in the fact that we are image-bearers, and every one of us is made to be like God, to be a picture of God, a reflection of his glory, and we are made to be like him. We're made to rule. We're made to judge. We're made to think, to evaluate, and to judge. That's what's involved in judging: to think, to evaluate, to organize, to judge, and all of us do that in various ways and it's a good thing but we're to do it like God does. God does it with all the information. It's interesting, actually, you can see this a couple of ways. I'm going to mention a couple of passages to you. We're going to talk through them quickly and I encourage you to look at them.

Genesis 3 is the first passage when after the fall happens God comes to find out what's happened, this is the whole way he describes it. Man sins, Adam and Eve sin against God. Now the Bible tells us the eyes of the Lord are in every place beholding the evil and the good. Psalm 139 says there's no place you can go and be apart from God. Wherever you are from the bottom of the ocean or the highest spot of space, there his hand is right there with you. His eyes are there beholding everything that happens so when Adam and Eve sin, what we read in Genesis 3, you turn over to Genesis 3:8, "They heard the sound of the LORD God walking in the garden in the cool of the day, and the man and his wife hid themselves from the presence of the LORD God among the trees of the garden. Then the LORD God called to the man, and said to him, 'Where are you?'" Now why is God asking that? This is the kind of thing we need to learn to do when we read the Bible, ask questions. "Hey, why would God need to ask, 'Where are you'? Can God really not see him?" Well, the Bible says the eyes of the Lord are in every place beholding the evil and the good. The eyes of the Lord are able to see behind the bush that he's hiding behind.

So why does he say that? Look what happens next, "'Where are you?' He said, 'I heard the sound of You in the garden, and I was afraid because I was naked; so I hid myself.' And He said," the Lord said, "'Who told you that you were naked?'" Second question. "Have you eaten from the tree of which I commanded you not to eat?" Third question. Why did he ask all these questions? Well, I think there are a couple of reasons. One reason is the Lord is a master counselor and he knows that a question gets to the heart more than a declaration. He could have just come down and said, "I saw what you guys did. Let's talk about the judgment." But he says, "Where are you?" He knows where he is. Why does he say where are you? So Adam will say, "Where am I?" There's something about a question that makes the creative mind of man go into action to think about the problem in a different way, and so God is a master counselor. So he asks the question, "Where are you? What have you done? Have you eaten from the tree?" All of those things to probe the heart.

It's so important and one of the problems we have, especially those of us who are more prone to be teachers and I think everybody is in certain ways, but especially if you have a teaching gift, one of the things I have to do is restrain myself to tell, especially in counseling someone, what I think they need to hear. I mean, I'm evaluating. Okay, there's the problem, and my mind is evaluating and I'll just be ready, "Now okay, here it's going to be a seven or eight minute sermon right now so take out your notepad, here's the answer." And you know, that doesn't work very well. I'm not a very good counselor, especially when I do that. Why? Because the person hasn't even gotten to really



understand what their issue is anyway so all I'm doing is just piling some stuff on that's like water on a duck's back, it's going off the back. But if I ask questions and I get them to understand what their problem is and they can actually see it, then they're ready to hear.

So I think one of the reasons God asks questions is for that reason but I think there's another reason he asks these questions and I think it is this, I think this is an example of what John Calvin said, how the Lord in his word is baby-talking with us. He used the English word translated from the Latin he wrote in, prattling. The Lord prattles with us. He comes down to our level and speaks so that we can understand. This is what revelation is. I mean, how can fallen finite people understand the eternal, infinite, omnipotent, omniscient God? Only because he lowers himself to speak on our level the same way you lower yourself to speak on a child's level that doesn't have a full vocabulary yet and you baby-talk, and you really communicate.

Well, what's he communicating here? What's he prattling with us? He's telling us this, he's telling us in the very beginning when God renders a judgment which he's about to do, he's about to curse, pronounce a curse upon the serpent, the woman and the man, he is about to speak from the judgment seat and pronounce, render the verdict. He's prattling with us and showing us God never does that without doing all of the research. He doesn't make a snap decision. He doesn't make a prejudiced decision. He comes down and investigates fully the situation.

