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By Gene Hawkins

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Choices - You'll find that this is a power that God has given to us, and it's the greatest power that you have, and you are the only one that can make such a choice. We're going to discover some of these things as we go on into these various lessons, and find out how powerful such things are.

I am sure that most of you have seen the PAX'S TV show, "Twice in a Lifetime." The theme of the show is to get down to the end of a person's life, go before the great judge so to speak, look back over their lives and give them the chance to go back and redo it. Of course, scripture doesn't teach that at all, but what I want to point out from this, is that so often in those different episodes, there is one event, or one incident that cause a completely different direction in life than what they could have gone for. What we're going to notice a little bit in this first segment as we get on, is how that when someone makes a wrong choice there are a series of events that follow after that. Things just escalate from there, and so it is vitally important that we learn how to make right choices, and we're going to see how that if people were to go back and indeed correct the mistake, then they don't have to continue that pattern. We would like to realize today, that when we begin to make wrong choices in our youth, we begin to establish a pattern that's going to follow us the rest of our lives, and those patterns that we develop can be extremely, extremely destructive.

(Ecclesiastes 11:9) "Rejoice, O young man, in thy youth; and let thy heart cheer thee in the days of thy youth, and walk in the ways of thine heart, and in the sight of thine eyes: but know thou, that for all these things God will bring thee into judgment." Solomon is actually throwing the gate and the door wide open. "Rejoice, O young man, in thy youth; and let thy heart cheer thee in the days of thy youth." He is saying for us to have a good

time while we're young, and goes on to say, "Walk in the ways of your heart." This simply means to make your own decisions, and follow your own desires whatever those deep-seated desires might be. He is opening the door for you to make the decisions you want to make, and we have that choice, and that power. Notice further, "In the sight of thine eyes:" Go after whatever you can see, and even though we'll find walking by sight is not walking by faith, we still have that option. We can go after, and we can clamor after everything that we see in the sight of your eyes, "but know thou young man; know thou that for all these things God will bring you into judgment." This doesn't mean that God is just going to simply get us down to the end of our lives with no warnings, with no anything, point back over, bring us in for the judgment, and bring the hammer down.

That's the way that some people view the judgment seat of Christ, and that is simply not the way it is. What it does mean, and what everyone must realize is that God will hold us accountable for our decisions and choices, and there will come a day of reckoning, where that we are going to either enjoy the result of our choice and decision, or there's going to be tremendous hardship, and there's going to be a regret.

What I'm hopeful of accomplishing in our lessons this week, is to see that when we get a few years down the road, and it doesn't even have to be until we're in glory, we will not have to look back with regret and say I wish, I wish, I wish, I wish. Know assuredly that we will be held accountable for those choices, regardless of how frivolous, or how unthinking we may have been in making the choice.

Solomon goes on to say, (Ecclesiastes 11:10).

"Therefore remove sorrow from thy heart, and put away evil from thy flesh: for childhood and youth are vanity."

I would hasten to point out that he is talking to young people. You just don't get too young to start making good decisions, but sometimes people think well, I'll just go

ahead and have my fun, and then I will do it. No, we must learn early in life to make those good decisions, because when we do, we will establish a pattern that is going to be beneficial to us throughout the rest of our lives. So, "remove sorrow from your heart, and put away evil from your flesh," because these childhood romances and wrong choices are not just going to be dismissed and excused. Oftentimes, people think that, but they are not, and we are dealing with tremendously serious things in our lives.

Decisions must be made in such a way that evil is put away from our lives, very early in our lives. Choices must, and will be made in our youth that will affect the rest of our lives. Solomon goes on to say here, that "Childhood and youth are vanity," and it means emptiness in life is a result of wrong choices. There's no reason we need to get down a few years from where we are right now, and look back on our lives as being empty, nothing, and unfulfilled. Yet, if you look out into the world of those who have made their own fleshly choices, you're going to find a lot of that, but it doesn't need to happen to us.

I'd like to point out here that Solomon, the wisest man that ever lived, is giving these instructions to his son, and imparting all of this wisdom, but if we look at Solomon's life, it did not have a happy ending, or measure up to what he said. You know, sometimes people have the idea that if it doesn't work out real good for the messenger, then I don't have to listen to his message. That's not the truth, because we are responsible for truth, no matter when we heard it, who we heard it from, or what happens to that messenger. God's word stands on its own, and we are responsible for that truth regardless. Just because Solomon's life didn't work out the way it really should have, does not mean that his son, or we are excused from following this very wise council and wisdom that Solomon gave, and so it is for any of the instruction that we hear in our lives.

Solomon's remedy for this rather depressing

conclusion here, is that "it's all vanity," and if you read the entire book of Ecclesiastes, you will find that's the theme of it, and it's exactly right, that anything of this world will bring you to emptiness. That's why we must look beyond, and realize that our inheritance and our treasures are over the sun indeed in heavenly things. Solomon's remedy for this depressing conclusion is to remember now, and he means remember right now. It's not a matter of remembering some distant time when I feel a little more like it, and I've had a little more fun, and I've experienced all of these things that other people have told me about. Remember now, this is the day to be making wise choices, and they start with considering what God wants; not what we demand.

(Ecclesiastes 12:1) "Remember now thy Creator in the days of thy youth, while the evil days come not, nor the years draw nigh, when thou shalt say, I have no pleasure in them." and you can underline this part that says, while the evil days come not, because I think it is so very important. Young people, there is a way to shorten and eliminate a whole lot of evil days in your life. There are ways that you can keep certain things from happening in your life if you choose to make the right choice, and remember your Creator. If you remember God, you're not going to have to go through some of the awful things that are out there in the world today, and it's to our advantage to remember our Creator now before these evil days come. There are days of innocence, when the damage is not yet been done, and we don't have to live in regret over unwise choices.

Solomon goes on in (Ecclesiastes 12:1). "Nor the years draw nigh, when you're going to say I have no pleasure in them." He's talking about those who made a choice to gain, and reach out to enjoy everything that the world had to offer. You only get to go around once in life, and you

hear of all of these advertisements where you've got to get all the gusto you can get, and you've got to do, and enjoy all of this. Do you realize, that if you get and experience all of it, and in the end you have left your Creator out, and didn't make your decisions based on Him, you will come to the conclusion that "I have no pleasure in them," and it will wind up that way. Do you know how gracious God has been to us? He has given us the opportunity to look into the future, and see what could be, and the opportunity to see to it that it don't happen to me. I'm here to tell you this morning that I just turned fifty-nine years old yesterday, and there are a whole lot of things that I have never experienced, and thank God I'm not going to. There could have been days in prison, days in drugs, days in diseases because of immorality, and you can name a list as long as your arm that we don't have to go through when we make God's right decisions. We will see this verse a little bit later on, so I'm just going to allude to it now. It's in (Hebrews 11) where we'll find that there are pleasures of sin, but don't be deceived by them because they last for but a season, and it's a real short season. These pleasures of the flesh do not last I will guarantee you, because all pleasures and excitement of the flesh will fade in time, and a very short one. Now scripture is filled with exhortations, and instructions to ward off that kind of sorrow when we would come down to the end of our life and say, I've had no pleasure in this, it's all vanity, it's nothingness, and my life is absolutely worthless. There are so many instructions, and exhortations to keep us from coming to that place. (Joshua 24:15-18) "If it seem evil unto you to serve the LORD, choose you this day whom ye will serve; whether the gods which your

fathers served that were on the other side of the flood, or the gods of the Amorites, in whose land ye dwell: but as for me and my house, we will serve the LORD. (16) And the people answered and said, God forbid that we should forsake the LORD, to serve other gods; (17) For the LORD our God, He it is that brought us up and our fathers out of the land of Egypt, from the house of bondage, and which did those great signs in our sight, and preserved us in all the way wherein we went, and among all the people through whom we passed: (18) And the LORD drave out from before us all the people, even the Amorites which dwelt in the land: therefore will we also serve the LORD; for He is our God." In the twentyfourth chapter of Joshua, Brother Smith quoted from there last night, and I want to see a few things in a portion here. Joshua says, "if it seem evil unto you to serve the LORD, choose you this day whom ye will serve;" What I want to realize here, is that you're going to make a choice, and even doing nothing, as we're going to see in the last day is making a choice, but you are going to make a choice. You're going to make a number of them, and you're going to have to choose this day whom you will serve, whether it will be God, or the flesh, either one of the two, and there's no middle ground as we're going to see in a moment. (Joshua 24:15) "Whether the gods your fathers served which were on the other side of the flood." This was all of the idolatry, as we'll find a little later, that even Abraham came out of. There are so many gods in this world, and a god is simply that which you give your allegiance, your time, that which you are bound by, and that which you are controlled by. We have our choice to give that right loyalty and desire unto our

Creator, and I'll guarantee you, that if you do, you'll not be disappointed. God will take that and He will do great things, but there are gods of immorality, religious gods which are going to accomplish absolutely nothing, gods of dishonesty, and gods of pleasure. This world is filled with all of these gods which want to dominate every part of your life, and we are going to serve some god, that's an absolute fact.

If you go over to the first chapter of Romans, you will find that God created us to worship and I don't care who we are, who we think we are, how strong we may be, and how independent we think we are, or may be, God created man to worship and we are going to worship something or someone. Make sure that we worship God who created us, and give to Him all of this allegiance that I have spoken of here before.

Joshua says: (15) "As for me and my house, we will serve the Lord." Again, only you can make that choice, because I can't make the choice

for you, and you can't make it for me. There are parents, who would like to make the choice for their children, because they understand the gravity of it, but the very best of parents cannot make the choice for their children to turn and yield to the Lord, they're the only one that can do that. We must be, and are responsible for our own choices, and so we cannot choose to yield to the Lord for anybody else, nor can anybody else make that choice for us, it belongs to us alone.

Joshua continues by saying: (Joshua 24:16-21) "And the people answered and said, God forbid that we should forsake the LORD, to serve other gods;" (17) "For the LORD our God." You will notice here that these people recognized God as that one of power and blessing, but their

conduct proved that they really did not believe Him, and sometimes young people give that when they say, you know, everybody does it. I realize that, but especially young people can become very adept at telling their parents and others in authority what they know they want to hear, but you see, that ain't going to stand up. We have to make these things based on our conviction, and so these people say, oh yes, we know that this is our God, and they recognized Him as such, but they did not give God that life long commitment that belonged to Him. This is where that we must make the choice to make a commitment to God that is not for the benefit of our parents, those around us, our peers and all of that, we have to make that choice for the benefit of us. We had better realize that we are standing before God Himself, as though no one else were around. They recognize that (17) "He it is that brought us up and our fathers out of the land of Egypt, from the house of bondage." Do you know, there are so many young people today, even at very tender ages that can testify of the glorious power of God, and that He has delivered them from the world? Some of them have already been brought out from the bondage of drugs and so many other bondage's of the flesh, that they already know the power of God by actual experience. These people knew that He had already shown His power, and freed them from the world, taken them throughout the wilderness, and all of these various things, but you see, they really did not live up to their commitment to the Lord. (18) "And the LORD drove out from before us all the people, even the Amorites which dwelt in the land: therefore will we also serve the LORD;

for He is our God," and that is exactly the commitment that they should have made. So, make sure that we follow through with our commitment and it doesn't just end up as lip service, and it cannot be, "for He is our God." Now, Joshua wanted to impress on them this very thing, and so in

(19) "And Joshua said unto the people, Ye cannot serve the LORD: for He is an holy God." Do you know what he is saying? He's saying as

Jesus did in the New Testament that no man can serve two masters. (Matthew 6:24). You can't say you'll do one thing, and do something else; you're going to have to mean what you say, and you're going to have to commit to this choice.

This next one seems to be a very strange statement, but I want to clarify it. (19) "He will not forgive your transgressions nor your sins. (20) If

ye forsake the LORD, and serve strange gods, then He will turn and do you hurt, and consume you, after that He hath done you good." I want to

say first of all, according to the scripture that there is not a sin, or a mistake you can make that God can't forgive. He is the God of all grace, and

will wipe the slate clean, but what people, and sometimes young people do not understand is that forgiveness, and consequence are not the

same. Sometimes people think and pray, oh God forgive, and then everything is wiped out from there on.

Forgiveness will wipe your conscience

absolutely clean, but I want to make a statement here that I would love for you to remember all the rest of the days of your lives. You can live

with the consequence of your sin, and in many cases will have to, but you cannot live with the guilt of your sin, because it will weigh down on

you to the point that it will crush you. We must establish the difference between forgiveness, and consequence.

David is a good example of someone that committed horrendous errors. He was guilty of adultery, fornication and murder, but David finally faced his sin and God forgave him. God did not take his life as was demanded by the law, which was the overriding glorious grace of God, but did you know that David had to spend a horrible life enduring the consequences of his sin. The sword did not depart from his house, and that man lived with a boatload of regret and grief, but not guilt, for that was wiped away. "Blessed is the man to whom the Lord will not impute sin."

(Romans 4:8). David knew what that meant, but I will tell you that David didn't get off scot-free. David bore the consequences that he did not have to bear, had he not made those ungodly choices that he made. It is so important we realize today that yes, God will forgive any sin that you have ever committed, but you may, and will have to bear the irreversible consequences of some of the choices that you make. I can tell you that you can do it, because God will give you the grace for it, but why go through it if you don't have to? Why in the world go through all that misery, pain, and sorrow if there's a way out, and there is? Don't do it in the first place, and so that's what Joshua means when he said, (Joshua 24:20-21) "If ye forsake the LORD, and serve strange gods, then he will turn and do you hurt, and consume you, after that he hath done you good," and people are living with some consequences today that they wouldn't have had to live with. So, early in life, make the choice that you're not going to do these things that are going to have such consequences. (21) "And the people said unto Joshua, No; but we will serve the LORD." If only they had meant that.

You know, we look around sometimes at young people and see such great talent, such great advantage, and they have so much going for them, but today I want to notice a few examples of some who were chosen that also had a lot going for them. I mean, they were just filled with all kinds of tremendous potential, but they made some wrong choices.

The first one is Saul. We're going to go down very near the end of his life, and this is what happened just a few days before he died.

Ultimately, he was killed by the Amalekites, and to further add insult to injury, they burned his body, and wanted no remembrance of Saul.

Finally, David sent his valiant men to go and get his bones, and those of his sons, and give them a proper burial, but Saul came to such a dishonorable death with such a dishonorable end. This incident happens just a few days before that, where we read in (1 Samuel 28:7), "Then said Saul unto his servants, Seek me a woman that hath a familiar spirit, that I may go to her, and enquire of her. And his servants said to him,

Behold, there is a woman that hath a familiar spirit at Endor." If you read the story

earlier, you'll find out that Saul sought the Lord. Scripture says that God would not answer him either by Urim, or by Thummim. You have reached an extremely hard place when the Lord won't even answer you. Now, don't tell me that Saul was not a saved man, because there's every evidence that he was, but when a person walks so far away from the Lord, then they can't even hear the voice of the Lord. That's an extremely dangerous place to be in, and so what did Saul do? Saul went to the other side, because this woman with a familiar spirit is one that is empowered by the devil. I want to say to you young people at this point who may think that fortune telling, Ouija boards, horoscopes, and all of that are nothing but

games, but I'm going to beg, and tell you to stay away from such ungodliness. It is not a game, it is dangerous, it is satanic, and so don't give into that kind of foolishness, because you are opening up yourself to all sorts of difficulty. I'm not saying that you're going to be demon possessed, and I'll go on record as saying that I do not believe there is any way, form, or fashion that a believer can be demon possessed, but you can be influenced tremendously by those tactics of the enemy. Don't allow it, just stay away from it, and don't fool with it.

