

## ***Discerning Truth and Error about God's Grace (Part 6)***

### **DISCERNING TRUTH AND ERROR ABOUT GOD'S GRACE**

I am talking about what I have been on the last several sessions: discerning truth and error about the grace of God. This is the fifth message I have given on this. Tonight I want to focus in on how God feels when He gives us grace. There are a lot of confusing ideas about the emotions of God, but the Bible gives us some clarity about that.

### **FOUNDATIONAL TRUTHS**

Paragraph A. God feels different emotions related to how His people respond to Him. Some believers live confused about how God feels and how God is thinking about them at different seasons and stages of their life. They do not know whether He is mad, glad, or sad, and He has all of those emotions. He can be mad, He becomes sad or grieved, and He has tremendous joy when He relates to His people. He has all three of these emotions related to believers. What we do not want to do is think God is mad, when in fact, He is delighting in us, and that happens many times.

Many times the truth is: God is delighting in a sincere believer, but because the believer does not understand the truth, and they are imagining God is relating to them like an earthly authority figure that they might have in their mind, and they live with a spirit of condemnation; when the truth is that God is delighting in them all along. That is tragic because it kills their joy, and they end up running from God instead of to God.

### **GOD WANTS TO ESTABLISH OUR HEARTS IN CONFIDENCE**

One of the central concepts of the bridal paradigm, or the kingdom of God through the lens of a bride, is the fact that God wants to establish our hearts in confidence, even in our weakness. If we feel confident in God's heart towards us while we are maturing, we will mature at a far greater pace, at a far greater speed; because we will run to Him with an open spirit instead of running from him in condemnation and shame. It is critical that we have understanding of how God feels because if we do not we shut our spirit down, and we retreat because we think He is mad, when the fact is that He is glad and He is delighting in us.

Well there is the other extreme. There are times when people believe the Lord is delighting in them—I am talking about believers who are living in compromise—they have perverted the Word of God, and they have perverted and distorted ideas about grace: where God is always mad. I mean, He is always glad no matter what, and everything is OK because God is the God of love. That is a distortion of the grace of God. It is a view of God's grace where God is never mad, or never sad, that is a distortion too, and they live in presumption. There are even believers who live that way, and many false religions have an idea of a God who is all-accepting no matter what. That is not the truth of the Word.

### **GOD'S FAVOR IS TOWARD US**

Paragraph B. We receive His grace, His favor, and His righteousness, which are the same thing. He likes us. His favor is toward us because of what Jesus did on the cross. He does not feel joy over everyone. He does not feel happy over everyone. He loves everyone, but He does not delight in everyone, but because of what Jesus did on the cross, it removes the obstacles that keep God's joy from being expressed toward us. God loves the world, He loves everybody, but the sin problem hinders God releasing His joy to us and having joy in us. When Jesus went to the cross, He paid the debt, the hindrance is removed, and the joy that God wants to have He is now able to express without violating any of His righteousness or justice.

Jesus went to the cross. We know that. He died for us; however, there is Christianity 101—I know we all know this—but we have to repent to receive it. Some, again, distort the message of the grace of God: that grace means everybody is OK. I am OK; you are OK, because God is filled with grace. They minimize or even completely neglect the requirement of the change of attitude of repentance.

### **REPENTANCE IS A CHANGE OF ATTITUDE**

Now we know, in paragraph B, that repentance is a change of attitude. It is a turning from sin and to God. There are two parts of repentance, it is not just turning from sin kind of into neutral, it is not turning to God while we are sinning. Some people do that. They say, "I love God," but they do not turn from their sin. Both of them are distinct parts of repentance, and they are different. One of them does not automatically guarantee the other one in people's thinking. Now if you really turn to God, you must turn from sin, but they are thinking, "Oh, I just love God."

I used to have friends, back in the old hippie days, in the 60's and 70's, they were getting high all the time on pot, and loving God, you know, just going for it. There are all kinds of other versions of that today. Man, they were high on God and several other things.

### **SINCERE REPENTANCE DESPITE UNSETTLED ISSUES**

Paragraph C. Talking about repentance, because you have to stress repentance, but the problem with the stressing repentance is overdoing it, and then the sincere believer misinterprets it. Truth is like a razor edge, it is so easy to get into distortion one way or the other. We want to stress repentance, and so it is the sincere ones who say, "Repentance? I want to do it so right that I imagine that I am never doing it right. I am always in false repentance because it is never enough," so they never, ever get into a place where they are enjoying confidence in their relationship with God while they are growing up, while they still have unsettled issues in their life.

### **THE PURSUIT OF FULL OBEDIANCE**

So I just need to say, paragraph C: the pursuit of full obedience. That is what we are after, that is what repentance means: we are going after God 100 percent. We have set our heart. The pursuit is very different from the attaining of it, but the setting of the heart to go after it is what God calls repentance. The attaining of it comes little by little over time. The genuine setting of our heart is what God cares about.

### **THE LORD IS PLEASED WHEN WE SET OUR HEARTS TO OBEY HIM**

The Lord is pleased with us, paragraph C, this is very important. The Lord is pleased with us from the time we set our heart to obey Him, long before our obedience is ever mature. Beloved, you need to know that those who are most sincere are the ones who misapply the emphasis of repentance, because they are repenting but they are so sincere to obey God that they never imagine that repentance is ever genuine. So they never ever have the sense of confidence that God is delighting in them, that God is enjoying them, so they are never in the love relationship dynamic. They are always at a distance hoping God will forgive them as a slave who is serving Him, and the truth is that God is delighting in them. The truth is in the Word, but they have not taken time, or they have been mistaught the Word of God because the Word is the answer to getting clarity; the teaching of the Word.