Now you see this in other places. Genesis 18, 18 and 19. I encourage you to read this, the story of Sodom and Gomorrah. You remember God comes to Abram, Abraham and says, you know, after they've talked about the promise of Isaac that's gonna be born, he says to these two men with him, these three men come to, it says three men come to meet with Abraham but he knows one of them is the Lord. So the Lord appears and somehow in a pre-Incarnate state, I think it's the Lord Jesus Christ, pre-Incarnate, the Lord there, and there's two other men and we find out those two men are angels when you read on into the next chapter. But the Lord says to the two with him, "Shall I not tell Abraham what I'm about to do?" And he says, "The outcry of the city of Sodom is so great. Their wickedness has reached its full measure and I have come down to see if the outcry basically is accurate." And he sends the angels into Sodom to search it out. Now the eyes of the Lord are in every place beholding the evil and the good, why does he do that? Because he's showing us he's not a God who makes decisions detached in some exalted place in the heavens without being connected intimately with what's going on. He never makes a prejudicial judgment. And you see this again and again through the Scriptures as you read it carefully. You'll see the Lord is showing us his heart is to give the full weight of evidence and examine it, and when he makes a decision like that, you can know he has done as Abraham says to him, "Shall not the judge of all the earth do right?" And the answer is, yes. An emphatic yes. The judge of all the earth always does what is right.

So you and I were made to judge like God is, like God does. We were made to get all the information and to reserve judgment until we have all the facts and then we render accurate judgments. The problem is we don't do that. We would if we were still submitted

to God. If we had never fallen into sin and we were submitted to the Lord and sin had not come into our very heart, we weren't in a world system that is dominated by the devil, we would be able to make judgments that are sound. But we come to our second point now, our condition. The design, we're designed to make judgments. The problem is our condition and our condition is we are fallen. We talked about last time two sub points here: we have a darkened mind according to the Scriptures, and we have disordered affections, or you could say deformed affections. A darkened mind, we cannot think correctly. We don't recognize truth the way that we should, especially related to anything spiritual. We can make sense out of natural things because of God's grace in natural revelation but spiritual things are spiritually discerned. 1 Corinthians 2:14 Paul says the natural man does not understand the things of God for they are spiritually discerned. He cannot understand them.

So we come into the world not being able to understand, our minds are darkened, and even when we're born again, we still have these wrong ways of thinking like Paul's dealing with in 2 Corinthians 10. We have affections that are alienated or disordered or deformed, that is, we don't even want the right things. We want something, we want ungodly things. We want wicked things. So back to Genesis 3, since you're still there hopefully, I want to show you how our desire to judge and our creation to be judges was distorted and destroyed.

Part of the lie of the devil when he tempts Eve in verse 4 and 5, he says, "The serpent said to the woman," after she said, "The Lord told us don't eat from the tree or touch it or you will die," the serpent said to the woman, "You surely will not die! For God knows that in the day you eat from it your eyes will be opened, and you will be like God, knowing good and evil." The lie that sin came with, was the lie that you can be like God. Now the thing that is amazingly ironic, and I encourage you to meditate on this and think about this, do you remember what we read in Genesis 1:26 and 27? "Let us make man in Our image and according to Our," what? "Likeness." In the image of God. To replicate God. God has already made man like him in the way God intends but Satan is offering something that is even more. Basically he's saying to be like God in a different way, to be equal to God, and he's offering the same thing that Satan himself had sought, to be like the Most High. And so when they eat from the tree, they find out that Satan is a liar. They do begin to die. They die spiritually in that moment, that is true death. They're separated from life. They're separated from communion with God. At the moment they sin, when their eyes are opened, they are separated from God. That's why they hide from God now.

They've died spiritually and they begin to die physically but what's interesting is that there was some truth in what Satan said. Again, Satan is a masterful liar and the most effective lies are half-truths. Remember he had said, "You will be like God, knowing good and evil?" Look what the Lord says in verse 22. This is when the Lord, there's a dialog among the Triune God, the Trinity here. "Then the LORD God said, 'Behold, the man has become like one of Us.'" How? How is like "one of Us?" How is he like the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit? "Knowing good and evil."

Theologians speculate as to what this means. I think what it basically means is that the way that man has come to know good and evil is man has come to be like God in judging good and evil for himself independent from God. He was gonna be a wonderful basically unblemished judge in God's eyes, in submission to God man would have made all the right judgments, but now because he wants to be like God, he wants to judge independently, he wants to look at circumstances and determine whatever he thinks is right and whatever he thinks is wrong and this is the downfall, and this is what you and I have in our hearts is the desire now to get in the place of God and to make judgments that only God can make.