Saul went to such a woman, (1 Samuel 28:8-12) "and Saul disguised himself, and put on other raiment, and he went, and two men with him, and they sought out this woman by night: and he said, I pray thee, divine unto me by the familiar spirit, and bring me him up, whom I shall name unto thee." The woman said well, who do you want me to bring up? That's after she told him Saul had cut off these people or wizards, and anyway he assured her that he would not destroy her. (10) "And Saul sware to her by the LORD, saying, As the LORD liveth, there shall no punishment happen to thee for this thing. (11) Then said the woman, Whom shall I bring up unto thee? And he said, Bring me up Samuel. (12) And when the woman saw Samuel, she cried with a loud voice: and the woman spake to Saul, saying, Why hast thou deceived me? for thou art Saul." Saul had gotten so far away from the Lord he wanted to bring up Samuel up from the dead at this time. So, Satan gave Saul a vision, and that vision communicated a message that happened and came to pass just exactly that way, but you see, here is Saul in the end of his life, and rather than the sweet and wonderful conversations, blessings, and messages that he had from God, he is now getting this information from the devil. It was not a comforting message, because it told him exactly that he was going to die, and we see the end of that life which was not pretty.

Now, I want to go back to the beginning of Saul.

(1 Samuel 10:1-2) "Then Samuel took a vial of oil, and

poured it upon his head, and kissed him, and said, Is it not because the LORD hath anointed thee to be captain over his inheritance? (2) When thou art departed from me today, then thou shalt find two men by Rachel's sepulchre." Saul received a number of signs of what God was doing, had in mind, and enabled him for his life. What I want to notice is that God does us exactly the same way as far as the truth of it, because he was to go and find two men by Rachel's sepulchre. Rachel's sepulchre in the scripture means life out of death. Rachel died, but she gave birth to Benjamin, and so life out of death is the great teaching here at Rachel's sepulchre. God teaches us that lesson over, and over again, and we learn it the day we're saved, that even though we were dead in trespasses and sins, yet God brings us out and gives us life. Again, He gives us various examples in our lives, that we must come to Rachel's sepulchre to find out we are among the living, and that God has brought us out of death, and into life. It shows to us the power of God. And then, (1 Samuel 10:2) "in the border of Benjamin at Zelzah; and they will say unto thee, The asses which thou wentest to seek are found." This is another thing that God has to make known unto everyone of us. The asses are the old creation which is that old rebellious nature we were born with, that would control and motivate every one of our lives. We have to learn the way of victory over that old nature, but do you realize what it is? It is that we have gone down into death there at Rachel's sepulchre, but we have come up into newness of life with the Lord Jesus Christ. That's the truth that Paul tells us in (Romans chapters 6, 7, & 8), and it would behoove you to get into a deep study of those three chapters, to learn the way of victory over sin in the flesh. I have died with Christ. (Galatians 2:20) "I am crucified with Christ: nevertheless I live; yet not I, but Christ liveth in me:" So, the asses are found at the cross where Jesus dealt with our old man, and that's where we indeed will come to this place where he (our old man) loses power over us. (1 Samuel 10:2

continued) "and, lo, thy father hath left the care of the asses, and sorroweth for you."

Notice further: (1 Samuel 10:6-7) "And the Spirit of the LORD will come upon you, and you shalt prophesy with them, (and you can underline it) and shalt (you'll) be turned into another man." That's what God does for us, by making another man, or a new man out of us. (7) "And let it be, when these signs are come unto you, that thou do as occasion serve you; for God is with you," and I know many of you young people have already been through experiences where you know of your own self that God is with you. You don't have to have anybody tell you, and you know it in your own lives. Those of you who already have been filled with the power of the Holy Ghost have already felt the power of God, and you know He's with you, you don't have to guess about it, it's not second hand, and it's just something you know. Saul had this advantage that he knew God was with him.

(1 Samuel 9:1-2) "Now there was a man of Benjamin, whose name was Kish, the son of Abiel, the son of Zeror, the son of Bechorath, the son of Aphiah, a Benjamite, a mighty man of power. (2) And he had a son, whose name was Saul, a choice young man, and a goodly: and there was not among the children of Israel a goodlier person than he: from his shoulders and upward he was higher than any of the people." (to repeat) (1 Samuel 9:1) "Now there was a man of Benjamin, whose name was Kish, the son of Abiel." We're backing up just a little bit to find out just who Saul was, and what he had going for him. His father was a mighty man of power, he had a son whose name was Saul, and just check off the things that Saul had. He was a choice young man, he was a goodly young man, there was not among the children of Israel a goodlier person than he, and from his shoulders and upward he was higher than any of the people. That's a testimony that would be envy to any young person that has ever been born into this world. What did Saul do with it? Not much and it is important that you and I make the choice to get

the utmost out of what God has given to us. God had given all of this to Saul, he didn't do anything to gain that, and it wasn't by his own expertise. God saw to it where he was born, the state that he had, and all of this physical realm that he had. Did you know the same thing is true of us? It's God who has given us all of this benefit, and we didn't do anything to get it, but we do have a choice as to how it goes from there.

Alright, I want to notice seven major errors, or mistakes that Saul made after he had all of this. Very early in Saul's life, we see some attitudes here which were not judged, and it became a pattern in his life. We must take instruction from that, and if we realize either through the word of God, and perhaps just through exhortation, observation, or something like that; people begin to point these things out. Let's not dismiss them, because if we do, a pattern will be established, and it's going to get worse, and worse as it did with Saul. This is just a few short days after Saul had been anointed, and then we read in chapter thirteen.

(1 Samuel 13:8) And he (Saul) tarried seven days, according to the set time that Samuel had appointed." Samuel had told Saul, if you go down there and wait for me, I'll be there, and you can underline it, but Samuel came not to Gilgal; (we're not told why, he just came not) and the people were scattered from him (Saul)," but Saul decided that he couldn't wait any longer.

(1 Samuel 13:9) "And Saul said, Bring hither a burnt offering to me, and peace offerings. And he offered the burnt offering." The first major error that Saul made was that he usurped authority. It means that he took a place that did not belong to him, and we are traveling on mighty thin ice if we take a place that God did not give to us. He intruded into the priest's office which was a very serious offence here and some were killed for that later on.

(1 Samuel 13:10) "And it came to pass, that as soon as he had made an end of offering the burnt offering," and you can bet on it every time, that if you get ahead and

jump in your own ways, ideas, and your own strength, you can almost set your clock by it; the minute you finish, here comes Samuel and it'll happen every time. "Behold, Samuel came and Saul went out to meet him, that he might salute him."

(1 Samuel 13:11) "And Samuel said, What have you done? And Saul said, Because I saw that the people were scattered from me." Saul made a wrong choice because his eyes were on the people, and he was not concerned with what God's word said, and we will more that likely make the wrong choice if it's based on what people do. Our eyes cannot be on people, rather than on the Lord, and then Saul said "And that you didn't come within the days appointed." and this is one of Saul's favorite excuses. We learned a term at the couple's retreat earlier this year which is called a blame-shifter, and it means that a person refuses to accept responsibility for himself, and always blames it on somebody else. Saul answered, that he did it because Samuel wasn't where he was supposed to be at the right time. If you would've done what you were supposed to do, I wouldn't have had to do that, always blaming somebody else. Young people, don't ever get started with that habit. Saul should have stood up like a man, took his medicine, and said I was wrong, forgive me. That's what he should have done, but didn't. Let's not make the same mistake.

Notice here in (1 Samuel 13:11), that he also "saw that the Philistines gathered themselves together at Michmash;" Here, he had his eyes on the enemy more than on God. Now, I realize that our circumstance and difficulty can't just be dismissed, but let's not be consumed with the difficulty more than we are consumed with God. Is God greater, or is He not? We must come to that place, and conclusion, and realize that God is greater than all the Philistines put together, but Saul didn't do that. He went on and that's exactly what happens when we view the enemy greater than God, because it'll cause us to lean to our own strength every time. We'll reach out for

what ever thread that there is in order to accomplish it. (1 Samuel 13:12) "Therefore said I, The Philistines will come down now upon me to Gilgal." Here's just another excuse, and I've often heard people make such excuses. "I have not made supplication (a prayer) unto the LORD." Well, for crying out loud, whose fault was that, and who can you blame? Saul certainly didn't take the responsibility for it. We know that we are to be in a constant attitude of prayer, (Ephesians 6:18) but Saul's heart was not turned to the Lord and His ways, then here's a real doozie. "I forced myself therefore, and offered a burnt offering." I know it's against the rules, I didn't want to do it, but someone had to do something, and how many times have you ever heard that? This is one that people often justify, and it's called "justified by the situation." I know it ain't quite right, but this a unique circumstance. Don't fall into that trap either, because the devil will bring off unique circumstance, after unique circumstance, to where they're all unique after awhile, and there's no distinction. It is imperative young people that we measure our lives by the standards of God's word, and not by the circumstance, and situation that we have. Some people are setting their moral standards by situation, and it's the wrong standard.

(1 Samuel 13:13) "And Samuel said to Saul, Thou hast done foolishly," and when you see that word foolish in the scripture, it's just another word for rebellion. Saul was rebellious in his heart, and because of that he made an absolutely wrong choice, and notice what Samuel tells him that he did. (1 Samuel 13:13) "You have done foolishly; you have not kept the commandment of the LORD thy God, which He commanded thee:" You see, all we have to measure our lives by is the commandment of the Lord, and the standard of the word of God. "What saith the scriptures?" Not all of these other things which men might use to justify their actions. Now, just how do we measure up against God's word? The word of God must become the priority and it must become paramount

in our lives, so Samuel goes on to say, "Now would the LORD have established your kingdom upon Israel for ever."

(1 Samuel 13:14) "But now your kingdom shall not continue: the LORD has sought (has chosen who?) Him a man after his own heart." That's the heart that you and I want to have. We want to be the one who is chosen, because we have a heart after God's own heart, rather than being the one rejected, because we did not have such a heart. God's still looking for that heart today, and bless the Lord, He's finding it in number, and I trust that He finds it in us. "The LORD has commanded him (David, the man after God's own heart) to be captain over his people, because you (Saul) have not kept that which the LORD commanded you." So he told him exactly what He was going to do, and why. Now, I want to notice here that Saul's demise began when he did not heed the word of God, and the same thing happens in our lives. Where it begins and starts is when we do not heed the voice of the Lord in our lives. You can write this down, and put it up where you can see and remember, that there is no substitute for simple obedience to the Lord, and we must come to that place.

Saul has already made a rather horrendous blunder, and as we notice those things that he went through to do that, I say the same series of events happens in our lives, but God gave him another test in (1 Samuel 15:2-3). "Thus saith the LORD of hosts, I remember that which Amalek did to Israel, how he laid wait for him in the way, when he came up from Egypt. (2) Now go and smite Amalek, and utterly destroy all that they have, and spare them not; but slay both man and woman, infant and suckling, ox and sheep, camel and ass." Now, this is the commission that God gives to us, and it's just another way of saying, God must have us judge the flesh in our own lives. I want to emphasize, that we really can't judge the flesh in somebody else's life, but we most certainly do have the power to judge the flesh in our own lives, and we must.

Now, I'd like to notice just a little bit of the symbolic language that is used here. They were to slay the man, who really represents that macho, self sufficient, independent proud attitude, and we may be quick to agree with that, and the things we know are not right. So yeah, we can do that, but then the woman speaks of those pretty, beautiful, and desirable things of the flesh. I may think there's some things I don't believe to be quite so bad in my life, but you see, the pretty things have to go too. The infant and the suckling are those so-called small insignificant things in our lives. Well, that wouldn't matter, and that's just such a little thing, I don't have to worry about that. The ox and the sheep represent the religious flesh. That is those things which you would sacrifice, and you can make a lot of religious sacrifices in your lives, but they're still flesh. The camels and the asses speak of the works of the flesh, and there are so many works we are oftentimes proud of, and we don't want to get rid of those things either, and so we make some choices not to judge those things. We want to cultivate, and bring them to their full potential in our lives, so to speak.

(1 Samuel 15:7-8) "And Saul smote the Amalekites from Havilah until thou comest to Shur, that is over against Egypt. (8) And he took Agag the king of the Amalekites alive, and utterly destroyed all the people with the edge of the sword." Now, Agag means I will overtop, and he speaks of the very best that our flesh has to offer, and we really do glory in those things we feel like that make us somebody, and sets us out from the crowd. I'm such a leader, such a charismatic one, and just the one, so that we feel like everybody would fall head over heels for us. Saul spared Agag.

(1 Samuel 15:9) "But Saul and the people spared Agag, and (notice) the best of the sheep, and of the oxen, and of the fatlings, and the lambs, and all that was good, and would not utterly destroy them: but every thing that was vile and refuse, that they destroyed utterly." We can identify with that, and there's a lot of things in our lives

that we're going to get rid of anyway, so there's no problem there, but there are these other things that are a little bit deceitful. We would spare them and God says no, but that's the pattern we find in our lives today, and so men simply go their own way and try to use the best that they feel is in them. Now, they're not following the ways of the Lord, and they often times do this and say, they just did that to sacrifice to the Lord, but God didn't want it. We're going to see this truth later on this week, but I want to emphasize upon our hearts today to never go your own way, and use the will of God as an excuse for it. Now, people like to do that, because they think it excuses them: Don't do it!

(1 Samuel 15:13) "And Samuel came to Saul: and Saul said unto him, Blessed be thou of the LORD: I have performed the commandment of the LORD." One of the greatest enemies that you and I face is the enemy of partial obedience. People do just a little bit, or what they think is an awful lot of what they're supposed to, but they leave undone all of this other and just lump it together saying, I've obeyed the Lord, and did what God said to do. Partial obedience is a tremendously destructive enemy, but that's what Saul did, and people will just do that in enough measure in their own estimation, not to be lying, but they don't fully obey. Well, I'll tell you that it's the same thing with us as it was with Saul. God didn't buy it from Saul, and God won't buy that from us. We may be able to lie, and to skim along for ourselves, but we're dealing with the God of the universe in our lives, and we must understand that Saul went further down from here.

(1 Samuel 15:14) "And Samuel said (if that's so), What meaneth then this bleating of the sheep in mine ears, and the lowing of the oxen which I hear?" A spiritual person is able to detect the evidence and manifestation of the flesh, and even though it might be hidden, he knows it's there. Oftentimes people get mad at the person that does that, accusing them of being judgmental and all of these various things, but flesh is flesh and a spiritual

person can understand that, and Samuel detected that here.

(1 Samuel 15:15) "And Saul said: (and you can underline the little word "they" again.) They have brought them from the Amalekites: for the people spared the best of the sheep and of the oxen, to sacrifice unto the LORD thy God;" Do you see what pattern he's established? Always, always shifting the blame to somebody else saying, it wasn't me, it wasn't my fault, the people did it, and still blaming others for his own errors. Fact of the matter is, Saul was the leader, and he was the responsible one, no matter how he tried to shift it away, but he was still the responsible one before God.