## **REPENT AND RENEW YOUR COMMITMENT TO WAR**

Now those who have sincere repentance, paragraph C, here is how you know if you have sincere repentance . . . It does not mean you never stumble because you will. You will stumble many times after you sincerely repent, meaning you will come up short of the light you have. You will obey less than that which God has given you, but when we repent and quickly renew our commitment to war against the thing we sinned against, then we know that our repentance is sincere.

## **START AGAIN**

So a guy goes out and does whatever he does. He knows he is wrong, and in the heat of the moment, whether it is anger or lust or lie or greed or covetousness or bitterness or anger, whatever it is, he expresses some expression of his lustful, sinful nature, and he is grieved. If he repents and renews, says, "Lord, I repent. I am declaring war. I am getting right back," he fell off of the horse so to speak. "I am getting right back in the saddle. I am jumping right back in the war. I am taking up where I left off seven minutes ago. I am back in it. I am going for it." Beloved, that is sincere repentance. You can have confidence that the Lord is delighting in you while you are growing. You will do that thousands of times over your spiritual life, if not tens of thousands of times: come up short of the light that God has given you in terms of your obedience. You do that which you know from the Lord you are not to do: in attitude, or in action or word; and then we get right back in and say, "Lord, I call that sin, and I declare war on it right now." Now you may stumble in it before the end of the day again or tomorrow, but you get right back in and declare war. In time, in time, you will get victory according to the light that you have. Then what happens is that the Lord increases the light. We get victory in a certain issue, and the Lord says, "OK, now that you have victory there in the grace of God, now I am going to give you more light in that area, and I am going to lift the standard." We start again. We come up short, we blow it, we repent, and we jump back into the battle.

## **IMMATURITY IS NOT THE SAME AS REBELLION**

Paragraph D. Very important point: spiritual immaturity is not the same thing as rebellion. This is really important to understand. Now we have said that so many times over the years. Many of the teachers here . . . if you have been around a couple of years, then you have heard that so many times. Some of you who have just been around a short amount of time, you need to get that really clear. Spiritual immaturity, stumbling, coming up short does not mean you are a rebel. It does not mean you are in rebellion. At times, spiritual immaturity, in the life of a sincere

believer is what I mean, they are sincere, they are just immature. There are times where, outwardly, it looks the same. They may, say, have the same outburst of anger. The person rebellious toward God, and the spiritually immature person who is sincere may have the same outburst, but it is coming from a totally different heart response. One is a sincere believer who is longing to love God and please Him, and they were overtaken. You know, kind of when things settle down, they say, "Ahh, this is not OK. It is not OK," and they feel that hot work of the Spirit touching their spirit. I know that one well.

### **THE HOT HAND OF THE LORD**

How many of you know what I mean by that hot hand of the Lord? You just feel like, "Oh my goodness." You feel smoke and nobody else can see it, but boy, you can feel it.

One guy said, "I do not get that."

I say, "Well, it is like when you get embarrassed and your face turns red. It is like your spirit gets embarrassed. You have that heat on your spirit. I just know that it so well. I can describe it."

The Lord is saying, "I do not like what you just said or what you just did. I just do not like that," and we declare war. We get back into the battle, and declare war against it. The Lord is looking at the heart.

### **PREMEDITATED SIN GRIEVES THE LORD**

The immature sincerely repents, but the person who is rebellious, they actually premeditate their sin. They are thinking, "It is Wednesday," and they are planning on sinning Friday night. They make the phone calls. They set it up. They arrange it. They fully plan to go sin on the weekend, and I want to say this: that is serious error for a person. For a believer that can plan sin a day or a month ahead of time and pull it off, if they are truly born again, they are in spiritual ICU. They are in intensive care. They are very, very sick spiritually if they can do that. If it is OK, I mean, they may try it once. They may try it a few times. If they can live in that pattern, then I would go as far to say that if they live a lifestyle like that, then I would question if they are born again. Whether they grew up in a Christian home or whether they are in ministry, it doesn't matter, I would question that a person who could live like that is born again. If they are born again, certainly they are in intensive care ward. They are really spiritually on the edge. That is very serious.

That is a very serious condition; to be able to plan sin in a day, or a week, or a month, and then to think about it for hours and days, and then to execute it, and then afterward say, “You know, I feel bad about that. I am going to plan on it next weekend as well.” The Lord is very grieved about that. That is not OK, and for people to claim, as we use the terminology around here, the bridal paradigm: the view of the kingdom of God where Jesus is a Bridegroom, so it is OK. That is deception.

So premeditated sin, sin that you are actually planning on, you are setting it up for tomorrow; if that shows up a whole lot, you need to seriously ask the Lord if you are saved, honestly. I know that that is a heavy statement, but it could be a life saving statement for you, a spiritually life saving statement for you. Because you grew up in the church does not mean you are born again.

### **TRYING TO GET FREE FROM SIN**

Ask the Holy Spirit. Say, “Holy Spirit, I am troubled by the ease of which I continually just say no to You.” Now, again, there is a difference between getting in the heat of the moment in anger, our pride, our defensiveness, we are under pressure and there is deception, we are covetous, lustful, and many different types of lust; in the heat of the moment, and then we see it, and then we declare it as sin, we declare war on it: that is an immature believer who is sincere in their faith, even though they will stumble over it again. They true in their heart, they are trying to think of a way to get free from that sin. They are not trying to find a way to not get caught in it. They are trying to get free from it at the heart level. That is the difference. So you are sinning. Are you trying to find a way to do it and not get caught, or are you trying to figure out some way to get free from this thing at the heart level, and if you are trying to find a way to get free, that is the genuine spirit of repentance.