You know, I mentioned last week about the little girl that said to her mom, "You're doing it wrong." Remember? A little young girl tells her mom, "You're doing it all wrong." I think that's even, it's even there before that. I mean, before you're a toddler, you know, why does a baby, have you heard like just a six or eight month baby just crying, you can almost feel the rage. Did you ever have a child do that? I mean, it doesn't happen all the time, a lot of times it's just kinda of, you know, "Ah, ah," okay. "Ah," you know, until somebody comes. But sometimes there's just like something and what's happening? That little soul is making a judgment that what is happening right now is evil and somebody better fix it. Okay, you think about that and I'm open to correction on that but I think there's something to it because you find it later as they grow up, they then tell mom, "You don't know what you're doing." Or remember how I told you last week, I was trying to tell my dad we were going in circles. He confirmed you cross the Arkansas River three times on I-40. So I saw it once, I saw it again, I saw it a third time, I'm like, "Dad, we're going in circles." I was five years old. Anyway, those of you who weren't here last week, sorry for those of you who were. But anyway.

So what is it? We want to make judgments beyond our ability. We feel like we're able. We feel like, "You oughta listen to me." This is where the rage comes from in our lives. We demand to be heard. That's the essence of sin. And not only demanding to be heard, we demand to be heard about things we don't really know about. We're not omniscient. We don't have all the facts and yet we love to pronounce judgment. We love to fill in the gaps and to make assumptions. I mean, think about this is in your life every day. Patti and I were talking about this recently. I'm a little bit hard of hearing and so my wife and I, we, you know, there will be a lot of times where I think she said something she didn't say and she'll think that I understood her because, you know, it's not like she says something to me and she says, "Repeat back what I said." She probably thinks maybe that would be a good idea. So we have a conversation, she thinks I heard something, I totally didn't understand it and then it later becomes a conflict, and we were talking about the fact that if we could just really make sure we just heard each other, a lot of our conflicts would go away.

But it's not just that. This is what happens, she may say something and I start interpreting and filling in gaps around it. I start thinking what she means is this. You know, like especially if she says something negative, I start thinking about what she's really saying. She's saying she's unhappy. She's saying I'm not a good husband or whatever. You start filling in gaps like that because you were made to make judgments, you were made to

evaluate, to discern, to make a judgment and so I am assuming I know what's in her heart and that is just foolish and it creates all kinds of conflict. And she does the same thing to me. And you all do the same things to one another.

This is why sometimes, have you ever had this problem? You're listening to somebody talk and you kind of know where they're going you think, and sometimes you may be right. Some of us can be pretty predictable, can't we? Like, "I know what he's gonna say. Okay, get it said." But listen, there is an audacity and a pride in that that we should repent of because you don't know what's in the other person's heart. You do not know where they are going. You may base it on pretty good experience but you're still not 100% sure. But listen, our problem is we make judgments on things we have no basis for making judgments and the right way to be a godly image-bearer, to be a judge rightly is that we should get more facts. We should ask questions. We should learn to say this, "Hey, when you said that, am I correct in you're saying, are you meaning this?" Rather than assuming that's what you meant and now let me answer back with my response to your charge. She wasn't even making that charge or I wasn't making that charge, or you weren't making that charge but we don't know it because sin in us is naturally prejudiced. We have such a high opinion of ourselves that we think we can look at externals and make judgments and often those judgments we think have some measure of experience in it.

Think about this. I was reading a man talking about a black brother was talking about an experience where he had been walking down the street and a woman had crossed the street as he and his wife were walking down, and he thought to himself, "She's prejudiced." And the Lord was working on him in his heart later and basically later he realized, he said, "You know, I don't know that she's prejudiced. How can I know what's in her heart?" He said, "Now I had been in experiences, I've had past experience where I thought were related to racism, people mistreating me a certain way." But let me ask you this question, this is very humbling: do you really know in all of the circumstances that you're adding up to make an evaluation about something, do you really know the facts in those circumstances you're building your case on? What I'm saying is if, say this woman, and he mentions this, he says maybe she had to get across the street because she's going to visit somebody on that way. He said, "I'll never know. I didn't ask her." But the Lord helped him realize that normally what would happen is somebody makes an assumption that's racism, and they file it away as a piece of data and evidence. Then they have another experience and they may think the same thing.

Now turn it around. You may be a white person and you are forming opinions yourself the same way. You think a black person has treated you a certain way and so you, even though you don't know what's in their heart, you're drawing conclusions from your experience. You're adding those up. You're calculating it and you are judging wrong and the worst part of it is, is you and I have no business making the judgment in the first place. We are not to judge people that way. God knows what's in the heart. We can't judge the heart.

Now we are supposed to judge actions, there's a balance. In fact, 1 Corinthians 5 says we are to judge in the house of God. We don't judge those outside, we judge those inside.