Samuel brings out the problem with Saul in

(1 Samuel 15:17) "And Samuel said, When you was little in your own sight:" Now, what we must learn is true humility, because true humility is an absolutely dependent spirit upon the Lord. True humility is when we are willing to let God fight our battle, and make our decisions, and there is no replacement for that attitude. Saul's selfsufficiency

and conceit which God hates, is just the opposite of this true humility, and so Samuel said, "when thou wast little in thine own sight, wast thou not made the head of the tribes of Israel, and the LORD anointed thee king over Israel?" In other words Saul, don't you think it turned out a whole lot better when you did it God's way, instead of your own way? You see, we find the same thing; it works out better if we go God's way, and do what He wants us to, rather than taking things in our own hands.

(1 Samuel 15:18-19) "And the LORD sent thee on a journey." He did this; He ordained this for you and (He) said: "Go and utterly destroy the sinners the Amalekites, and fight against them until they be consumed. (Why didn't you do it?) (19) Wherefore then didst thou not obey the voice of the LORD, but didst fly upon the spoil, and didst evil in the sight of the LORD?" You see, Saul's desire for gain pushed him to a wrong choice, and did you

know that's happening among young people today? If you get consumed with gain, it will discolor and distort the right choices that you make. We must not get our eyes so much off on the spoil and the gain that we make a wrong choice. Even though Saul knew what was right, he did not do it.

(1 Samuel 15:20) "And Saul said unto Samuel, Yea, I have obeyed the voice of the LORD, and have gone the way which the LORD sent me, and have brought Agag the king of Amalek." If you read that whole text, you'll find God did not say that but you see, Saul tried to rewrite the word of God, and we often try to rewrite what God says. You can't do that, and we must take the scripture, the word of God, and the commandment of the Lord as He has written it, and not how we would like it to be. He said, we have utterly destroyed the Amalekites and here again:

(1 Samuel 15:21) "But the people took of the spoil," I had nothing to do with it. "The chief of the things; they should have been utterly destroyed, to sacrifice to the Lord:" Still blame-shifting.

Now, here are a couple of verses that I believe would be extremely profitable to commit to memory. If you want an assignment during this youth camp, and something you would like to do when just alone in your quiet time with the Lord, just memorize these verses. (1 Samuel 15:22-23) "And Samuel said, Hath the LORD as great delight in burnt offerings and sacrifices, as in obeying the voice of the LORD? Behold, to obey is better than sacrifice, and to hearken than the fat of rams. (23) For rebellion is as the sin of witchcraft, and stubbornness is as iniquity and idolatry." Some would excuse these as, that's just a part of me and the way I am. Well, if it is, you'd better get it changed in a hurry, because you are opening yourself up to the devil.

Rebellion and stubbornness is equated with witchcraft and idolatry. Those are demonic terms, and we want nothing to do with them. It means when we have that attitude, we're opening ourselves up to the devil, and then

we can be destroyed big time, so don't allow that and just excuse it. Don't let rebellion replace simple obedience unto the Lord, because it's nothing to fool around with. Now notice, "because thou hast rejected the word of the LORD," and I want you to notice exactly what He said. God doesn't say, because you saved Agag, the oxen, the sheep, and all of these other things. Saul's offence was that he rejected the word of the Lord, and his attitude that was wrong, not the outward doing of things. That was bad enough but you see, the thing we're held accountable for is our attitudes before God, and because of that, you've rejected the word of the Lord. Well, He hath also rejected thee from being king.

Now, this is God's irrevocable decree, but Saul didn't get any better. Saul didn't accept this decree, and he didn't accept the will of God, but instead, he tried to override it by his own efforts. He even knew who his replacement was, but do you know that Saul spent the majority of the rest of his life trying to kill his replacement, who was David? God said that David is going to reign, it's going to happen by my decree, and Saul refused that. That's a dangerous position to be in, when you and I are going directly against the God of the universe. I'll guarantee you, we'll lose that battle every time, and so Saul would not submit to that even though he knew, and he pursued David constantly.

(1 Samuel 15:24) "And Saul said unto Samuel, I have sinned: (it's about time) for I have transgressed the commandment of the LORD, and thy words," but what I want to notice, and what we have to guard against, is that this was not true repentance. Saul was sorry he was caught, but he was not sorry that he had did it, and the way we know that is by these next statements. You will notice that he did this because he was caught, not because he was sorry, and if it were true repentance, he would have bowed to God's will. If you'll remember when David was faced with the same thing in his sin, he just said, blessed be the name of the Lord. He was willing for

his son to die, or at least he accepted for his son to die, but notice Saul's next statement. "I did all this, because I feared the people, and obeyed their voice." You see, he's still not accepting full responsibility for what he did, and that's why it's not true repentance. Well, I'm sure sorry for what I did, but it was their fault you know, you gotta know that! We can't do that, and so Saul's repentance was not a genuine repentance at all, and we have already seen his end, so we won't go back over that. You know it is not pretty, and so in conclusion of Saul's life I'll simply say, if you've made mistakes, be willing to simply step up like a man, take the medicine, go on, and believe God to bring something good out of it. David shows us that wonderful truth.

The next example that we view is here in Solomon. He also had a tremendous beginning, but his end was also terrible because of wrong choices he made resulting in such wasted potential. In (Ecclesiastes 4:13), Solomon had this to say, and this is his own testimony. This is the conclusion that he came up with near the end of his life when he saw the mistakes, but by then it was too late. He says, "Better is a poor and a wise child than an old and foolish king, who will no more be admonished." That's just the contrast of Solomon's early life, with his later life. He was that little child in the beginning, but he lost that, and began to make his own choices and decisions, and then he wouldn't listen to anybody.

In the beginning of his life: (1 Kings 3:5-7) "In Gibeon the LORD appeared to Solomon in a dream by night: and God said, Ask what I shall give thee. (6) And Solomon said, Thou hast shewed unto thy servant David my father great mercy," and notice that early on, Solomon did recognize the grace of God, and he depended on it. Solomon really started out good, and there was such wonderful potential, and his life could have been so much different than it was, but you will notice, that "David walked according as he walked before thee in truth, and in righteousness, and in uprightness of heart with thee; and

thou hast kept for him this great kindness, that thou hast given him a son to sit on his throne, as it is this day. (7) And now, O LORD my God, thou hast made thy servant king instead of David my father:" Here he acknowledged that it was not because of any good thing that I did, it was not because of my expertise, and it wasn't because I'm so wonderful that God owed me anything. God did this according to His own wonderful and marvelous grace, and we have to recognize the same thing. Paul said in his life that I am what I am by the grace of God, and everyone of us have to acknowledge exactly that same thing; Solomon did here, but it's sad to say, he lost that.

We must recognize even as young people that God will lead our steps and put us in certain positions at certain times, so let's not think we're so wonderful that we pull ourselves up by our own bootstraps. Notice his next statement where he says "I am but a little child," a little dependent, teachable child. I will say to you young people, and to all of us, let us never lose a teachable spirit, because if we get to the place where we can't learn anything from anybody, we're going to stop right there. You know, I'm a firm believer that we can know all the truth, because Jesus promised it when He said, "When the Holy Ghost is come, He will lead you into all truth." I believe that with all my heart, but I also believe that we'll continue learning truth our whole lifetime right up until the time Jesus opens the door and takes us into heaven. I believe that, but in order to understand that truth we must have that teachable spirit, and there's just no replacement for that. If we know it all, it's all over as far as learning anything else.

Well, Solomon says, (1 Kings 3:8-9) "And thy servant is in the midst of thy people which thou hast chosen." Notice again how Solomon knew that God had advanced him. "It's a great people, that cannot be numbered nor counted for multitude. (9) Give therefore thy servant an understanding heart to judge thy people, that I may discern between good and bad: for who is able to judge

this thy so great a people?" What I want to see here, is that we have a right request for a right reason. He didn't want to be so wise everyone would just stand in awe of him, though that happened in many cases, but he wanted this request so he could fulfil God's purpose for him, and that's exactly what we need to do. Go before the Lord, and believe God to give us that which is going to be able to accomplish what He wants to accomplish through me. That's a right request, and a right reason, because it was not to glorify Solomon.

Well, that's why we read the next verse: (1 Kings 3:10) "And the speech pleased the Lord." We can still be those who are pleasing the Lord, because we have that speech. Now, remember this where Jesus said, (Matthew 12:34) "Out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaketh" and so if we have this attitude in our heart, we're going to be able to have the speech that pleases the Lord too, and it is so imperative that we have that. God says in (1 Kings 3:11-13 paraphrased), "Well Solomon, because you didn't ask for the life of your enemies, riches, and all of these things, I'm not only going to give you the wisdom that you asked for, I'm going to give you everything you didn't ask for" Sister Mooneyhan used to tell us in class, and I've enjoyed it so much over the years, that you can never out give God, and that's exactly the truth. Many have proved that down through the years, and you young people can prove exactly the same thing.

(1 Kings 9:1-3) I want to notice here, that God appeared to Solomon a second time. "And it came to pass, when Solomon had finished the building of the house of the LORD, (that is, he built the temple and he built his own house) and the king's house, and all Solomon's desire which he was pleased to do, (2) That the LORD appeared to Solomon the second time, as he had appeared unto him at Gibeon. (3) And the LORD said unto him, I have heard thy prayer and thy supplication (that is, when he dedicated the temple), that thou hast

made before me: I have hallowed this house, which thou hast built, to put my name there for ever; and mine eyes and mine heart shall be there perpetually," but then God tells Solomon, here is some responsibility that you're going to take. God had done all of these things and has made just inexhaustible provisions for us, but like it was with Solomon, God could not make the choice for Solomon to walk in all of these things. God can give you all of these revelations of truth, advantages and blessings, but here's what it comes down to in (1 Kings 9:4). "If thou wilt walk before me, as David thy father walked, in integrity of heart." We must commit our hearts and make that choice unto the Lord, He cannot do it for us. These wonderful revelations and visions that God gave to Solomon had to have been glorious and wonderful, and I want to impress upon us today that they've not stopped; God still wants to reveal His truth to you. It may not come in a vision, or something of this matter, but it can be just as real. I've had many glorious wonderful revelations of truth, and I know that countless others have done the same thing time after time, and God speaks to us just as He did Solomon. He was not anything unique, and it's not the last time that God made His will and purpose known to a person at all. He does the same thing in our lives but you see, it's up to us whether we walk in the truth that God gives to us. This is our choice, and we must appropriate them exactly as Solomon was instructed to do. I want to point out one more thing here. God gave to Solomon all of this wisdom, and we've seen these things. If you read the book of Proverbs you will find just untold wisdom that God gave to Solomon, but if you read the Kings you'll find he didn't walk in all of that. You know, what I'm impressed with is that even with all that Solomon did, do you know that God never did take away his wisdom? Scripture tells us the gifts, and callings of God are without repentance. (Romans 11:29) Ha, if you don't like what I did, I'll come down and snatch it away from you and make an idiot out of you; we don't read that.

Solomon still had that wisdom, and Ecclesiastes is written evidently very near the end of his life after he had all of these different experiences, and he's still writing down that wisdom. What I'm saying is that the knowledge of the truth, and the revelations are not enough; God won't just suddenly take it away, but you see, you're not going to get the benefit of it. In order to get the benefit of what God reveals to us, we have to walk in His ways, submit our lives before Him, and let Him make it real and practical. Now, Solomon did have consequence here.

(1 Kings 9:5-7) If you will do all of this Solomon, and walk according to the way that you should, (5) "then I will establish the throne of thy kingdom upon Israel for ever, as I promised to David thy father, saying, There shall not fail thee a man upon the throne of Israel. (6) But if ye shall at all turn from following me, ye or your children, and will not keep my commandments and my statutes which I have set before you, but go and serve other gods, and worship them: (7) Then will I cut off Israel out of the land which I have given them; and this house, which I have hallowed for my name, will I cast out of my sight; and Israel shall be a proverb and a byword among all people" and Solomon did have a choice. God told him what would happen if he obeyed, and what would happen if he didn't, and with his eyes wide open he went the wrong way, and all of these things that God said would happen to him, did. You will notice in (5) it says, "there shall not a man fail thee upon the throne." Well, do you realize, and we'll see this a little bit later on too, that Solomon's line was cut off. You see, his heir was not the one that came down, and was fulfilled in Jesus. David had another son by the name of Nathan, and that's the line God used, so make no mistake that God means exactly what He says, and says what He means, and we must abide by that.

Alright, I want to notice another expression of Solomon's life, and another little sidelight here. (1 Kings 12:4). This is after Solomon is gone, and the young men that were grown up with his son Rehoboam, spoke unto

Rehoboam. This is the way he would speak to the people, and what I want to see here is what Solomon was before he died. Your father made our yoke heavy, but if you make it lighter we'll serve you. Rehoboam's answer to that was, (1 Kings 12:10-11) "My little finger shall be thicker than my father's loins. (11) And now whereas my father did lade you with a heavy yoke, I will add to your yoke: my father hath chastised you with whips, but I will chastise you with scorpions." What I want to see here is that when we reject the ways of the Lord, and refuse to walk as God would have us, we become extremely hard on other people, and a real detriment to them rather than being the edifying one that we could have been. I'd like to realize here, that this is Rehoboam speaking, and you'll notice that he listened to his peers for his wisdom, and it was the wrong wisdom. I believe we're going to get into this in our lesson tomorrow, and that is peer pressure. When you listen to those around you, rather than listen to those authorities over you and the word of God, more often than not you're going to make a wrong decision and choice, and Rehoboam did.

You'll notice on down here in our story of (1 Kings 11:9), "And the LORD was angry with Solomon (Why?), because his heart was turned from the LORD God of Israel." God wants your heart, and He wants that to be joined and surrendered unto Him. Now you'll notice, "Which had appeared unto him twice." Now, maybe Solomon didn't value these two appearances that much, but God did, and I want to say today that God values every revelation of truth He gives to us. It is something precious to Him, and therefore must be precious to us, and we must guard it with our lives. God is jealous of that truth which He has given.

(1 Kings 11:10) "And had commanded him concerning this thing, that he should not go after other gods," but even after God warned him as He does to us today, Solomon went right on and we find out that he made wrong choices, and did not enjoy the place that he could

have enjoyed, or could have had.

Solomon did exactly what Saul did in (1 Kings 11:40).

"Solomon sought therefore to kill Jeroboam." Jeroboam was Solomon's replacement just like David was Saul's replacement. Saul didn't accept God's decision and tried to kill David, and Solomon didn't accept the choice that God made and tried to kill Jeroboam, but in both cases you'll find out those men came to the throne. So, God does have His purposes and His decrees, and they are going to be fulfilled regardless of how we fight against them.