### **GOD LOVES UNBELIEVERS**

Roman numeral II. God loves unbelievers. God so loved the world. We all know that, but here is the point I want to make: He loves unbelievers. They have no regard for Him, but He loves them, but He does not approve of them. That is an important concept because as humans we do not have a grid to really love someone, to give everything to them, like God gave His only Son, and to be in total disapproval of the way that they are living. Now there are times I have seen people do that, a parent or a spouse, where the children or one of the spouses is just way out there, and they are staying steady. That is rare, but I have seen that. You do not

see it much. The idea that God could love the world but be in significant disapproval of the individuals in the world, yet still love them in truth; that confuses people because of the doctrine that God loves the world; they confuse it with, "I am OK, you are OK, and everything is OK," and it is not OK.

### **GOD BLESSES ALL**

Paragraph B. God actually gives blessings to evil people, but He does not approve of them even though He is blessing them. Now the reason we struggle with that is because we would never do that. We have no grid of blessing profusely the people that we are against. We do not have any grid for that whatsoever, except for by the grace of God and a renewed mind, then we will do that, but this is a very difficult concept to understand. The reason we have to understand it is because God's blessing is on people, and the people assume it is His approval, because they are thinking of it through a human standpoint. God's love is so superior that He can continue to bless. It says, "He causes the sun to shine on the evil and the good. He sends the rain on the unjust." He provides economics, many things, health, and much prosperity to evil men. He is really against them, and they do not have any grid for that, they confuse it. The Word is really clear about it, but they do not know the Word at all, so they do not understand it.

### **GOD ENJOYS AND DELIGHTS IN BELIEVERS**

Roman numeral III. God enjoys and delights in believers. Now the point I am making is that God loves unbelievers; He does not enjoy them, but He loves them. He enjoys a brand new believer. The day you are born again, the obstacles that are hindering God's embrace being released to you and God's enjoyment of you, those obstacles are removed because Jesus paid for them. The day you become born again is the day God moves from loving you only, to now enjoying you. He does not enjoy you only after you mature. He actually enjoys you the moment you are born again, and your heart is sincere toward Him, and you are just completely filled with all kinds of unsettled issues in your life. You do not have much light. The only understanding you have is obey Jesus, say no to sin, and you hardly know what sin is, you know?

### **GROWING IN MATURITY**

I remember after I was born again, I went on in a number of issues, and people told me it was sinful, but I couldn't believe it. I really could not. The hardest thing, I will just say that when I was born again, the hardest thing for me to understand was why cussing was sinful. I was a crazy cusser. I mean, I had the foulest mouth you

could imagine because I grew up in the neighborhood where we thought, you know, "Pass the milk," they just had other words. Everybody did that. It was not the milk they were passing, and when I was born again I was with Christians, I would say those words in my prayers, and they were horrified, the older Christians.

I would say, "Why does God care if I mention body parts? Why does He care? He knows they exist."

My leaders would say, "Bickle, just sit down. Listen, look us in the eye. You cannot talk like this."

I would say, "I cannot for the life of me get why this bothers God. It is only words." Anyway, I could go on and on about several other issues, but I will not go there. I think I am going to lose some of you. You are going to say, "I cannot even pay attention now. I wonder what you were like. You were a mess." I was a mess.

### **THE LORD DELIGHTS IN NEW BELIEVERS**

OK, Roman numeral III. Getting back on this. We do not have much light the day we are born again, but I was obeying all the light I had. I just did not have much, and the Lord delighted in me. He delights in you the day you are born again. He does not delight in you only five years later, when you have gone through all the classes, all the courses; when you have proved yourself. It is not that. He delights in you from the very beginning. He enjoys you. Beloved, this is an important revelation to get really clear on.

### **GOD DELIVERED ME BECAUSE HE DELITED IN ME**

One of my favorite verses in over 35 years of walking with the Lord, I hope it is not too revealing why it is one of my favorite verses. When King David had lived in 14 months of compromise, the day he repented after 14 months in Ziklag, actually 16 months, not that it matters. Psalm 18:19, the day that he repented after 16 months, he said (paraphrased): "God delivered me because He delighted in me."

I could just imagine David's friends as he is singing this song. I can just imagine the person coming up to him and saying, "Why did God just deliver you?" because he had a tremendous deliverance on that day.

Instead of David saying, "Because God is merciful," but "Because He likes me."

I can imagine them saying, “He liked David? We have been with you for 16 months. We know where your heart has been.”

### **FIRST-CLASS CITIZEN STATUS**

David still loved God, but he was in compromise in Ziklag for 16 months, but he knew on the day that he repented, he knew God delighted in him, and that was one of David's greatest strengths. David was an aggressive repenter, I mean, he repented hard, and he believed in God's delight. The day he repented he was back into a first-class citizen status with God. He felt comfortable with God. He knew that God delighted in him. He could talk with God. What he said to Him moved God's heart the day he repented. Beloved, that is a powerful revelation to see that.

### **RUN TO HIM, NOT FROM HIM**

I want to offer you Psalm 18:19 as one of your favorite verses for the next 30 years, it has worked well for me. It is a great verse because it will cause your spirit to be open. You will run to Him instead of from Him, because what our natural tendency to do is to repent and to put ourselves on three months of probation. We put ourselves in time-out for three months, and we do all the spiritual disciplines, and if we can hang in there for three months, then we get our confidence back; but the problem with that regime is that if you get your confidence by doing good, then you end up becoming proud when you do good. Wherever you get your confidence from is where your pride is going to be, and our confidence is in Him and who He is. He looks at our feeble repentance that is sincere, but it is still weak. It is imperfect, but it is sincere, and because of who He is, He delights in us. That is why we have confidence.