When we're not living consistent with the word, we love each other enough to ask questions and to find out and then once we really gather the data to say, "Listen, listen, brother," you can say to me, "Ty, you're not living consistent with what the word of God says in this area of your life." And that is love. Leviticus 19:18, the second commandment, Jesus said, "The two great commandments, you shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your mind, with all your strength." That's Deuteronomy 6:5. "The second is like unto it," Leviticus 19:18, "You shall love your neighbor as yourself." The verse before that says, "You shall surely reprove your neighbor. You shall not hate him." You get that? If you don't reprove and correct your neighbor when he's in the wrong, you are hating him. Love speaks truth but love gathers the facts before it speaks truth. Love, generally you can come to a brother that you think's wrong and is going to ask some questions. "Hey, I'm concerned about something. This is my observation, maybe I'm not seeing it right. Help me with this. The way you're speaking to your son, it just seems like there's struggle with anger. Tell me about this. Am I seeing it correctly?"

You come like that and then that's loving reproof, but the problem is we make these pronouncements because of our condition. We go beyond what we know and our affections, we want to exalt ourselves. We want to put other people down. And remember I talked about last week, what was it, the confirmation bias that people talk about. Confirmation bias is that you hear and receive data that you want to hear and you ignore data that doesn't confirm what you already believe. That's just another way of saying that's pride. That's another way of saying that is a judge, a person God made to be in his image who has been messed up by sin like you and I have. We don't want to listen to what we don't want to hear.

So that's our condition. That means that we should be humble. And now thirdly, our environment. So we are prone to make prejudicial judgments about other people, those closest to us and those farthest from us, everyone in between. And we live in a world which is constantly doing the same thing because unbelievers have no choice but to do this. I mean, you have people making judgments all the time and it's not wrong to make judgments, but you've got to gather information and know what you know and know what you don't know.

In the area of the coronavirus, many of us need to lower the intensity with which we are holding our present opinion about whether you should do X or not do X related to the coronavirus. Most of us probably need to lessen our hold on that opinion. I'm not saying don't have an opinion, I'm saying acknowledge that your opinion is not based on all the information because nobody has all the information. You may think you have pretty good information but it would be wise to be asking other people who disagree with you what their information is too so you can have all the information, and not being angry that people don't agree with you. The anger itself is sin.

And when it comes to this idea of rushing to judgment, so some new data comes out about the coronavirus and the media is doing it all the time and they're fanning it into a flame all the time. Look at this. Look at this. Be afraid. Be afraid. And maybe we should

but we should be looking at all the facts, and when it comes to this issue of rushing to judgment, look at how quickly our society rushes to judgment over the tragic circumstances that we see reported in the news. I mean, this last week Jacob Blake, the last unarmed black man, possibly unarmed, we don't know for sure, there are reports he may have been reaching for a knife but I don't know. I wasn't there and neither were you. But the rush to judgment. It happens in those circumstances. I don't understand why he shot seven times, was shot seven times. That's a puzzle to me. That's very concerning. But why is there this rush to judgment and to condemn and to say, "That's another example of racism." Do you know that? Do you know that that's the motivation? Do you know that? We don't, so what has to happen is we have to be people who are willing to reserve judgment until all the facts are in.

We can be concerned and when the facts are in, we should want justice, and every time someone is treated unjustly in our society, we should want justice to happen. I mean, if we were guilty of something like that, if you're godly as a repentant person who's done something evil to someone, you should want justice to fall upon yourself even. That's righteousness, to see God's truth, God's will vindicated. But we need all of the facts and not respond with emotion out of really this desire to pronounce judgments upon people.

I know it's rooted in a lot of pain from the past and so we need to be compassionate with one another as we minister to one another. Some of you are coming from positions where you have either experienced pain directly yourself, the pain of racism, or you have close friends or family members who have, and it's understandable that there is pain and we need to have compassion but we need to be people to understand that the most compassionate thing we can do to someone else is to help them find the truth, not some narrative that's prepackaged, preconceived, but to find the truth. And when we find the truth, to rejoice in truth. Love rejoices in truth.