Our next example is Samson, and we're going to see just a little bit about him today, and more about him tomorrow. Here's another man that had great potential, and I want to notice some things said of him. He was the deliverer of Israel by God's decree, he was chosen of God, the Spirit of the Lord was upon him, he was supernaturally born, and you can read in the book of Judges how that God used him to perform great feats but you see, some wrong choices brought him to ruin also. It begins in (Judges 14:1-2). "And Samson went down to Timnath, and saw a woman in Timnath of the daughters of the Philistines," (and to repeat) "And Samson went down to Timnath." Well, that's a part of the Philistines first of all, but the word Timnath means a portion, and he shouldn't have been in that portion at all. He should not have been in that land and you'll notice that "he saw a woman in Timnath," so beware the wandering eyes. His eyes should have been on his own inheritance, and he should have been back in the land where God had made him, but he just completely ignored that the way many do today, and so "he saw a woman in Timnath of the daughters of the Philistines." We're going to find out tomorrow about relationships, and how very dangerous they can be when we make the wrong choice. You notice, he continued and he came up and told his father and his mother and said, "I have seen a woman in Timnath of the daughters of the Philistines, (and you can underline this, and don't ever

allow this to become your attitude; if it's there now, be sure and get rid of it) now therefore get her for me to wife". That's not a request; that's a demand, and when we begin to make demands we are in trouble. We are really traveling on thin ice once again.

Notice further here that (Judges 14:3) "His father and mother said to him: Is there never a woman among the daughters of your brethren, or among all my people?" You can take a wife of them, so why go to the uncircumcised Philistines? That's godly council and according to the scripture, but what was his answer to that? You get her for me anyway as he said to his father: "get her for me" and notice again the demand that he would dictate what his parents should do, and what's the reason? "It's because she pleases me well," that's what, and that's the most important thing. We can't, as young people give into such things as these. A selfish desire is at the heart of a wrong demand, and a wrong choice. It seems that some never learn, and Samson didn't if you read the record, and I want to point this out because so many have tried to do this over the years. Did you know the Spirit of the Lord was in the midst of all this, and kept moving on Samson as he continued to perform great feats, and miraculous things by the power of God? People have said at different times, well now, if God didn't want me to do this, then He wouldn't bless this ministry, and He wouldn't bless or do this, that, or something else, but you see, that's not so. Samson's life continued to go down, down, down, and of course those miraculous things began to fade off too after awhile, but we cannot justify these wrong things just by the miracles that God is apparently doing at a certain time.

You will notice that God didn't permit the marriage to that woman, because He didn't intend for it to take place, but that didn't stop Samson in his rebellion, and rebellion always closes off our ability to comprehend danger. When anyone is filled with rebellion, you'll find out that they just do not have the ability to comprehend the danger and

pitfalls that are there, and so Samson proceeds to go further. (Judges 16:1) "Then went Samson to Gaza and he saw a harlot there." Why do you want to go after a harlot? I mean, here you are seeking this woman for marriage, but marriage doesn't even enter the equation now. His standards have dropped so bad, you can throw marriage out the window the way many have done in our country today. It's become just a matter of prostitution and harlotry, and that's not God's way. I'm so disappointed, and devastated by so many in the Christian community that have bought into exactly the same thing, and it's no more right to do this today than it was two, four, six, or eight thousand years ago. God has not changed His standards, and we must abide by the standards of God's word. Well, Samson isn't even seeking marriage at this point, because He's just concerned about his own lust, his own desire, he went to a new low, "and he went in unto her," and so our country has done the same. Now, if you read the record, Samson is still performing great feats but you see, that does not justify what he is doing, and it brought him to ruin.

(Judges 16:4) "And it came to pass afterward, that he loved a woman in the valley of Sorek, whose name was Delilah." Have you noticed how that Samson's desires are now completely out of control? I have a favorite saying that I adopted some years ago, and I don't know where I got it, or when, but "we are going to do what we want to do," and that's why young people, it is imperative we have the right want to. We must have the right desires because our desires will dictate what we do every time, whether they be godly or ungodly. Samson's desires were fueled by wrong choices, and he failed to establish any kind of discipline in his life which led to all of this. So, he went down and loved this woman in the valley Sorek. It means choice vine, and that's no place for a Nazarite. She was in sympathy with the Philistines, she betrayed him, and her name was Delilah. It means brought low and boy, she sure did bring him low at that time; she really did.

I don't want to leave us on this note, and so very briefly, we're going to consider some right choices, and what God can do. I want to leave us with the thought of what God can do, and how He can correct some terrible states. You may think, I have made every mistake you've mentioned and then some, but what I want to impress upon us is that I don't care what your state is, or what you've done or not done. If you will give all those pieces to God from this day forward, He will bring good out of all that chaos. Now, you may have to live with some consequences as we said before, but God can still bring you out in a total life of victory, and to full spiritual maturity in Christ, because that's the power of the grace of God. Here are examples: (Joshua 24:2) "And Joshua said unto all the people, Thus saith the LORD God of Israel, Your fathers dwelt on the other side of the flood in old time, even Terah, the father of Abraham, and the father of Nachor: and they served other gods." He's talking about Abraham, or the one who became Abraham! The man was an idolater for heaven's sake, and yet look what God did for him. Is He any less able to do that for us today? No, He can accomplish the same blessing. Abraham became a wonderful man of faith as we very well know, and became known as the father of faith, and we're instructed to walk in the steps of our father Abraham. All of this from a man that had been an idolater, and if you're in such a place as this, I want you to remember a verse from (2 Corinthians 5:17). "Therefore if any man be in Christ, he is a new creature: old things are passed away; behold, all things are become new." God can literally make us new, and it's not just wonderful words. (Genesis 12:1) We see Abram. "Now the LORD had said unto Abram." If you read that story, it reads like that his father Terah was in command and perhaps he was for awhile, but what I want to notice is that Abram is the one that God actually spoke to. I know that many young people come from homes where their parents are not believers, and we've gone into some of these things

before, but I feel it's good to review them. If you have the right attitude, submit your heart to the Lord, want the very best, and the primary desire of your heart is to have the best that God has to offer, you can have a positive influence on your parents exactly the way Abram did. God spoke to Abram, and the whole family came out of idolatry. That's the grace of God, and God is still doing it today. So God said, "Get thee out of thy country, and from thy kindred, and from thy father's house (Well, he couldn't do that, because they all came with him) unto a land that I will shew you, (2) and I will make of you a great nation." He gave him the Abrahamic Covenant. (Genesis 12:1-4) "So Abram departed, (and here's the key) as the LORD had spoken unto him." If we are doing from our heart that which God has spoken unto us, you can't go wrong and this is a right choice.

There are four women in the first chapter of Matthew who were very unlikely people, and yet God gave each one of these a prominent place in the lineage of Christ. That's why I say, God can change circumstance, and things in our lives if we just give Him the pieces and say it's busted up pretty bad but here it is, and let God do something.

(Matthew 1:3) "Judas (Greek for Judah) begat Phares and Zara of Thamar (Greek for Tamar)." Do you know how that came to be? Thamar played the harlot in order to get pregnant by her father-in-law Judah. (Genesis 38:24) Now, I'm not saying that's right, there's no way, but I'm saying that God can take even the worse that we have done, and turn it around for good if we let Him do it, which is another wonderful expression of the gospel. Do you know, it wasn't our righteousness that brought us to Jesus? It was our sin of unrighteousness that brought us to Him, and so if we admit and acknowledge that I have sinned, and come short of the glory of God, (Romans 3:23) that's the message of salvation that we teach. He will bring us out of death into life, and give us more than we have ever had. God will do that even now, if you just

let Him do it.

(Matthew 1:5) "And Salmon begat Booz of Rachab (Greek for Rahab), and scripture makes no bones about it. Rahab was the harlot, and she's called a harlot all the way through. I don't think there's a place in scripture that mentions Rahab, without mentioning the fact that she was the harlot. Well, it simply tells us once again that she didn't remain a harlot, and God does not leave us in this state that we're in. He'll also bring us out of it no matter what it is, if we'll simply give Him the opportunity.

(Joshua 6:17) "And the city shall be accursed, even it, and all that are therein, to the LORD: only Rahab the harlot shall live," and she did. James refers to her works in (James 2:25). "Likewise also was not Rahab the harlot justified by works?" She did what she did as a result of her faith by just giving what she had, and who she was to the Lord, and that's what God remembered. (Hebrews 11:31) "By faith the harlot Rahab perished not."

Ruth: Boaz begat Obed of Ruth. This woman was a Moabitess, (Ruth 1:22) and an idolater, but God brought her directly into the lineage and the life of the Lord Jesus Christ, and that was because of her faith. She simply laid it all before the Lord, here it is, you can have it, this is what I am, it makes no difference, and yet God wonderfully made this woman a tremendous woman of faith.

(Matthew 1:5-6) "And Booz begat Obed of Ruth; and Obed begat Jesse; (6) And Jesse begat David the king; and David the king begat Solomon (of who?) of her that had been the wife of Urias;" This relationship came out of adultery, but God overcame all of that and made this woman in the line of Jesus. Now, it is interesting to note here how God's grace overruled a very grievous mistake, and Bathsheba was the mother of Solomon, but as I told you before, it was not Solomon's line that is the lineage of Jesus. God gave Bathsheba another son by the name of Nathan, and this is the one that God used in the line of Jesus. You can compare that with (Matthew 1:11).

Solomon's line was cut off in (Jeremiah 22:30), and (1 Chronicles 3:5) we find that Bathsheba (or Bathshua) was the mother of Nathan. So, I say to us today in closing, there is not a situation and circumstance that you are in now or that you get into, that if you will honestly and humbly lay it before the Lord, and cry out for His mercy and forgiveness, God will raise you up and indeed set you on a throne; God can do that.

Today, we want to speak on relationships and priorities, and we're going to find that relationships are so extremely important to our lives. We will notice how they can make or break you so to speak, and influence you in the right or wrong direction, so it is vitally important the choice or decision that you make in regard to these relationships, as we are going to see here shortly.

The first thing we want to notice is a little bit about ourselves, and the fact of the matter is that we are three people. That may sound strange, but I believe you will understand it by the time we finish with this segment.

Number 1 - **We are who we are**, and that means that we are who we are in the eyes of God. He is the one who really understands and knows us beyond our own comprehension, and is the actuality of who we are. We may see and assume different things, but God is the one who knows what is down deep inside. I know David understood this as he wrote in the Psalms, "search me oh God, and see if there be any wicked way in me." Only God could know and understand what was deep in the heart of David, so who we are is who we are before God, and in His sight.

Number 2 - The second person that we are is, **we are who we think we are**, and that means that each of us has an opinion as to who we are. Now, some of that may be right, and some of that may not be so right. There are some young people that really illustrate this and come to it. Now, they do it in a little different, and somewhat of a rebellious way, but how many parents have heard this over the years? A son or daughter comes to them in

rather a storm of rebellion saying, I've just gotta get out of here, I gotta find out who I am! And you know, sometimes that's really just an excuse to rebel against authority and leave, but there is one point that is true in that, and that is, they don't really know who they are. Now, I want to notice that the apostle Paul had this same experience in, and you will read in (Romans 7:14-25), that Paul had a tremendous battle before he really learned who he was in Christ. He was battling back and forth between the two creations, and knew what he wanted. He had certain desires, but there were others that overruled that, and it was just a tremendous warfare that Paul waged in that chapter. I want to point out here, that he's not talking about his life as a sinner, but after he became a Christian, and he was waging a tremendous warfare between right, wrong, good and evil. His final conclusion in that, is that this is the way he saw himself, and we must come to see ourselves before we find the reality, and the actuality of seeing ourselves in Christ. He said, "Oh wretched man that I am." That's the way he felt, who he thought he was and of course, reality for him at that time. If there's anything that I would love and wish I could do in the lives of people, it would be to make them see themselves as a new creation in Christ Jesus. That is the greatest incentive, blessing, and power over a poor self image that there is. If you can see yourself as a new creation in Christ Jesus, you realize how valuable, special, unique, and loved you are. What a difference it makes in your life when you perceive yourself in that manner, rather than just viewing yourself as ready for the rubbish heap which is not going to do anybody any good. We must see ourselves as a new creation in Christ, but that takes a period of development, feasting on God's word, and experiences with the Lord till we begin to find out that I really am somebody, and you are. God made you that way in Christ, and so we are who we think we are.

Number 3 - Then the third one really is the most dangerous one. This is where that we especially make

some wrong decisions and choices in our lives. **We are who we think others think we are.** Now, be sure that we understand these two words "think." Who we think others think we are, because everyone of us have an opinion of how we believe others see us, and that may be right, or that may be wrong. I've known people that thought others had a certain image of them only to find out no, I never thought that of you at all. So, **we are that person who we think we believe that other people think we are.** We believe they have a certain image of us and as I say, this is the most dangerous one because so often, especially in our youth we have a tendency to try to measure up to the image that we think other people have of us. We believe that we must do, or not do certain things in order to gain their approval. This is where peer pressure comes in, and I believe there are more wrong choices and decisions made from peer pressure than anything else. I want to point out the difference here in peer pressure and peer dependence. Now, you're never going to get away from peer pressure, and all of the rest of your life you're going to find peer pressure, where people are trying to pressure you for one thing or another, and to do one thing, or not to do something. You're going to have that even as adults, but you have to begin learning how to handle it in these earlier years, and you will not become peer dependent. Now, peer dependent means that you get your image of yourself from someone else. In other words, you can't function unless a certain people or persons approve of you, and if they don't approve of you, then you take every measure and every step to do it all right, so they are going to approve of you. Probably one of the greatest difficulties that every one of us have as a human being, is rejection. Now, some people may say oh, I'm so tough skinned it don't bother me whether they like me; that's a lie. Everyone is plagued with that and nobody wants to be rejected, but I will guarantee you that if you choose God's way, you're going to have to live with rejection. You search all down through the scriptures, and you will find

those who made their choices, and they suffered rejection as a result of it. If we don't learn to handle rejection, we are going to be peer dependent, and we simply cannot allow that because I'll tell you, more often than not our peers are wrong, and so we cannot give up and give in to peer dependence because we will make those wrong choices. Our choices must come, and they must be based on what God wants for our lives, and if we are peer dependent He doesn't have a chance, because we will please our peers before we please God, our parents, or anybody else any day of the week. We want to have God's acceptance, so don't give up to this peer dependence for your image and acceptance.

Number 4 - This first scripture in (Matthew 6:33-34), I just simply call it back to basics, and there's no way that we can get around that. God always knows where to start, and where to finish too, so let's go back to basics. When we want to get our priorities and relationships right, when we want to get away from peer pressure, and when we want to have everything in order as God would have it in order, (Matthew 6:33-34) "But seek ye first." That "seek" simply means it's an active thing on our part, and He says "Seek ye first;" not last. This is not something that you do when you've exhausted everything else, when it's convenient, or when somebody else loses interest in you. "Seek ye first the kingdom of God and His righteousness," and there's only one place you're going to find His righteousness, and that's in the Lord Jesus Christ. So you see, you seek Him first, you gain Him first, and so "seek God and His righteousness, and then all these things shall be added unto you." That means all these material, and various things that we need in this life, and God knows what they are, and all of these will be added unto you. (34) Take, therefore no thought for tomorrow." So often, decisions and choices are made on the basis of some of our peers trying to scare us as to what's going to be down the road. If you don't do this today, then you're going to lose tomorrow. (Matthew 6:34) "Take no thought

for tomorrow, for tomorrow shall take thought for the things of itself. Sufficient unto the day is the evil thereof," and of course that's true, so seek those things first, and put God as that priority.