### **THE LORD DELIGHTS IN YOU**

Paragraph B. Isaiah 62 the Lord says, (v. 4) “You shall be called be called Hephzibah”—and the word Hephzibah means—“the Lord delights in you” (paraphrased). This is what God declares over His people. Beloved, our relationship with Jesus the King is a relationship with Jesus the Bridegroom King. He is not only a King. He is a Bridegroom King. He has power. He is a King, He has a kingdom, but He has the heart of a Bridegroom. He has a heart with delight and a heart with joy to the people who relate to Him as a King. He is a Bridegroom King. Look at this in verse 5 (paraphrased): “...as the bridegroom rejoices over the bride, in the same way God rejoices.” God has anticipation and joy over weak and broken people, who love Him, I mean, their love is weak. Their love is immature.

Their love wavers, but it is sincere. It is just not mature. The Lord actually delights in them.

### **THERE IS NO PROBATION**

Well the question becomes, you know, “If you repent today, how long are you on probation?” You are not on probation at all. You do not have to wait a week to see if you really make it. The Lord will immediately begin to rejoice over you. This is really important, I mean, it is an issue of life and death spiritually for people, because it is when they repent and they are sincere, but they have a wrong image of God. They have wrong teaching. They cannot feel confident in God’s presence; so the Word is boring, prayer is boring, worship is boring because they are imagining a God who is scowling at them when they are worshipping, “Oh you again. Yeah right, I saw what you did yesterday.” That is not what He is like. He is actually rejoicing over us. The moment we repent and line up and agree with Him, to repent means to agree with Him. It is the same thing.

### **I WILL CARRY YOU**

Look at this story here—the parable of Luke 15 (paraphrased): “What man . . . having 100 sheep,” Jesus is telling this story in Luke 15:4, “does not leave the ninety-nine . . . and go after the one? When he has found the one”—this is the part I want you to get. This guy, the sheep, this guy is way off the path. He is talking about humans. He is making an analogy, but He is talking about us. He is talking about those who are the people of God. He is talking about sheep, those who are God’s before they got off the path, that is what He is talking about. Look at what Jesus says,—“He lays that sheep upon his shoulders” (paraphrased). Jesus picks up this sheep, puts it on His shoulders, and He is walking back to the right path because the sheep does not have enough strength to get back on the path, so He carries us. He helps us. Is He complaining? No, He is rejoicing all the way back.

### **HE WILL INTERVENE**

When you and I get on the wrong path, and we repent, we say, “Lord, we are really stuck. We are in something that . . . We ask you to help us. Lord, we agree to come against this, but it is in our heart. The problem is that we are in a situation where our heart is really bound, and we ask You, God, to help us change our heart.” Even the prayer for God to help you change our heart, you are really saying, “Would You pick me up out of the mud? I am totally stuck in the mud,” because if the sheep are in the mud, many times they will kick, but they cannot get out of the mud. The shepherd actually has to carry them. He has to intervene.

## **I WILL CARRY YOU**

So what is the shepherd feel like while His is intervening? “When I get you home, you are going to get a whipping, boy.” No, when the shepherd intervenes, he puts the sheep on his shoulder. He says, “I will carry you. You cannot get out of the mud. I will intervene and help you. I will break in and create a way of escape for you.” He carries us in His strength, and He is rejoicing all the way. God is not complaining.

Jesus is telling us this story because He is talking about how He feels when somebody in the sheepfold gets off the path into a wrong place. He is not saying how He feels toward unbelievers. He does the same way, but He is talking about how He feels toward believers. He is talking about sheep here.

## **REJOICE IN THE DAY OF REPENTANCE**

Luke 15:6 (paraphrased): “When he gets back to the right path”—I mean, gets back to the ranch so to speak—he calls his friends, and he says to them, “Rejoice with me” (v. 6, paraphrased). “Not only am I rejoicing,” says Jesus, “but I want everyone who knows My heart, everyone who is My friend—I want them to enter into a spirit of joy with Me.” So when the guy repents, Jesus has joy. Do not say, “Well, we will see how long that repentance lasts.” Beloved, if the repentance lasts a day, may you be found rejoicing in the day in which the repentance was there.

Now we cannot really read people's hearts that well, but when someone says they repent, it does not mean that you fully trust everything they say from that point on. They have been living in darkness, but there needs to be a spirit of rejoicing with Jesus, because Jesus is rejoicing if they repent. Then He goes on to say, “There is joy in Heaven. There is joy in Heaven over a sinner who repents” (Lk. 15:7, paraphrased). Again, He is talking about someone who is among the sheepfold who lost their way. There is joy. There is not probation. There is not skepticism. There is not, “Wait and see.” There is joy the day they repent. Beloved, the day they repent there is joy.

## **GOD HAS NOT WRITTEN US OFF**

Paragraph D. God smiles over our life in a general sense. I say “our,” meaning sincere believers, which is the vast majority, if not everyone, in this room. He smiles over our life. There are weaknesses in our life, but He smiles. He might deal with a particular sin, but in the general sense He esteems our life and He has

pleasure over our life. It is like a parent can have a son or a daughter where there is an issue that they are in disapproval over, but they really love their child. God is the same way. God does not define our life by one issue. He sees that we are stuck in an area, we are crying out for help, but He has not written us off. We are trying to get unstuck from this mud, but we are really stuck at the heart level, and we hate it that we are stuck. We hate it, but we are stuck.

The Lord is on our team. He likes us, and He says, "I am not writing you off, and I like that you are crying out to Me to help you that you are stuck, that you cannot get free yourself. I will intervene in time," but He wants us to know that we are not defined by the one area that we are struggling with, or the two areas or whatever the number is.