One other thing I want to say about environment today is I was reading a blog by a young man named Samuel, I think it's S-e-y. You may have seen, he's an African American young man, Christian, and he wrote a blog that just is an arresting title. Listen to this, he said, "If silence is violence," you've heard that phrase silence is violence, that's one of the refrains going around now, that you must not only see what's happened, you must speak out about it or you are a part of the problem. And listen, there is a place, there is a grain of truth in that. If evil's going on and it's truly going on and the facts are with it and we're not speaking out, that is wrong. But the question is are the facts in? Samuel Sey, this black Christian man, he wrote this title, he said, "If silence is violence, then Jesus sinned." That's a very attention-getting title, isn't it? He basically points to the fact that Jesus did not comment on every social injustice that was happening around him. Even when we're told exactly what happened at the moment that he found out about it, the example is Matthew 14, it's around verse 35, I believe. Jesus hears that John the Baptist has been beheaded by Herod, this wicked tetrarch has killed a man of God, Jesus did not organize a protest, he went away alone to pray. Sey writes if that's what, if silence is violence, then Jesus sinned in that. He never spoke out about what Herod had done to John the Baptist. So it must not be a requirement for every person to speak out on every single issue.

Another example is Luke 13. Jesus is teaching and someone comes to him and says, "Have you heard what happened in the temple today?" That day Pilate had sent in Roman soldiers into the temple to chase down some guys, some zealots who had come in. They were Jewish zealots who were under, you know, the warrant for their arrest. They're in the city. The Roman soldiers begin chasing them. They run into the temple so they can be safe because a Roman soldier, a non-Jew cannot enter the temple according to Jewish law. It's a death sentence. Well, the Roman soldiers not only follow them in, but they kill them at the altar and the blood of these Hebrew Jewish men mingles with the blood of the sacrifices, defiling the blood of the sacrifices. And the report comes to Jesus, "Have you heard what happened?" I mean, this is an incredible act of wickedness and injustice. According to Old Testament law, you would expect him to be indignant. Do you know what Jesus says? He says, "Do you suppose that these Galileans were worse sinners than other Galileans? I tell you no, but unless you repent you will likewise perish." He says the issue is not the injustice out there, the issue is the injustice in your heart. That's the issue with God. That's the first issue always. He goes on to say, "You remember what happened when the Tower of Siloam fell over last year and killed 18 people in Jerusalem? Do you think those Judeans were worse sinners than other Judeans? I tell you no. This tragedy that happened was a reminder that all of you are going to die and meet God, unless you repent you will likewise perish."

He's saying that what matters most is people's eternal souls and so the question is do we care about people's souls? Are we lovers of souls like Jesus is? The bottom line as Christians is we are to be people who are wise and prudent. Proverbs 18:2 says, "A fool delights in revealing his own mind, but a wise man seeks understanding." The mind of the prudent acquires knowledge, and the ear of the wise seeks knowledge. Proverbs 18:13, "He who gives an answer before he hears, It's folly and shame to him." We're not to give answers and judgments before we know. We're to be concerned. We're to mourn with those who mourn even while we're waiting, of course, but we're to be people who are pursuing truth because God is like that and it is really good to know that God is not someone who makes rash decisions. There's nothing in your life that will happen to you where God is going to say, "Whoops, I got ahead of myself." He's thought everything out perfectly. He's considered every contingency. He's taken it all into account and everything he does is done with perfect knowledge and wisdom. Now you and I can never have perfect knowledge and wisdom but we are to seek more and more and more to have enough to base our evaluations on. And that's sound judgment. Sound judgment is when you don't make a decision based on your previous preconceived ideas, you look at a circumstance, you lay those preconceived ideas down and you say, "What are the facts of this circumstance?"

And that's what really it means to love people and we're called to love all people. We're called to love people with different color skin than us, of course, because it doesn't really matter, biblically there is really physically the Bible says there is only one race, Adam's race. And if there are two, there is a sense in which there are two races, there's the people of God and there's everybody else. Whoever belongs to Jesus is my brother and my sister and we are to love one another, we are to understand one another, we're to pursue life

together with each other, we're to deal with the difficult issues of life, the confounding things and we're to listen to one another, to ask questions of one another, to try to show the value that we hold with another person to really listen and not prejudge what they're gonna say, anticipate, assume. And in knowing them like that, we love them and we're able to help them and we're able to point them to Christ, and when we do that, we're magnifying Jesus. That's what he has called us to do.

Let's go to the Lord in prayer.

*Our Father, how grateful we are for Your perfect wisdom and, Lord, we pray that You would help us be people who are like You made us to be. Lord, You made us to be people who make meaning and order and we do see things and we interpret and we're supposed to do that, but help us to be wise. Help us to be patient. Help us to be kind all along the way. Help us to be gracious toward those who don't know You, who are at times very upset about things. Help us to understand how a gentle answer turns away wrath and how we can minister love and grace to everyone we come in contact with. Help us to understand that it's not about winning an argument, it's about exalting a Savior. Help us to know that all that matters, Lord, is Jesus and all that matters is the souls of men, and help us, Lord, be lovers of souls like Jesus. We pray in his name. Amen.*