We want to get in now to a very strange scenario, and this is a choice of compromise. This is a choice that is often made in the lives, especially of young people because you see, they know what is right. Many of you have grown up in godly homes, churches that really do preach and teach the gospel, a separated walk, and all of these. There are many of you that are not ignorant of what God wants, and you're not ignorant of the right way at all, but you give in, and so many people give in to this thing of trying to have the best of both worlds. Several years ago I saw this scripture I just couldn't believe, so I had to read it a few times, but it just didn't seem possible that such a thing would happen, but of course I have seen it in living color and actual life since then, and it is indeed happening today. Now, it's exactly the same thing as we saw yesterday in Saul with partial obedience where people think they can go part of the way, or just enough to satisfy their own conscience so to speak, and then the rest doesn't make any difference. As we noticed, partial obedience was one of the greatest enemies that we faced as far as attaining the right choices, and God's righteousness. (2 Kings 17:32) Notice what these people did. "So they feared the LORD, and then they made unto themselves of the lowest of them priests of the high places, which sacrificed for them in the houses of the high places." These high places tell you that they were engaged in idolatry. They feared the Lord, and yet they were engaged in idolatry. That doesn't sound possible but it is, and so people try even today to have the best of both worlds. Oh yes, we want to yield to the Lord and want what God has for us, and yet they will go after the idolatry, and they will bow down to all these different bondage's and gods we mentioned yesterday, and no one is going to win that way. God is not a God of compromise, and so we

just cannot fear the Lord on the one hand and engage in all of the idolatry on the other, and yet so many down through the years have tried to do this and I'll tell you, it is a very miserable existence.

I want to notice four examples of some very costly relationships. We saw this man yesterday, and we're going to explore his life just a little bit more today, and see if we can learn some of the things that we need to in order to avoid the situation that Samson got himself into. As we saw yesterday, he went down to Timnath and saw this woman of the daughters of the Philistines. He came up and told his father and mother, I've seen a woman, and you remember from yesterday's lesson how that he demanded that woman. God never did allow the marriage to come to pass, but that didn't stop Samson from pursuing his own way, and going after a relationship that was not of God, and so the next time in (Judges 16:1), "Then went Samson to Gaza, and saw there an harlot," and so you'll notice here, he has no intention of marrying this woman. There's nothing honorable about this at all, because this is just simply a harlot or a prostitute, and he went into her. (Judges 16:4) "And it came to pass afterward, that he loved a woman in the valley of Sorek, whose name was Delilah." Now, "afterward" is a very important word, because it means when you start on this downward path, you're going to need some kind of a drastic and dramatic measure in order to stop it or you just keep right on going, but there was nothing on that in this history concerning Samson. There was no great event, or great experience with the Lord that stopped that downward plunge. Now, God can do it, and could have stopped him if Samson had relied upon Him, believed God for it, and had sought the things of the Lord first. God could have stopped it between the wife and the harlot, or between the harlot and this woman Delilah but you see, unless something happens to stop that, then it's just an "afterward" in your life, and a continuation of what's already gone before.

(Judges 16:4) So, "it came to pass afterward (you will notice) he loved a woman in the valley of Sorek." This is why that I encourage young people, and everyone to surrender your emotions to the Lord because they are so powerful. They have such a bearing on us as we're going to see here, and this downward path that Samson took was because of that inner emotion. There's no doubt He loved this woman with a fleshly love, or human affection, and the lust of the flesh is extremely strong, but it was not divine love. "He loved a woman in the valley of Sorek, whose name was Delilah," and so, we are going to notice the progression of Samson's downfall here, and as we go along you just have to ask, how could anybody be that dumb? Now, we look around today and we ask the same question, how could you be so stupid? Well, you see these emotions just blind us as we're going to find out with Samson.

(Judges 16:6) "And Delilah said to Samson, Tell me, I pray thee, wherein thy great strength lieth, and wherewith thou mightest be bound to afflict thee." Samson, I want you to tell me where your strength is, so that we will know how to beat the living daylights out of you. Now, how dumb does that sound to you? You have to wonder how ignorant could Samson be? There's nothing seductive about that, and it's not like she was trying to catch him off guard. I wondered if Samson really thought that he was so invulnerable, and absolutely indestructible that he was just playing a game with her, and if she was just a challenge to him? I don't know all of these things, but I do know that some people play the same games today for those kinds of reasons, and that's why we must beware. Some in our day seem to think that they can play with fire and not be burned, but you can't. If you play with the flesh and enter into these things, you can only go to the brink so often before you're going to fall over the edge, it's that simple.

(Judges 16:7) "And Samson said unto her, if they bind me with seven green withs that were never dried (that's just cords), then shall I be weak, and be as another man."

Samson's downfall as I say, is progressive just as it is with us today, and so this first hint that he gave her is the number seven. He had seven locks of hair, and so he made this reference of seven to the seven locks which he had. Well, she tied him up that way and called the Philistines. They came in and he just broke that like it was burnt flax. (Judges 16:10) "Then Delilah said unto him (after that) Samson, behold, thou hast mocked me." Now, he broke these bands as though they were nothing, but you will notice here, how that she begins to accuse him and said Samson, you're just mocking me, and this assault against him just builds, and the same thing happens until people are in a relationship that they just cannot extricate themselves from, and so Samson you're at fault, you're at fault. "Now you tell me I pray thee, wherewith thou mightest be bound." Did you know that he continued to play the game? He said unto her in (Judges 16:11), "If they bind me fast with new ropes that never were occupied, then shall I be weak and be as another man." Now, these new ropes are again a reference to his hair which has never been cut, and this also fails, but she just persists. Again, he continues on with her which is the result of getting involved in wrong relationships where the heart, and the feelings are in control. Good sense just goes absolutely out the window, there is no reasoning, and it becomes totally unreasonable. We sometimes see the way certain girls are treated by some young men, and if the girl had any sense at all, which she doesn't at that time because of her emotions, she would go the other way in a heartbeat, and the same thing with a young man, exactly as we have here with Delilah treating Samson the way she did. Well, you will notice Delilah said unto Samson, (Judges 16:13) "Hitherto thou hast mocked me, and told me lies: tell me wherewith thou mightest be bound," and she really becomes very demanding with him at this point, and he said unto her, "If thou weavest the seven locks of my head with the web." He finally divulges the secret of his hair at this point. That failed too,

but notice the assault continues. (Judges 16:15) "And she said unto him, how can you say I love you when your heart is not with me?" Now, how many times have you heard that line, and we hear it very often wherever fornication is involved. Now, if you really loved me, then you would submit yourself to me sexually in this matter, and sadly enough so many have bought into that, and they're trying to buy acceptance, but of course there's such a price to be paid.

Now, I will tell you young people that yeah, this is the nineties, but God has not given some special dispensation for the nineties where that extramarital sexual activity outside of marriage is alright. No, it's still sin, it always has been, and it always will be. We must make up our mind to either go according to the standards of God's word, or try to rewrite God's word in accordance with the modern declaration of the nineties, and I guarantee the pain will follow. The complications are going to follow, and some of them can be very severe, so she uses this tactic. (Judges 16:15) "How canst thou say, I love you, when your heart is not with me? you have mocked me these three times, and you have not told me where your great strength lies." She puts all the blame on him, (Judges 16:16-17) "and it came to pass, when she pressed him daily with her words, and urged him, so that his soul was vexed unto death; (17) That he told her all his heart, and said unto her, There hath not come a razor upon mine head; for I have been a Nazarite unto God from my mother's womb: if I be shaven, then my strength will go from me, and I shall become weak, and be like any other man." Notice these words of pressure which she brought to bear on him, "You don't love me, your heart is not with me, you have mocked me, and you've not told me the truth." All of these things are used today to coerce people into doing things that they really do not want to do. That's why I say that we can not fall victim to peer dependence, and we cannot give in to the pressure that is coming against us. Now, I want to notice here she pressed him daily with her

words, and the effect of that was that he was vexed unto death. The fact of the matter is that he should have left long ago.

Now we come to Joseph. He was a godly man and he respected the ways, and the operations of God, so when Potiphar's wife tried to put pressure on him, (Genesis 39:7-8) what did he do? He fled immediately, because you see, temptation is nothing to fool around with, so don't stand there and see how long you can resist temptation. Scripture tells you to flee temptation, so get up and get out. I've known some girls, and have been so very pleased and proud of them, that when these things came up with their boyfriends they said alright, I will walk home, now just leave me alone, let me out of here, and that's the right choice. So flee, get out and don't try to stand there and withstand such pressure as that.

(Judges 16:19) "And she made him sleep upon her knees." You see, what happens is that a person just gets wore down, and wore down until the resistance is all gone. There's nothing left to fight and resist with, and so it's just a matter of sleep, where they are in such a state that you can do anything in the world you want to with them, and talk about a sheep led to the slaughter, that's exactly what Samson became. (Judges 16:19-20 continued) "And she called for a man, and she caused him to shave off the seven locks of his head; (and then if you can believe it) and she began to afflict him." She began to torment him and didn't call for anybody else to do it, she did it herself. That's why I wondered how Samson could be so stupid and yet the same thing happens in our world today. "His strength went from him. (20) And she said, The Philistines be upon thee, Samson. And he awoke out of his sleep, and said, I will go out as at other times before, and shake myself. And he didn't know that the LORD was departed from him," and we need to understand it well. It doesn't mean you're going to lose your salvation, and that you're going to go to hell as some would teach, but young people, you can play with fire only

so long, and then you will pay the price.

The scripture is absolutely true in (Romans 8:13).

"For if ye live after the flesh, ye shall die:" (Galatians 6:8)

"If you live after the flesh (soweth to his flesh) of the flesh you shall reap corruption." (Judges 16:21) "The Philistines

took him, and they put out his eyes." As I told you

yesterday, there are some who go ahead and justify such behavior as Samson's, because if you read the record

from the very beginning, on down from the time that he

got involved with this woman that he wanted to marry, and

continue from there on down, you're going to find some

tremendous displays, and manifestations of the power of

God in Samson. Sometimes people see this and say, you

see there, it doesn't make any difference, because he's

still manifesting this power, he still has all of this glory,

and he still has all of these things that are going for him.

Well, before you get to thinking along that line, go down to

the end of Samson's life, and then tell me that he profited,

and that God said it was alright, because God didn't. (21)

"They put out his eyes, and then they brought him down

to Gaza, and they bound him with fetters of brass." Now

he has to submit to the dictates of someone else, "and he

did grind in the prison house." He is doing their work and

if you read on down in that chapter, they made sport of

him, and they mocked him big time, but finally Samson's

hair did begin to grow out. That's a wonderful picture of

the church which we will not go into, because the church

is gone the same way, and yet God is going to bring out a

remnant, so to speak. His hair began to grow, and you

remember the story, how he asked the little boy to put his

hands on the pillars of the temple, and he pushed with all

of his might, and down came the temple, and all the

Lords, and all of the people, but Samson died too. He did

not meet an honorable end, so was it good and right for

him to get involved with these women? You know it

wasn't, and so let's not fall into that trap of trying to fear

the Lord, and yield to the flesh at the same time; it doesn't

work. Even though God may use us, and do wonderful

things through us the way He did Samson, what was Samson's reward? Very little, and so don't go down that path.

Then there was Solomon, and we noticed Solomon yesterday also being a tremendous young man, and he had such a terrific beginning. God spoke to him, and gave him these wonderful revelations, but I want to notice that the downfall of Solomon was in his relationships. That's why I continue to say that the relationships that you keep have such a tremendous importance, and influence on your life. Solomon was the wisest of all men, the richest of all men, and the most powerful of all men, but (1 Kings 11:1) tells us, "But King Solomon loved many strange women." Again, this is not divine love, because divine love is directed according to divine paths. "Solomon loved many strange women, together with the daughter of Pharaoh (an Egyptian), women of the Moabites, Ammonites, Edomites, Zidonians, and Hittites;" You name them, he loved them, and it means that he was pulled by this affection for all of these women. (1 Kings 11:2) "Of the nations concerning which the LORD said unto the children of Israel (and you can underline it), Ye shall not go in to them, neither shall they come in unto you: (why?) for surely they will turn away your heart after their gods." God makes a great deal of the affection, sympathy, interest, connection, and dedication that Solomon had from his heart to the Lord, that is now turned from Him toward these women, who are actually opposite of what God is.

You will notice that Solomon clave. That word clave means to cling, adhere to, and to catch by pursuit. Solomon is the one who ran and went after these women, and he's the one who wound up the loser. He was actively engaged in pursuing strange women and it was not simply a matter of being deceived at all. (1 Kings 11:7-8) "Then did Solomon build an high place for Chemosh." When we are influenced in the wrong way, then we are going to start to do things that are not according to God's word.

We're going to do things that are contrary to the principles, and to the ways of the Lord. Solomon began to build places of idolatry. Now, he had already built the temple of God according to the will, purpose, and plan of God. Now, he begins to put that energy into building the temples of the idols. "He builds an high place for Chemosh, the abomination of Moab, in the hill that is before Jerusalem, and for Molech, the abomination of the children of Ammon, (8) And likewise did he for all his strange wives, which burnt incense and sacrificed unto their gods." All this was an attempt to keep these ungodly women happy, and content much the same way that Delilah did with Samson, and so it is today. Many relationships are going to literally demand compromise, and I'll tell you as it was in the case of Solomon, that compromise can be absolutely devastating.

This verse is not in your notes, but the next verse says, (1 Kings 11:9) "Solomon's heart was turned from the LORD God of Israel, which had appeared unto him twice." He turned from God who had given, and done so much for him because of these bad relationships with women, and we find that he forsook the things of the Lord.

The next one is Ahab in (1 Kings 21:23-25) and this was not by any means a godly man. He never had anything godly about him that I can find out in the scripture, but I want to see the relationship by which he was influenced. (23) "And of Jezebel also spake the LORD, saying, The dogs shall eat Jezebel by the wall of Jezreel. (1 Kings 21:24-25) Him that dieth of Ahab in the city the dogs shall eat; and him that dieth in the field shall the fowls of the air eat. (25) But there was none like unto Ahab, which did sell himself to work wickedness in the sight of the LORD (and you can underline this part), whom Jezebel his wife stirred up." Ahab is going to bear, did bear, and will bear his own burden of responsibility, but I want to notice that he was influenced by this relationship with Jezebel who stirred him up. If you go back and read the story, you'll find it was Jezebel's idea to

have Naboth killed, and then Ahab would get his vineyard. Ahab went and he said, your vineyard is right next to mine, it's real convenient, and I want to buy it. Naboth said no, this is my inheritance of the Lord, this is what God has given to me and I'm not going to give it to you. He made the choice to stay with what God had given to him, and that choice cost him his life, but it was the right choice, I'll tell you that. It was Jezebel's idea to frame him, so that they could get the vineyard, and God did not forget that, so she's the one who stirred him up. Wrong relationships will bring wrong influences every time. And then, there's the prodigal son, (Luke 15:11-13) "and he said: A certain man had two sons: (12) And the younger of them said to his father, Father, give me the portion of goods that falleth to me. And he divided unto them his living. (13) And not many days after the younger son gathered all together, and took his journey into a far country, and there wasted his substance with riotous living." The word riotous means dissolutely evil, lewd, and wicked. It means loosed from restraint, and to be especially loosed in morals and conduct, and I want to notice here that rebellion will always lead to a far country. You may not even go out of the house, you may not even go out town, but rebellion will always lead to a far country. You will also notice that waste will also follow it. Now, it's not hard to realize here, that this young man didn't spend all of his money directly on himself. I don't think you can live riotously by yourself, and so I fear that he fell into the same trap that so many other young people are falling into today, and that is trying to buy your friends, and the price is more than just money. There are many takers out there, and they are going to take whatever they can from you, and that's exactly what happened to this young man. You will notice in (Luke 15:14-16), "And when he had spent all," and I will guarantee you that this kind of a taker will draw it out of you until you have nothing left, be it your energy, money, or morals; anything. They will simply drain you dry and (14) "So when he had spent all, there arose a

mighty famine in that land and he began to be in want. (15) And he went and joined himself to a citizen of that country, and he sent him into his fields to feed swine. (16) And he would fain have filled his belly with the husks that the swine did eat: and no man gave unto him." When friends are bought at whatever the price may be, they are going to leave you quite alone when they can get nothing else out of you. That's just the absolute reality of it, and there have been many down through the years who have experienced it exactly the way that the prodigal son did. Now, this is a good place for the Lord to work, and as I told you yesterday that if you ever get into a position, have gotten into a position, or are in a position like this; don't despair, and quit howling. God can take those pieces, and bring order out of chaos right now, and He has done that over and over.