### **DEFINED BY WHO WE ARE IN CHRIST JESUS**

My point is that God defines us by who we are in Christ Jesus. There is a yes in our spirit. When we were born again, the Holy Spirit worked a yes in our spirit. The day we were born again we begin to say, "Lord, we want to say yes to you." The yes in our spirit was imparted by the Holy Spirit by the grace of God, and Jesus sees that yes, and He likes it, and part of the way that He defines you is through the gift of righteousness, but He also defines you by the yes, the longing in your heart to obey Him.

That obedience is not mature yet, but the longing is there. You are saying, "Lord, I am stuck, but I want help." You are crying out. You are even fasting and praying. You are crying out, but you are still stuck. I want to assure you that the Lord has not defined you by the area you are stuck in. He sees the cry in your spirit, and He sees the blood of Jesus, the Father does when He looks at you.

### **WEAK LOVE IS NOT ALWAYS FALSE LOVE**

Paragraph E. Our love for God, when our love for God is weak, it can still be true. It can still be true love. Weak love is not always false love. Weak love for God is immature. It is not false. It is still love. It is just weak. In our attitudes, in our speech, in our habits there are things that are displeasing to the Lord, and we are warring against them. Now we only have a little bit of light. When the Lord turns the light up over the years, you think, "Oh my goodness, I was really stuck. I thought I was stuck, but I was really stuck back then."

### **I AM DARK BUT LOVELY TO GOD**

Beloved, God sees genuine love in a person whose love for Him is still weak. This really changes the way you approach God. It gives you confidence to go stand before Him. When I have confidence that, as the Song of Solomon 1 says, “I am dark in heart” (Song 1:5, paraphrased) what she means in the allegorical interpretation, the spiritual interpretation is, “I am dark in my heart, but I am lovely to God.” When you feel lovely while you are growing, you will grow much faster. If you feel shame all the time while you are growing, you will grow spiritually very slowly because most of the time when you approach God you will be retreating and hiding from Him.

### **WORSHIP WITH AN OPEN SPIRIT**

In your heart you will be thinking, “Oh, I do not want intimacy. No, it is only going to show how false I am.” Then when we do worship God, we worship God with our spirit covered, and what I mean by that is that instead of an open spirit—what I mean by a covered spirit—I am just making up a term, it is not a theological term. Those times—and most of you understand this—I have done this plenty of times—in my early years especially—I would worship God, “I love You. I love You. I love You. I promise I will not sin if You will forgive me just one more time.”

### **QUIT TRYING TO NEGOTIATE WITH GOD**

I was always negotiating trying to get God to take me seriously and to forgive me, and the Lord, eventually through the Word, said, “Quit negotiating with Me,” because when you are negotiating with God while you are worshipping, your spirit is closed all the time because you are guarded because you feel like you are going to get rebuked by God if you just relaxed.

So if you are worshipping, “I love You. I love You. I really mean it this time. God, I really mean it, if you answer me this one prayer, I will never ask again,” as though God is broke and He does not have any money to give or He does not have any power. I used to in the early days try the old, “This is the last time I will ask it if You will just answer me once.”

You know, finally the Lord got clear to me, “I am not poor. I have lots of time. I have lots of money. I have lots of power.

You do not have to do the old ‘one more time if You will just do this.’ Forget that.” Well I know some of you relate to that. There you go. I got you.

### **GOD DELIGHTS IN GIVING US COMPASSION OR IN SHOWING US MERCY**

Roman numeral IV. God delights in giving us compassion. God delights in showing us mercy. It is the same chapter, Luke 15. It is a different parable. Jesus feels compassion over the prodigal, not just rejoicing. Compassion is different than rejoicing. They certainly go together. They overlap, but you will notice that it says in verse 18, here is the prodigal. The prodigal means the true son. In both of these situations the son is in the family. It is not an unbeliever. We often read the prodigal son for the unbeliever. The prodigal son is to a believer who knows better. It is to us, and we can use it for an unbeliever, the Lord does not mind. The Holy Spirit will use it, but it is talking about people who are in the family who are in covenant with God who know better and they still go off the path. Luke 15 needs to be one of your favorite chapters in the Bible because there are three parables. Just one after the other God tells us how He feels toward those who are His who do not live right.

### **LUKE 15 IS ABOUT BELIEVERS**

I wore out Luke 15 in my earlier years, and I have appealed to it many times since then, but in verse 18 the son, the born-again believer in our context, came to his senses and he said, “Father, I have sinned,” He is dealing with his real father, I mean, in our sense God is really our Father. We are talking about believers.

### **THE FATHER RUNS TO HIS SON**

“He arose and he came to his father. But when he was still a great way off, his father saw him” (Lk 15:20, paraphrased) Now Jesus is revealing God the Father. The Father sees us even at a long way off. The Father has compassion, compassion, not, “When you finally get to this porch, you are in trouble.” Your Father feels. He feels powerfully. he sees the son coming up, you know, coming up over the . . . he can see him at a distance. He cannot see his face, but he knows the way he walks. He says, “That is my son.” It says here that the father ran, because in the ancient world—just because of the protocol of society—the father would remain seated, and the son would come in a posture of humility and humble himself. The father gets out of his chair and he runs—this is completely against the protocol of that society.

The people who are hearing Jesus are saying, “Wow. Even the father with a compassionate heart would not do that.”

And Jesus would say, “Yes, that is true, but your Heavenly Father is not like you.”

### **HE WILL TAKE TEN**

Beloved, I tell you, you take one step, He will take ten. He will run, He will fall on your neck, and He will kiss you. We are talking about the day the guy repents. We are not talking about the year later when he came home from Bible school, and he got top honors in the class, we are talking about the day he repents. There is nobody who loves like this, except the grace of God is moving on them.