Now, what I want to impress on you this morning, is that there is a price to be paid for making this choice of going into a far country. Going through the scenario that this prodigal son did you'll notice, it was at this time that you don't read of any of his friends that came around trying to help him. Who knows, but that the citizen of that country had taken from him too? We're not told, but what we do realize, and what we do see is that this young man was very much alone with no one there to help him. Where are all the people that were there when he was spending money hand over fist on them? In his time of need where are they and you know, I've seen that over, and over again where those who you gave so much to, are the very ones that are not there when you are in need. Well, thank God he came to this place (Luke 15:17), because when he came to himself he said, "How many hired servants of my father's have bread enough and to spare, and I perish with hunger!" God in His infinite grace brings people to this very condition of need, in order that we may realize that God can, and will help. God can minister to us in a condition like this when no one else can, and so he said, I will rise and go to my father. Do you

realize here, that he had never forgotten his roots, and I'm much encouraged by that in regard to many of the young people that I know. I'm confident they know where their Father's house is, and we will continue to believe God that they will make that choice. (Luke 15:18) "I will arise and go to my father's house, and will say unto him, Father, I have sinned against heaven, and before thee."

Do you realize the difference in this true repentance, and the so-called repentance of Saul that we saw yesterday? True repentance doesn't try to put the blame on anybody else, but it shoulders the full responsibility that I'm guilty, and I'm ready to take the consequences. If it means going home and working for my father as one of his hired hands, I'm ready and willing to do that. That is true repentance, and that is the right choice. (19) "I'm no more worthy to be called your son. Make me as one of your hired servants (20) and he arose." Be sure that when you come to a conclusion such as the prodigal came to, follow through with it. It's one thing to say yeah, I was wrong and I'll do it, but it's another to get up off your backside, arise and go. (Luke 15:20) "He came to his father. But when he was yet a great way off, his father saw him, and had compassion, and ran, and fell on his neck and kissed him." The father that he had hurt so much was here with open and ready arms to receive him back. Where are all his friends whom he had spent so much on, and had just taken from him? (Luke 15:21-22) "And the son said unto him, Father, I have sinned against heaven, and in thy sight, and am no more worthy to be called thy son. (21) "But the father said to his servants." Did you notice, the father just really ignored his repentance speech? I want to notice that speech of repentance had to be made for the sake of the son, not for the sake of the father, and so it is the son who was right in order in doing that, but the father is not going to hold it over him, and keep him alienated.

I want to notice something that is very important here in these next few verses, lest people get the wrong idea,

because I've already told you, when we make certain decisions and choices, there are sometimes some severe consequences that are going to follow. Now, you will notice here that the father said, (Luke 15:22) "Bring forth the best robe." It tells us that God has brought forth the best robe of the righteousness of Christ for us. "Put it on him; put a ring on his hand." That's symbolic of the sealing of the power of the Holy Ghost, because the ring is a seal, and we are sealed and filled with the spirit. "Put shoes on his feet." (Ephesians 6:15) "We're shod with the preparation of the gospel of peace." (Luke 15:23) "You bring hither the fatted calf." That fatted calf is the sacrifice of the Lord Jesus Christ, and we find that beautiful and wonderful fellowship with Christ. God is bringing us back unto Himself, and He will do that for anyone regardless of the depths to which you may have sunk, and God wants to bring you right back into fellowship. Let's bring hither the fatted calf, kill it, and let us eat and be merry. This young man found a joy that I'm sure he had not known since he left home, and yet it was still waiting there for him.

(Luke 15:24) "For this my son was dead, and is alive again; he was lost, and is found. And they began to be merry," and it's very important to realize, that's only the beginning. When God begins to rebuild, if you will let him, He will do and take you through the total rebuilding process. He just began to be merry, and so there is a way out. God can heal, restore one to fellowship, and wipe away the guilt, misery, mistakes, and all of these things, but what I want to realize here is that yielding to the flesh always has its price. Do you know that we don't read one word that this father went to the son that stayed home and said, now I want you to share your inheritance with the prodigal? The prodigal son had already squandered all his inheritance that he got in the natural, and so I'm saying to you young people today, there may be much of your natural inheritance that you've already squandered. Well, you may just have to kiss that goodbye. God may give

you more, and that's up to him but you see, what we're concerned with today is that we believe God to bring us back into the spiritual realm, and to give us that, but don't think that God absolutely has to restore the natural inheritance that has been squandered. He may leave that as a constant reminder that you have to believe, and make your choices for Him, and then of course when we get to eternity, the natural inheritance doesn't make any difference anyway.

We know bad choices can be costly, but good choices can also be costly at the time. What we have to remember, is that if you make a good choice, it may cost you at the time, but they can, and will have great reward later. That of course, is exactly what we are wanting to do, and that is to strive, and to have that wonderful eternal reward.

Our first example is the three Hebrew children Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego. (Daniel 3:15-16) "Now if ye be ready that at what time ye hear the sound of the cornet, flute, harp, sackbut, psaltery, and dulcimer, and all kinds of musick (when the music comes on), you fall down and worship the image which I have made (that's Nebuchadnezzar speaking) well: but if you worship not, you shall be cast the same hour into the midst of a burning fiery furnace; and who is that God that shall deliver you out of my hands?" This is a very defiant man who says, when you hear the music, you worship me, or judgment will be immediate. (16) "Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego, answered and said to the king, O Nebuchadnezzar, we are not careful to answer you in this matter." Translation: We are not going to use flattering words, and give you the false impression that we will obey you when we have absolutely no intention of obeying you, because this is absolutely contrary to what God says. They would have no part of false worship and they continue on and say, (Daniel 3:17-18) "If it be so, our God whom we serve is able to deliver us from the burning fiery furnace, and he will deliver us out of your hand, O

king. (18) But if not:" Now, they knew they'd be delivered one way or another, but if He doesn't see fit to keep us out of this furnace, or deliver us out of it, "be it known unto you, O king, that we will not serve your gods, nor worship the golden image which you have set up." We know that God can deliver us, but if He chooses not to, then we still choose to take the consequences, and sometimes that's the choice that you and I may have to make. We may have to choose to take the consequence, rather than to bow to evil. (Daniel 3:19-20) "Then was Nebuchadnezzar full of fury, and the form of his visage was changed against Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego: therefore he spake, and commanded that they should heat the furnace seven times more than it was usual to be heated." (20 paraphrased) "He also got his best men to go in here to be sure that they were tied up tight, and that they were ready to cast them in."

(Daniel 3:23-25) "And these three men, Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego, fell down bound into the midst of the burning fiery furnace. (24) Then Nebuchadnezzar the king was astonished, (you'll notice they were bound because they made a right choice and decision) and (Nebuchadnezzar) rose up in haste, and spake, and said unto his counsellors, Did not we cast three men bound into the midst of the fire? They answered and said unto the king, True, O king (that's right). (25) He answered and said, but I see four men loose, walking in the midst of the fire, and they have no hurt; and the form of the fourth is like the Son of God." Now, what I want to see here as I said, there are consequences for making right choices, but God also has His rewards of making right choices, and they began to experience these immediately. I want to encourage us today that you don't have to wait till you get years down the road to find out that there are rewards for making right choices. It is quite clear they were bound because of the decision and choice they made. They were thrown into the fire, and things may get a little bit hot for you when you make a right choice, but you will

notice here when they were thrown into the fire, what happened? Well, they had been bound, but now they're loose and walking around. It means that God can give you that kind of victory in spirit, that you are loose and walking around even in the midst of the heat. It's not destroying you, it's not bringing you down, and it is not something that is keeping you from accomplishing this goal, and being in the place where God wants you to be.

The next thing we see, is that there is a fourth one in there, and this is the one that I love, because when we are in the midst of the burning fiery furnace, it is at that time we get a vision, or a view close up and personal of Jesus, the Son of God. We come to know Him in a deeper, and a greater way than we have ever known before, all because we made the right choice. So, these rewards are wonderful and God is still honored by those choices, and I'll guarantee you, that if you honor God, He will honor you. (Daniel 3:26-27) "Then Nebuchadnezzar came near to the mouth of the burning fiery furnace, (this is not over) and spake, and said: Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego, you servants of the most high God, come forth." I want to notice here, that you have to go through the test before you get the recognition. They were just nothing when they were cast into the furnace, but now they're seen by Nebuchadnezzar as servants of the most high God. You see, they have gone through something, and have proven themselves, and so Nebuchadnezzar said, "Ye servants of the most high God, come forth, and come hither (and they did). Then Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego, came forth of the midst of the fire, (27) "and the princes, governors, and captains, and the king's counsellors, being gathered together, saw these men, upon whose bodies the fire had no power." You can come forth from something like that unscathed, and others see your testimony, and you become a living testimony. It's not just something that's written in the scripture, or that someone has said about you, they see the gospel living in you, and so you become a living testimony of the power of

God.

You will notice that a hair of their head was not singed, their coats were not changed, and the smell of fire had not even passed on them. You see, these people proved something to those round about them by their experience, and by their conduct, and this is what happens when we choose the way of righteousness. Now, if you choose to yield to the flesh, it's going to plague you till you believe God to take care of it, but you will notice what a wonderful blessing that making the choice to yield to the Lord, and a decision for Him turned out to be, and that's not all.

(Daniel 3:28) "Then Nebuchadnezzar spake, and said, Blessed be the God of Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego, who hath sent his angel, and delivered his servants that trusted in him, and have changed the king's word, and yielded their bodies, that they might not serve nor worship any god, except their own God." I want to notice how far reaching their choice was, not just to themselves, and not just to these that viewed them and saw their testimony, but they actually had the power to change the king's word. That is a mighty power, and it was done because of the right choice that they had made.

(Daniel 6:10) Then here again, "when Daniel knew that the writing was signed." This was not something that caught Daniel unawares, because he knew the decree was that no one could pray, no one could ask a petition of any one or of any god except Nebuchadnezzar, and Daniel knew that the writing was signed. He knew that the punishment, and consequence of not obeying the king's writing was to be thrown into the den of lions, he knew all of that. "Now when Daniel knew that the writing was signed, he went into his house; and his windows being open in his chamber toward Jerusalem, he kneeled upon his knees three times a day, and prayed, and gave thanks before his God, (and you will notice) as he did aforetime." This was not an act of defiance on the part of Daniel, because he just continued what he'd always done, and of

course they knew that and had set him up, but you remember the story, and what I want to see here is that Daniel made his choice with his eyes wide open. It was not an accident, but it was with specific purpose that he did what he did, and another thing I want to notice about him is that his actions were based on faith, not on fear. I've noticed over the years, that if we make decisions because we act out of grief, anger, fear, or of some other negative emotion like that, we will more often than not make the wrong decision or choice, but when we make a choice based on faith, it will be the right one, and so Daniel made that choice.

(Daniel 6:11) "Then these men assembled, and found Daniel praying and making supplication before his God." I wonder if he was praying, O Lord, don't let them throw me in the lion's den? I don't really think so, I think he prayed the way he always did. If you go through Daniel's prayers, he was praying for Israel, and for Jerusalem to be restored and all of these things; such a godly man. No matter what he was praying, (Daniel 6:12 paraphrased) "Then they came near, and spake before the king concerning the king's decree; Didn't you sign this decree, that every man that should ask a petition of any God," and they were simply telling him anyone that didn't, would get cast into the den of lions, and "the king said: Yes that's true, according to the law of the Medes and Persians, which alters not. (Daniel 6:13) Then answered they and said before the king, That Daniel, which is of the children of the captivity of Judah, regardeth not thee." Now, that really was not true, because he did not do this in defiance of the king, but we just as well to realize, that when we make right choices, we may be wrongfully accused too, so that cannot make any difference. God knows and will defend us, and that is exactly what we must keep in mind. Again, they say, Daniel "regardeth not thee, O king, nor the decree that thou hast signed, but maketh his petition three times a day."

(Daniel 6:14) "Then the king, when he heard these

words, was sore displeased with himself," because he knew that he had been had, but the decree had to proceed, and that's exactly what happened. (Daniel 6:16) "Then the king commanded, and they brought Daniel, and cast him into the den of lions. Now the king spake and said unto Daniel, Thy God whom thou servest continually, he will deliver thee."

Now again, I want to point out that the choice that Daniel made had an impact on those around him, and the king was one of them. Now, here the king speaks faith: (Daniel 6:16 continued) "He said the God who you serve continually; He will deliver you." Then if I recall the story right, he was up all night praying for Daniel, and he couldn't wait to get down to the den the next morning, holler down there and hope that Daniel was going to answer him. Did your God preserve you and in essence, (Daniel 6:21) "Daniel said O king, live forever." I'm still here, and I'll bet you that Nebuchadnezzar was one of the most relieved kings you ever heard of, but you see the impact that he had on another's life. Now, it's so important that we come to that place, and I can't dictate and tell you what to do, or you can't dictate to me, but we are all of one body, and our lives are to have a positive effect on other people, even on the world. So, when we make a right choice, then we can have a positive impact on those around us, be it sinner or saint, and you may not always hear or know about that, but let God keep the records, and just stick with our responsibility to make the right choice in the first place, and then let God take care of the rest.

(1 Kings 22:12) Our next example is one you don't hear much about, or at least most people don't. His name is Micaiah, and he prophesied during the time of Jehoshaphat, the king of Judah, which was one of the good kings of Judah who made a mistake here. Jehoshaphat made more than one of those in that line, but here he was, and had aligned his forces with Ahab, king of Israel, and God didn't want that. Jehoshaphat

wanted a prophet to come down, so that he could seek council of him, and so Jehoshaphat heard all of the prophets that Ahab had, and he was spiritual enough to know that he didn't think this was the right answer, so we read, (12) "And all the prophets prophesied so, saying, Go up to Ramothgilead, and prosper:" These prophets said exactly what they knew Ahab wanted to hear, and sometimes people do that today by saying what they know you want to hear, even though it's not right. "For the LORD shall deliver it into the king's hand." (1 Kings 22:13) "And the messenger that was gone to call Micaiah spake unto him, saying, Behold now, the words of the prophets declare good unto the king with one mouth." In other words, all of Ahab's prophets agree that the Lord is going to be with Ahab, and prosper him when he goes to battle against Ramothgilead. If you go back and read the story, Jehoshaphat was still having doubts, and Ahab said, there is one more, but I don't like him because he don't prophesy good concerning me, and so Jehoshaphat said well, lets hear what Micaiah has to say anyway. (1 Kings 22:13) "And the messenger that was gone to call Micaiah spake unto him, saying, Behold now, the words of the prophets declare good unto the king with one mouth:" In other words, everybody agrees on this, and you and I are going to come up against situations, where everybody agrees on it except us, and this is the time we must make our choice as to what God is saying, and not what the crowd is saying..