### **IN THE FATHER'S FULL FAVOR**

Look at verse 22 (paraphrased): “The father said to the servant, ‘Bring out the best robe and the ring and the sandals.’” In other words, the robe, the ring, and the sandals are statements of favor and honor. Each one of them is symbolic. They are powerful, but it is a first-class citizen. We are talking about the day he repents he is in the father's full favor. His prayer life works, right that day.

### **CONFIDENT THAT GOD DELIGHTS IN MERCY**

Paragraph B. God delights to show us mercy. He wants us confident, He wants us to have confidence that He delights in it.

### **COMPASSION TO RENEW THE RELATIONSHIP**

Paragraph C. Lamentations 3, beloved, the Lord's mercy—because of His mercies we are not consumed—you could put in the words, “we are not wiped out. We are not over. We are not finished,” that is what consumed means. Because of His mercies we are not finished; we are not wiped out. Because His compassions never, ever fail, but this is only to the people who repent, because if the person does not repent, the compassions of God are restrained because God gives compassion to renew the relationship. He does not give compassion so that we can feel comfortable sinning. He gives compassion to renew the relationship. That is what the compassion is for. Some people get confused. They think mercy is kind of like a disconnected entity. Mercy is so that we will restore the relationship and walk with God in agreement, which is called righteousness.

## **A BRAND NEW BEGINNING AND A NEW DAY**

Look at verse 23 (paraphrased): “His mercies, His compassions are new every single day,” every day, if today is the day you blow it, tomorrow you wake up with a brand new beginning. Every day His mercies are new if you will take them. The guy totally blows it, and we could tell them with confidence, “You repent, you are a first-class citizen right now, and I tell you, tomorrow morning when you wake up, it is a completely new day in God. God is the God of the second chance, and He gives us a million of those.” It is fantastic.

## **PUSH DELETE**

Paragraph D. I have said this phrase for years. Sometimes it gets misunderstood. I tell people, “When you repent, just push delete and stand in confidence. Push delete because God is pushing delete, in turns of His affections being released toward you and His joy.” There still may be some consequences in the natural realm that you have created, you know, you knock the dominos down, and there is a cause and effect with bad decisions. I am not saying all the consequences are gone, but in terms of God’s emotion, you can push delete.

## **LOCATE THE THOUGHT PATTERNS THAT KEEP US SINNING**

Now when I tell people to push delete, I do not mean that they should not inquire of the Lord, and even others, as to why it is that they keep sinning in this pattern. I have encouraged many people—whether you call it counseling or whatever you call it—to get with another person who can help you discover the places in your heart where you have wrong ideas of God—wrong ideas of life—why you keep stumbling. Some people just say, “Well, I just push delete.” Delete is in relation to receiving God’s emotions. It does not mean the consequences are going to go away, but it does not mean that your wrong thought patterns are going to be cured instantly. We need to solve, to locate the thought patterns that help us to keep sinning in the same way.

## **DISCONNECT FROM SINFUL PATTERNS**

There is much to be said about people receiving counsel from one another because really what counseling is—if it is Biblical, and that is the only kind that I recommend—the guy says, “I am in counseling. I am a mess,” no, counseling is just tailor made Bible study. That is really all that counseling is. If you have a question, and the guy or gal takes Biblical principles and applies them to a wrong mindset, you say, “Oh, I get it.” When we change our paradigm of God, ourselves, or how life works, then we disconnect from sinful patterns. It does not mean we are

never going to sin again, but we have a whole different opportunity to not stumble in that area. So when I say push delete, I am talking about in terms of God's emotions. God says, "Everything is out of the way. I am enjoying you. You still may have to have consequences in the natural realm because there is a cause-effect dimension, and you still need to find out why it is that you keep doing this. If you cannot find out yourself through the Word, get with somebody and say, "Hey, can you help me? Can you see the blind spots?" Get with someone who is skilled in the Word, even a little bit.

### **GOD UNDERSTANDS OUR WEAKNESS**

Paragraph E. God understands our weakness far more than we understand it. God does not discipline us to the degree that we deserve it, nor does He change the way He feels about us when our weaknesses manifest. This is fantastic! Look at Psalm 103, (v. 11) "For as high as the heavens are above the Earth, so great is God's mercy to those who fear Him." How high is the solar system from the planet? I mean, we are in the solar system, bad analogy . . . how high is something up there than the Earth? That is how great God's mercy is. I mean, you are not going to out-sin the mercy of God. That is the point. Here is the part, verse 14, that I want to point out, "For God knows our frame. God remembers we are dust" (paraphrased). He remembers we are weak. He does not forget. We forget, but He does not.

### **GOD IS NOT SHOCKED**

I remember the time that I was just in my teens, and I said, "Oh no, I did it." I said the most arrogant statement as I was crying out to God, "Can You believe it?" Like God was shocked because I was.

I can imagine, I did not hear anything, but I can imagine the Lord saying, "Hey, little guy, there is a whole lot more where that came from."

### **GOD REMEMBERS WE ARE JUST FLESH**

Psalm 78 is a grand passage. You want to read the whole passage. It is a grand passage; yes, many times God turned His anger away, and He did not stir up all of His wrath! Many times He restrained what they deserved. Why? He remembered they were just flesh. God has a tender remembrance of how weak we are. He is not shocked when we are because we are shocked in our religious pride, we cannot fathom that we were capable of it, but God knows we are capable of much more. He is not thrown off in the relationship just because we are. He is not. He remembers.