So, the messenger's advice to Micaiah was, (13) "let thy word, I pray thee, be like the word of one of them, and speak that which is good," and here is the commitment that Micaiah made. (1 Kings 22:14) "And Micaiah said, As the LORD liveth, what the LORD saith unto me, that will I speak," and there's just no substitute for that kind of commitment. He had to make a choice to follow the crowd and go with his peers, or to go alone, and he knew it was going to cost him. (1 Kings 22:15 paraphrased) "He came to the king, and the king said Micaiah, shall we go against

Ramothgilead to battle, or shall we cease?" Micaiah answered him saying, you just go right on up there, the Lord is going to deliver Ramothgilead into your hands, everything's absolutely wonderful and of course, he said it probably just about like that, and the king knew that he didn't mean it.

(I Kings 22:16-23) "And the king said unto him (Micaiah), How many times shall I adjure thee that thou tell me nothing but that which is true in the name of the LORD? (17) And he said, I saw all Israel scattered upon the hills, as sheep that have not a shepherd: and the LORD said, These have no master: let them return every man to his house in peace. (18) And the king of Israel said unto Jehoshaphat, Did I not tell thee that he would prophesy no good concerning me, but evil? (19) And he said, Hear thou therefore the word of the LORD: I saw the LORD sitting on his throne, and all the host of heaven standing by him on his right hand and on his left. (20) And the LORD said, Who shall persuade Ahab that he may go up and fall at Ramothgilead? And one said on this manner, and another said on that manner. (21) And there came forth a spirit, and stood before the LORD, and said, I will persuade him. (22) And the LORD said unto him, How? And he said, I will go forth, and I will be a lying spirit in the mouth of all his prophets. And he said, You shall persuade him, and prevail also: go forth, and do so. (23) Now therefore, behold, the LORD hath put a lying spirit in the mouth of all these thy prophets, and the LORD hath spoken evil concerning thee."

I want to clarify just a little bit of this, because God does not force people to lie, make any wrong choice, or do anything that is wrong, but we are allowed a look into the spirit world, and we need to understand that those forces are working even in our midst today. There is the spirit world that has such an impact and influence on what is happening in our world today, and so God simply used the lying spirit to accomplish what He wanted to do. If you can remember the devil in this light, he is just a puppet

and a tool in the hand of God, and can only go as far as God allows him to, but God will use him over, and over again. Satan is always trying to oppose the purposes of God, and instead he accomplishes them, and so that's what happens here, and Micaiah just gave them that view, into why the messages were different.

(1 Kings 22:24) But Zedekiah the son of Chenaanah went near, and smote Micaiah on the cheek (he just slapped him as an insult) and said, which way went the Spirit of the LORD from me to speak to you?" You can see here that he certainly did not want to admit that he was not telling the truth. What I want to notice though, is that when you stand up and make the right choice, you may be smitten on the cheek too. You may be the victim of a rather severe insult so to speak, but that did not deter Micaiah and it must not deter us.

(1 Kings 22:25-28) "And Micaiah said, Behold, thou shalt see in that day, when thou shalt go into an inner chamber to hide thyself," and if you read all of the rest of this story, you will find all of these things came to pass exactly as Micaiah said that they would. (26) "And the king of Israel said, Take Micaiah, and carry him back unto Amon the governor of the city, and to Joash the king's son; (27) And say, Thus saith the king, Put this fellow in the prison, and feed him with bread of affliction and with water of affliction, until I come in peace. (28) And Micaiah said, if thou return at all in peace, the LORD hath not spoken by me. And he said, Hearken, O people, every one of you," and as far as I know, if they adhered to this, and unless the king's son had some kind of a change of heart that we're not told about, then poor old Micaiah spent the rest of his days in prison. The only way he would have been released, is when Ahab came back in peace, and Ahab never did come back in peace, because he died in that battle. There's no record Micaiah was ever released but you see, he was willing to stand up and make the right choice that God wanted for him, and had given to him to speak, even though he knew it was going

to result in a consequence to him.

(1 Kings 17:10-15) And then, on a little kind of a practical note, I want to notice the widow woman. "So Elijah the Tishbite arose and went to Zarephath. And when he came to the gate of the city, (this was during the time of the famine they had, and the brook is dried up) behold, the widow woman was there gathering of sticks: and he called to her, and said, Fetch me, I pray thee, a little water in a vessel, that I may drink. (11) And as she was going to fetch it, he called to her, and said, (by the way, when you're going over there) Bring me, I pray thee, a morsel of bread in thine hand. (12) And she said, As the LORD thy God liveth, I don't have a cake, I just have a handful of meal in a barrel, and a little oil in a cruse and I am gathering two sticks, so that I may go in and dress it for me and my son, that we may eat it and die." So, you know she didn't have a whole lot, because it only took two sticks to cook it, (13) "and Elijah said to her; Fear not; go and do as you have said: but make me thereof a little cake first, and bring it unto me, and after that you can make for you and your son. (14) For thus saith the LORD God of Israel, The barrel of meal shall not waste, neither shall the cruse of oil fail, until the day that the LORD sanded rain upon the earth. (15) And she went and did according to the saying of Elijah: and she, and he, and her house, did eat many days." You will notice, the choice that she made defies natural reasoning. I mean, that here he is asking her to take the food out of her, and her son's mouth in order for him to have it, and by our natural reasoning, that simply is not right, but she made the choice to step out and to believe God.

Now, I want to notice that God is looking for that same attitude, commitment, and choice today in our lives. You honor Him first, and you just see what miracle God will bring in things financial, which is what this would surround, and even the very food that we eat. If you as young people early in your life, establish the discipline of giving and honoring God with the tithe, even though you

may look at it as sacrificing something that you want, I guarantee you that God will honor you the rest of your life. This woman and her house, and Elijah did eat a handful of meal, and a cruse of oil for many days, and my bible margin says for about a year, and so just give God the chance to create some miracles for you in financial ways. We've already seen that some relationships can be very bad, and choices that can bring some pain and heartache to us, but in this next segment, I want to notice that some relationships can be very good. (Joshua 15:16-19) And Caleb said, He that smiteth Kirjathsepher, and taketh it, to him will I give Achsah my daughter to wife. (17) And Othniel the son of Kenaz, the brother of Caleb, took it: and he gave him Achsah his daughter to wife," and so Othniel and Achsah become a terrific team here. This is a real good relationship, and I believe Othniel became the first judge of Israel. He was a very godly man, and the wife that he married was a very godly woman, and that's just an unbeatable combination. You will notice here, this woman knew exactly what she wanted, and moved her husband to ask of her father to give her a field, and by the way while you're at it, give us those springs over there too. Now, that's equivalent to a wife reaching out for the spiritual blessings of the Lord, and when you get two people that are allied together with their hearts on spiritual things, you have an unbeatable combination. This is exactly what we need to be looking for in the relationships that we want to form with others, and so they made a good team, and that kind of a relationship is invaluable. (Ruth 1:15-16) Another is Ruth in the land of Moab. "And she (Naomi) said, Behold, thy sister in law is gone back unto her people, and unto her gods: return thou after thy sister in law. (16) And Ruth said, Intreat me not to leave thee, or to return from following after thee." Do you remember how Ruth just refused to leave her mother-in-law, and defied all odds to be here, but this choice that she made, and her heart is what was so important in

making right choices. She was indeed a woman of faith, and so when we have that heart of faith, we're also going to make a right choice, and it will be God. What I want to notice in this segment, is that God is able to take care of your relationships. Now, so often people get the cart before the horse, and they're just determined to just get this one, or that one, but if you will leave your choice of a mate to the Lord, you're going to come out a whole lot better. If you have that heart to leave your decisions to the Lord, it's amazing the avenues and the doors that God opens up.

(Ruth 2:2) "And Ruth the Moabitess said unto Naomi, Let me now go to the field, and glean ears of corn after him in whose sight I shall find grace. And she said unto her, Go, my daughter." Notice again the quality of this woman Ruth. She is listening to those in authority over her, she is taking council, she is not going out trying to find a man, and she made choices based on that direction and council. There is no substitute for that attitude, and we are indeed advised and wise to seek council, rather than going our own way. (Ruth 2:7-9 paraphrased) "And she said, I pray you, let me glean and gather after the reapers among the sheaves," and she's talking to Boaz, her future husband, but she doesn't know that at this time. (8) "and he says to her, you go and don't glean in other fields, and you don't go far from my maidens (9) and let your eyes be on the field that they reap, and then you come here to eat and to drink." I want you to notice, that all of these are invitations which would never have happened if Ruth hadn't made the decision, and the choice to come the way that she did. You will find, that when you make right choices, there are things that fall into line completely beyond your own control that are going to bring, and lead you to the place God wants you to be. (Ruth 2:10-12) "Then she fell on her face, and bowed herself to the ground, and said unto him, Why have I found grace in thine eyes, that thou shouldest take knowledge of me, seeing I am a stranger?" This woman

had a true heart of humility and she understood the grace of God, (11) "and Boaz answered and said unto her, It hath fully been shewed me, all that thou hast done unto thy mother in law since the death of thine husband: and how thou hast left thy father and thy mother, and the land of thy nativity, and art come unto a people which thou knewest not heretofore. (12) The LORD recompense thy work and a full reward be given thee of the LORD God of Israel, (notice this) under whose wings thou art come to trust." Boaz recognized that quality in her, and that she was a woman who knew how to trust and believe the LORD God.

(Ruth 2:13-14) "Then she said, Let me find favour in thy sight, my lord; for that thou hast comforted me, and for that thou hast spoken friendly unto thine handmaid, though I be not like unto one of thine handmaidens. (14) And Boaz said unto her, At mealtime you come here," and we noticed this in previous lessons, how God brings us into closer harmony and fellowship, and so let Him establish the relationship rather than trying to do it ourselves. It must grow, and when it grows for the right reason and basis, then it is going to come to good. Ruth did exactly what she was instructed to do, did not go her own way, left her choices to the Lord so to speak, and chose to believe God. She came to a good end.

(Ruth 3:1) "Then Naomi her mother in law said unto her, My daughter, shall I not seek rest for thee, that it may be well with thee?" And so here again, one godly woman is giving council to another one wanting to make a right decision and choice.

(Ruth 3:10) "And he said, Blessed be thou of the LORD, my daughter: for thou hast shewed more kindness in the latter end than at the beginning, inasmuch as thou followest not young men, whether poor or rich." This is a real testimony of Ruth, and the values that she had. It's no wonder that we read these following things.

(Ruth 4:13) "So Boaz took Ruth, and she was his wife: and when he went in unto her, the LORD gave her

conception, and she bare a son." (Ruth 4:17) "And the women her neighbours gave it a name, saying, There is a son born to Naomi; and they called his name Obed: he is the father of Jesse, the father of David." When Ruth left her choices to the Lord, and she simply followed in the way that God opened to her, this Moabitess, this idolater, this complete castaway was not only brought into the commonwealth of Israel, but she became the great-greatgrandmother

of David, and had a permanent place in the lineage of the Lord Jesus Christ. Right choices in relationships are just absolutely irreplaceable.

In this last section, I want to notice that choices for wealth can be extremely dangerous. I would say at the outset to beware of trying to get rich quick and establish wrong relationships to do it, because that has happened over the years and boy, it has really come to naught. (Proverbs 14:12-14) I want to notice today, especially in this light of getting wealth or money, that (12) "there is a way which seemeth right unto a man, but the end thereof are the ways of death. (13) Even in laughter the heart is sorrowful; and the end of that mirth is heaviness. (14) The backslider in heart shall be filled with his own ways: (but notice) that a good man shall be satisfied from himself," and by that, we mean he is going to have satisfaction, and fulfillment from within, rather than from peer pressure. This becomes a very important point when we talk about relationships, and getting money, because there are some people that will compromise just about anything in order to get material possessions.

(Proverbs 28:18) Now you will notice here, that "whoso walketh uprightly shall be saved," or shall be delivered. This is the one that makes those right choices, and realizes that they cannot go the way that seems right, but is a way unto death. Being saved doesn't mean, just being saved from hell, but we're talking about be delivered from so many pitfalls that come from greed. I guarantee you, that if you have a greedy heart, you will get into

trouble constantly, and so we must make those right choices. You will notice, "he that is perverse in his ways shall fall at once," so again there is a consequence to making a wrong choice, and that consequence is often very, very destructive.

(Proverbs 28:19) "He that tilleth his land shall have plenty of bread." This is the choice for making a honest living. Don't be afraid to work with your hands, or giving your time. What I'm talking about here once again, is this get rich quick thing, and people will sell out in a hurry in order to do it. Solomon says, "He that tills the land shall have plenty of bread: (notice) but he that followeth after vain persons shall have poverty enough." If you latch on to vain, or empty persons with empty promises and you're just trying to take from them, there will be problems, and there will be trouble. It is so dangerous to establish a wrong relationship in an effort to gain all of these riches. Sadly enough, I've known some in recent years who have gone that way, just to get the masses of this world's goods, and what a price they have paid with their bodies and morals.

(Proverbs 28:20) "A faithful man shall abound with blessings: (notice further) but he that maketh haste to be rich shall not be innocent," Now, I would advise and encourage you to go home, and study over these verses in this entire segment on your own time, because they surround this area of making money, and getting rich.

(Proverbs 28:21) "To have respect of persons is not good: For, for a piece of bread that man will transgress." If a person is peer dependent, and just going after somebody in order to get what he wants, he will literally give himself away, and destroy any kind of dignity or self worth that he has, just to get those fleeting riches, and it absolutely is not worth it. We simply cannot sell out to that kind of activity of the flesh, in order to impress someone to the degree they're going to give us what we want, because remember, that they have a price too.

(Proverbs 28:22) "He that hasteth to be rich hath an

evil eye, and he considereth not that poverty shall come upon him." Here again is exactly the same stringent warning of going after these quick riches. Many have made that kind of a choice just for a carrot so to speak, but here's another admonition, and this is not always so easy to do. You may have those who will try to put pressure on you to do those things which are wrong, and go apart from the principles, things, and ways of God, but you must learn to stand and say no, I want no part of it, so just leave me alone.

(Proverbs 28:23) Here's one other thing you may want to consider. "He that rebuketh a man afterwards shall find more favour than he that flattereth with the tongue." There is a time to attempt correcting, or admonishing those who are trying to pull you away, but you can't force them to do anything. The first step is to resist what they are trying to get you to do, and the second step is to try to do something good for them, by trying to admonish, or rebuke them as it is mentioned here. So, make the choice to not give into wrong doing, but then try to rebuke him rather than flattering, or trying to pacify him, even though he is wrong.