## **GOD'S ENJOYMENT IS NOT THE SAME AS HIS APPROVAL**

Roman numeral V. God's enjoyment of us is not the same thing as His approval. The fact that God delights in us, even in our sincerity, does not mean that He approves of everything we are doing. We may not have understanding of the things we are doing that still have darkness in them, because He has only given us a little bit of light. I am thinking of those early on—well no, the most mature apostle still has very little light compared to the light they will have in the age to come—so this applies to everybody. So I tell people that God enjoys them, and some people make the mistake that; if God enjoys me, then I must not do any wrong, I can do no wrong. No, the fact that God likes you and He understands you does not mean He approves of everything you are doing. God can actually delight in you while you have an issue that He is against, and He can speak to you and continue to delight in you while you are working on this issue. Then He can help us in that issue, it is called discipline, Hebrews 12 (v. 5-11). He disciplines us, that is what Hebrews 12 is talking about. It is for our profit so we would remove the thing that hinders love in our life. It is holiness, that is what holiness is about. God disciplines us so that we remove the thing that is hindering holiness or hindering love.

## **GOD HAS TENDER PATIENCE**

Paragraph B. In the process of God enjoying us but still disapproving of an issue in our life, that is not confusing to God. That is sometimes confusing to people. They are all or none, as though God is. God has complexity in His emotion and diversity, and lots of ability in His emotions. He is not narrow-minded or His abilities or emotions are not narrow like ours. He can really enjoy us but put His finger in an area that He is insisting that we change, and He will discipline us with His delight if we do not. Here is what He does—paragraph B—He gives us time. He has tender patience, and sometimes His patience confuses us. We think, “Well, you know, I have been delivered from this issue. Now it is a month, a year, two years. Everybody forgot.”

## **GOD GIVES US TIME TO REPENT**

There is a verse I should have here Ecclesiastes 8:11, just write that one down. It says (paraphrased): “when the sentence of judgment is not executed quickly”—in other words, when the sentence of the judgment of God's discipline is withheld, He gives time—the sinner does not take it to heart. The sinner says, “I did not get in trouble. I guess God did not see, or He forgot,” and all that was happening is that God was being patient. Ecclesiastes 8:11.

Look at what He says to Jezebel, “I gave Jezebel time to repent and she did not, so I am going to cast her into a sick bed.” (Rev. 2:21-22, paraphrased) This is Jezebel, and Jesus is giving Jezebel time to repent. Just so that you are not confused, the Jezebel of Revelation 2 was an actual teacher in the city, in the church of Thyatira. This is not Jezebel in the days of Elijah—1 Kings 18 like 900 B.C. This is not the same Jezebel. Now could you imagine this gal’s upbringing? Her mom named her Jezebel—her dad—that tells you a little something about their family circle. OK, I mean, the poor girl had a wrong—you know—the cement dried the wrong way. Let’s put it that way. That is not the point, but sometimes people get confused and they think that is Jezebel from 900 years earlier from 1 Kings 18-19, which is King Ahab’s wife who was against Elijah. This is not, this is a different person with the same name. Anyway, the point is that God gave her time to repent.

He says, you know, others are saying, “Just break her.”

The Lord says, “No, no, I am going to give her time. I am going to give her every chance in My mercy to repent. I am against what she is doing, but I am still for her, I am still—in My heart—working to get her to repent.”

### **DO NOT TAKE HIS TENDER PATIENCE FOR GRANTED**

Beloved, when God is being tender in His patience with us, do not be presumptuous with that and say, “Well, you know, I am doing wrong things with money and the months have turned into years. Nobody has ever caught me. Heaven does not seem to be looking.” I am doing it relationally, or I am doing it in some kind of abuse—something you are putting in your body whether drink or food or substance or something—you say, “Well, the Lord still seems to be with me.” Do not take His tender patience for granted. Do not say, “Well,” obey the Word. He is giving you time because He cares about you.

### **DIVINE CORRECTION IS NOT DIVINE REJECTION**

Paragraph C. Divine correction is not divine rejection, but rather, it is proof that He loves you. When God corrects us He disciplines, every believer has seasons of divine discipline. It is not that He is against you, because in the human arena, many parents when they correct they reject, they say, “Stop it. You are bad.” It means, “I do not want to relate to you right now. I do not want to embrace you. I do not have good feelings toward you.” So in the human arena, correction means emotional rejection, but it does not with God. It is the opposite. He corrects us because He delights in us. It is the exact opposite.

## **WISDOM IN LETTING THE WORD REBUKE YOU**

Jesus says here in Revelation 3 (v. 19, paraphrased): “As many as I love, I rebuke them—if I love them I actually rebuke them.” The Word of God touches our spirit with rebuke in it, but there is tenderness in the rebuke. It is not a railing rebuke. When He gives a rebuke—if you will read the Word and let the Word rebuke you—beloved, it is called wisdom. If you receive the rebuke of the Lord through the Word, it is called wisdom. If the Word does not work, then He will raise somebody up to say it to you. He will probably—usually—what I have witnessed in my own life and in the lives of others, God tries to speak to us through the Word.

We say, “no.”

## **LEVEL TWO: REBUKED IN A PUBLIC SETTING**

Then we come to a public setting. It is still anonymous. Nobody knows. He says, “I am speaking to you like I did this morning in your personal time with Me.” The preacher, the singer is saying it.

You say, “No.”

## **LEVEL THREE: PERSONAL REBUKE**

“OK, we will go to the next level then.” Then He raises up somebody to get in your face and say it.

“No.”

## **LEVEL FOUR: ANOTHER PERSONAL REBUKE**

He raises up the second one. “I bind you, Satan, in the name of Jesus.” It is not Satan; it is God.

## **LEVEL FIVE: CIRCUMSTANCES TO CHASTEN US**

Then He will use circumstances to get your attention because He cares so much about you. Beloved, we do not need to wait for circumstances to chasten us, because He will chasten us by His Word in our personal life. If we will receive His chastening, His discipline by the Word, He says, “OK, we did it.”

## **LEVEL SIX: PUBLIC WORD TO REBUKE**

Or say that we are responding a little slowly. Then He will use a public word, like some of you right now undoubtedly, you are thinking, "This might be the Lord."

"Forget it! It is the Lord. Stop sinning! Do not think it "might be," this is the Lord, He is talking to you."

You say, "It must be me."

"Yes, that is right. It is the Lord; It is you."

### **HE CARES ABOUT US**

I want to be disciplined by the Word or chastened by the Word. The Word chastens, it stings us. He tells us we are proud. He tells us we are disobedient. He tells us we are fleshly. The Word will chasten us, discipline us. He chastens everybody He loves. He rebukes us, but the rebuke goes more public, a friend—another friend or another person—you know—with some the police get involved, and the rebuke goes higher. Authority figures in the business or the work place, get involved. It takes it to another level beside friends. Then it comes to circumstances. He does care about us so much.

### **HE IS REALLY COMMITTED TO YOU**

Look at Proverbs 3, "Whom the Lord loves He corrects in the way a father corrects a son whom He delights in." God delights in us, but He would love to correct us only by the Word if we would take it, or by a friend, but He will keep bringing the level up if we need Him to. He will give us patience, but beloved, do not take His patience as though He did not see or He does not care. Take His patience is that He is really committed to you, but He is not just committed to getting you off the hook, He wants to go easy if you will say yes. He is committed to getting your attention, to getting my attention.

### **WHEN HE HAS GIVEN YOU OVER TO YOUR SIN**

Paragraph D. It is a terrible thing to get away with sin long term because when you get away with sin long term, it means that He has given you over to it. If God is no longer striving with you, I am thinking of the verse in Genesis 6 where it says, "The Spirit of God was striving with men in the days of Noah," Genesis 6:3 (paraphrased). The Spirit strives with us, strives. When the Spirit quits striving with you, the Lord is giving you over to it.

He says, “OK, you can have it your way. You can have your way.” Then the circumstances of bondage will get worse and worse because the first thing that will happen is not necessarily a negative circumstance in terms of a crisis, you know, out in your other circumstances, the first heavy thing is that we get in bondage to that area. The Lord says, “I will give you over to it. If you do not want to repent, I will give you over to it.” Beloved, there is a day in the realm of immorality in the realm of drugs, alcohol, and bitterness and anger, there is a time when a person is given over to what they want. The Lord says, “OK, you can have it if that is what you want, but it will be a relentless taskmaster to bring you to horrendous bondage and then way more severe circumstances will come later.”

### **THIS IS SERIOUS: YOU NEED TO ASK FOR CONVICTION**

If you think—if the Lord has been dealing with you, and you say, “I have not felt His dealing with me,” then beg Him to deal with you. Say, “Lord, wait, wait, wait, wait, wait. Let’s re-talk this through. Convict me. Convict me.” I am serious. Get serious about this. I do not think that there would be very many people in this room who would be in that condition. I mean, very possibly no one, but there might be one. God gives them over.

### **HE FEELS OUR PAIN WHEN HE IS DISCIPLINING US**

Paragraph E. God feels our pain even when He is disciplining us. He told Israel, “In all their affliction, God was afflicted” (Is. 63:9, paraphrased). That is what the prophet Isaiah is saying. When He is talking about here in Isaiah 63, He meant the divine discipline. The affliction was brought on because of their sin, and God was afflicting them, but God was pained while He was afflicting them. It was not a casual, distant thing. God says, “This hurts My heart in reality.”

### **WHEN GOD IS GRIEVED**

Paragraph F. Another type of emotions. God is grieved, which is different from anger. He is heartsick. God is sick in His heart, meaning He is in pain at the heart level, over lukewarm believers who will not respond to His goodness. He tells the Laodiceans, (Rev. 3:16, paraphrased) “I will vomit you out of My mouth.” He means—He does not mean, “I will cast you away”—He means, “You have hurt me so much that I am reacting to it. I feel it. I am sick over this. It is not that I have nothing to do with you,” because some people read that and think God casts them off. God says, “I take this so deeply personal that I cannot let it go. It actually has a hold of Me in a very deep way,” and that is how He feels. When He sees someone whom He has shown His goodness to, and now they are born again and have

become passive; He is not saying, “You are disgusting to me,” He is saying, “What you have done has grieved Me so much that My stomach is sick”—I do not mean in the physical sense, but in the spiritual sense—“My heart is sick. I am completely made sick by this.”

### **GRIEVING THE SPIRIT**

You know, you have heard of the situation of the guy who sees the situation that is so grievous that he vomits. It is not just that he tasted something; but in crisis and grieves about it, as though he sees a car wreck and it so hurts him. That is what Jesus is talking about, “It is really touching Me in a deep way.” We can grieve the Spirit. The Spirit can be quenched. The Spirit can have pain, sadness, and pain.

### **DO SPIRITUAL DISCIPLINE SO YOU CAN RECEIVE MORE**

OK, I am going to just leave you with this. I just mention that the spiritual discipline gets us in a position to receive more, not to earn more. God does not love you more when you are more disciplined. He gives you more because you position yourself to receive. He does not love you more. You do not earn more, He does not like you more. When I am fasting and praying and serving, it positions my heart to receive more from Him. It is a statement of my hunger, and then He says, “I will give you more because you are hungry for relationship.”

Amen. Let's stand.