(Proverbs 28:24) Here's another very important one. "Whoso robbeth his father or his mother, and saith, It is no transgression; the same is the companion of a destroyer." Sometimes, children think stealing from their parents is no big deal, but it is a big deal, and that theft doesn't just include money. You can rob them in obedience, honor, respect, and love which is due them and if you do, you're going to pay the price, I'll guarantee that. I have seen this so many times when I was a kid, that there are some who think it's so smart, it's so cool, it's so big, and they become part of the in-crowd if they can insult their parents, and declare how horrible and terrible they are; don't you ever give in to that. God only gave you one set of parents, and you need to defend, honor, and respect them, and you'll pay the price if you don't.

The next part here is in the matter of our livelihood,

and the Proverbs have much to say about that. There is a great deal of difficulty brought on young people today because they have this burning desire to get together, have a relationship, and get married right away, but you know, they don't have anyplace to live. They don't have anyway to put food on the table, and all of these various things, and it seems like they never think about that, and so we hear those old clichés, such as you can live off of love, but that don't work either, it don't fill your stomach. Others have said well, two can live cheaply as one, and that's true just as long as one don't eat, and the other goes naked.

(Proverb 24:27) Solomon points out something that is very important here. "Prepare thy work without, and make it fit for thyself in the field; and afterwards build thine house." So young men, you must establish that you are able to get and keep a steady job, to where you can take care of yourself, and then you build a house, where you'll have a place to bring this woman. That's one of the major things that a father looks for when someone comes to take his daughter. That's his most precious possession, I'll have you to know, and he wants to know that this young man that is taking his daughter is going to be able to take care of her, and at least meet the necessities that she has, and hopefully gets to the place where he takes care of her just as well, or even better than the father did. Someone asked a young man that was going to get married how they would eat, and the reply was that we'll make out. He said, I know that, but how will you eat, and so you see, you must take all of these things into consideration. Make sure you can take care of this woman by being financially stable enough to have something to feed her, and a place to take her, and then you won't have to go through those horrible fights, because there simply is no money, and things like this.

(Deuteronomy 24:5) I also want to notice here as far as the order of things, that "When a man hath taken a new wife, he shall not go out to war, neither shall he be

charged with any business: but he shall be free at home one year, and shall cheer up his wife which he hath taken." You see, right relationships must be cultivated and maintained, and they must be given the right priority. In other words, it was important for a soldier of that time to be able to go forth to war, yet God put this family relationship ahead of that. He told them that if you have this man who has just married and is a soldier, he should stay home a year before going to the battle in order to establish, and make this new married relationship solid. That means that it has to be a priority, and when you establish right relationships with right priorities, they can be the most wonderful thing that there is, so let us get our priorities right, and in the right order.

Well, this is our last session today. It's not the last of the meetings, praise God, but it is our last session and to me, they have flown by. You may have wondered if they will ever end, but I trust that we are getting some practical and profitable material to apply to our lives. We have noted those who have made some right, or wrong choices, and we're going to see more of that today. We have seen how desperately important it is for us to have right relationships, and I must impress upon you once again, that you're the one that's going to be choosing your relationships. It's not just as a husband, wife, mate, or something like that, though that's certainly included, but it is other relationships that can be very destructive. These are the things that you're going to have to guard against, and then you will be able to make right decisions, and choices throughout the rest of your life. We must recommit in our own heart that we are going to choose these things as we take our place, and just simply believe God, and I trust we know how to do that by the end of this session.

The title of our session today is, "Choosing the ways and treasures of the Lord," and you know, there are people that make certain choices out in the world, and they are good. I have known some very moral people that

have chosen to go the way of morality, and I've seen others that have chosen to deny the steps of greed, and just believe God to prosper them, and all of this is wonderful, but God has actually given to us a higher calling than just what we see, and enjoy in this world. What I especially want to enlarge on today is that we are in preparation for eternity, and not only where we spend eternity, but the rewards, and wonderful treasures that we have there will depend directly on the choices that we make today. I want to go into the fact that we must desire, and value the ways and treasures of the Lord right now, and as we go on, we'll learn to value them even more. (Proverbs 14:12) We noticed this verse yesterday in the lines of financial things, and we put it in that context. As I told you at that time, it has a very wide range of application. "There is a way which seemeth right unto a man, but the end thereof are the ways of death," and we find that there are so many ways today that seem right, but we're going by, and using man's standards and value system. They seem so right, and everyone of us are going to come to places in our lives, when we're going to have to make a choice between the ways of the world, the ways of destruction, and indeed God's ways. This shows us, that so many ways we think are right, really are the ways of destruction, and we see that again, and again in the scriptures.

(Judges 17:6) Judges is a book of failure, and one key to the great failure that we see there is, "In those days there was no king in Israel, but every man did that which was right in his own eyes." That is a very dangerous standard to go by, where men just do that which is right in their own eyes, they establish their own righteousness, and we find that in our society today. Our society says it is alright to live together in adultery, or fornication, to steal as long as you can get away with it, and to do anything just so you get what you want. It doesn't matter how much, or badly you hurt someone else, because that's not the point, it is what is right in your own eyes. Now, you'll

notice the reason that is true, is because there is no king in Israel. We must establish Christ as the king in our lives, and when we do that, there is a king, director, and one who is on the throne of our hearts, and we'll no longer be going according to our own ways, but once again, the choice is ours to make.

Now, there are four times in this book of Judges that we read there was no king in Israel, and I point out once again that overall, Judges is a book of failure. It is typical of the church today, and the same thing is true, that men have denied Christ the place in their lives that He must have. They have turned to their own ways, and done that which is right in their own eyes. I want to notice four examples of people today who made their own choices, rather than giving God the priority.

(Genesis 13:7) The first one is Lot. "And there was a strife between the herdmen of Abram's cattle and the herdmen of Lot's cattle." God was going to bring a separation between Abram and Lot, and I want to notice, that God is not the author of strife. God didn't bring the strife, but He did use this to accomplish His purpose, and I've brought that out a little bit before in our lessons, that God is not responsible for so many of the things that happen, but He uses even the very evil things in our lives to accomplish His purposes. God didn't ordain the strife, but He used it, and may use the same thing to break up some of the relationships that you may, or may not have even yet, because there can be certain people, and things that you're associated with which are going to have a very negative effect on your life. If God is going to take you to where He wants you to be, He may have to separate you from those influences, and so He may use strife, or bad experience for good. I've known people over the years that were in some relationships that were not good, and the only way that God ever got them out of that, is that He had to teach them a very painful lesson of losing some money, or something like that. I mean deep-pained where they were hurt so desperately, that they finally realized

this person is not good for me, and so God can use all sorts of those things in order to separate us from those particular influences. Now, in this case God had to bring a separation between Abram and Lot, and I'll notice a few things about that as we go on .

(Genesis 13:7-8) "And there was a strife between the herdmen of Abram's cattle and the herdmen of Lot's cattle: and the Canaanite and the Perizzite dwelled then in the land. (8) And Abram said unto Lot, Let there be no strife, I pray thee, between me and thee," and Abram at this point is very spiritual man, and he knew that this condition ought not to exist, and so he's just going to eliminate the problem because there's too many cattle and too little land. He said the whole land is before us, so you go one way and I'll go the other. It doesn't make any difference, and I'm going to let you make the choice, and so, "Let there be no strife between me and thee."

(Genesis 13:9) "Is not the whole land before thee? separate thyself, I pray thee, from me: if you take the left hand, then I will go to the right; or if thou depart to the right hand, then I will go to the left." Now, here's another very important point that I want to realize, in so far as our spiritual experience is concerned. Lot had just been following his uncle Abram, and was not really laying hold of the things of God on his own. I've personally experienced this more than once, but in our early Christian experience, God may give us an uncle Abram, and that means He gives us someone that is very strong to lead and encourage us. He gives us someone that we can look up to, and depend on that we know how to trust but you see, in every Christian there comes that day when you're going to have to believe God for yourself. Lot couldn't go on the rest of his life hanging on to the coattails of Uncle Abraham, and God does not want that in our lives, because you see if that happens, we'll end up trusting Uncle Abraham, rather than trusting God. He doesn't want that, so God has to teach us to trust Himself. Now, what we're going to view here didn't turn out real

good for Lot, but it was not God's fault, and it was not uncle Abraham's fault. It was the choices that Lot made for himself, so there comes a weaning time in our lives, when we do have to stand on our own two feet, and although Lot didn't take it, this was really his door of opportunity. He just didn't do what he really should have done, and we are going to find out why God does that for us. Don't be surprised if there comes somewhat of a rift, and I don't mean a very bitter rivalry hatred thing, but a time when you can no longer have that dependency on the one that God has given you. God don't want you to have a crutch for the rest of your life, and so He separates you to make you stand on your own two feet, and I think I've experience that a number of times in my life. There are some of those that I had for crutches, and they're still some of the most precious and wonderful brethren that I know. I still love them dearly, but I just don't have that same thing to where there is a dependence, and I'm just standing in their shadow. God doesn't want you to stand in the shadow of anyone, because He wants you to make your own shadow. You see, He wants you to have that place of stability in your own life where that you can say with Paul (Acts 27:25) "Sirs, I believe God," not I believe because you believe, but I believe God.

Now, you will notice as we come on down here, we become weaned as I said, but then Lot was shut up to his own choices, and he began to make them. (Genesis 13:10) "And Lot lifted up his eyes, and beheld all the plain of Jordan, that it was well watered everywhere, before the LORD destroyed Sodom and Gomorrah, even as the garden of the LORD, like the land of Egypt, as thou comest unto Zoar." The land of Canaan was big enough to hold both Lot and Abraham. Lot could have had any portion that he wanted, and he would of not taken a thing from Abraham, but what I want to see, is what Lot did, what he saw first of all, and then the choice that he made. (Genesis 13:10) "He lifted up his eyes and he beheld all the plain of Jordan that it was well watered" and so on.

The pull of Jordan was the first thing he saw. The word Jordan means “their descent,” and it is actually the plain of death, and of course it really became that to Lot. He then saw it as the garden of the Lord, or the Garden of Eden, and this is a very dangerous thing. Lot looked at all of this land of Sodom and Gomorrah, and we know without going into it what all happened there, and how that it was not a godly place. Do you see what Lot saw out there, like the garden of the Lord? Oh, this must be the will of God for me, and this is why I say, beware of the tendency to go after your own personal desires, and use the will of God as an excuse for what you want, it is a very dangerous thing to do. Then there are those people that come to me and say, I'd like to have your advise and council, and you find out after the first five sentences all they want you to do is to agree with them, and you know you can't do that. I talk to them and give them a few pointers, and a little bit of council as to what the scriptures say, then they come up with this statement that I have no idea how to answer. Well, the Lord told me to do so, and what are you gonna say, who am I to tell them He didn't? If God told you, you do it. Now, I don't think He did, but I don't have the right to tell them that, but anyway like the garden of the Lord, so beware of using the will of God as an excuse for just going your own way. But, I want to notice the real reason that Lot chose this land.

Lot chose to go to Sodom and Gomorrah because it looked like the land of Egypt. Now, Abraham had lots of faith, and he went down to Egypt because there was a famine in the land, so back to the world as we say, and if you trace his life out, you will find out that when Abraham was down in Egypt, he didn't build one altar. You cannot be in the world and worship the Lord, and Abram couldn't do it, and didn't build an altar of worship until he came back up out of the land of Egypt. When Lot was down there, he looked around, and what he saw appeared like Egypt or close to it, and he liked what he saw, and thinks this is wonderful. It was actually the world that filled Lot's

vision, and if the world fills our vision, we are in deep trouble as far as laying hold of the deep treasures and things of God. Egypt or the world had a great hold on Lot, and so beware of where you look, because you will go where your eyes go. (Genesis 13:11) "Then Lot chose him all the plain of Jordan; and Lot journeyed east: and they separated themselves the one from the other," and so the choice belonged to Lot, and this is what he took. Abram just threw it up for grabs saying, whatever you take, I'll go the other way. Do you know what that means? He left his choice to God, and so that's exactly what we must do. When we leave our choice to the Lord, it might seem to people that we're certainly leaving ourselves wide open and vulnerable, but you know, if God is on the throne, and we believe Him to give us what He wants, how in the world can we go wrong? So, we must leave our situation, and end result of our lives unto the Lord, and sometimes that is a very shaky thing to do. I got kind of an object lesson of that yesterday when I was out minding my own business watching these young people, and their different activities. Brother Pat walked up to me, and he told the kids he would give them an extra point if they could persuade me to stand on this platform, and fall backwards into their arms. I didn't know what I was getting into, and didn't agree to it readily, so he kinda explained it. Well anyway, you go down here to this little platform, and stand up there, and you fold your hands like this, close your eyes, and on the count of three, you fall back and let them catch you. Now, sometimes that's exactly the same attitude that we have to have with the Lord, and we can imagine all of the things that could happen, but they never got me: Thanks! But, that's what Abram did, and he left that choice to the Lord, and we can do the same thing. I have a habit of telling people, and myself that the Lord hasn't dropped one of us yet, so Abram left his choice to the Lord.

Now, notice the contrast between these two. Abram dwelled in the land of Canaan. Now as I say, that land of

Canaan was big enough for Lot and Abraham both, and it would not have taken a thing away from either one, but Abram dwelled in the land of Canaan, and Lot in the cities of the plain. What I want to notice in this next little segment here, is that Lot pitched his tent toward Sodom, then in (Genesis 14:12) we see Lot dwelling in Sodom, and later on he's in the gate of Sodom. What I want to notice about that, is that when we make choices to go after the world, or things like that, it's not always a very sharp turn that we make, but begins with a gradual giving up of those things which are right. We fudge a little here, a little there, and a little somewhere else until before long, we're completely away from the line, or direction that we want to be. It's just a matter of one rendering of the scripture which reads, "they swerved from the faith." That's what makes it so dangerous, because you don't realize that it is happening, but if you give up a little ground here and a little there, pretty soon you don't realize how insensitive you are to the leading of the Lord, and to the prompting that God would have for us, so we see that it is a progressive thing, and indeed a very dangerous one.

(Genesis 13:13) "But the men of Sodom were wicked and sinners before the LORD exceedingly," and then as we noted, Lot dwelt in Sodom (Genesis 19:29). There was a time when he was carried away captive when he was in Sodom, and I've seen that happen in the lives of people down through the years. They get involved in something that they are just about to be destroyed, and God miraculously comes in and delivers them. I mean, He sets them free and you think boy, oh boy, they've learned their lesson and they're going to go on now, but it isn't long till they're right back in that same position and condition.

(Genesis 19:1) We see Lot sitting in the gate of Sodom, which means that he had an official place there, and some of us wondered if he was trying to make a political difference; was he trying to clean up this ungodly place? Some Christians seem to have the idea they can

do that in our world today, but according to the scriptures that's not going to happen. Scripture teaches that we're not going to convert this world and have a worldwide revival. What scripture does teach is that we can pluck this one, and pluck that one, and as many individuals as we possibly can, but we are never going to turn this tide around. Perhaps Lot was trying to do that, but we do know one thing and that is, he didn't succeed or turn it around by any stretch of the imagination. Now, I want to notice, that even when the Lord overthrew Sodom and Gomorrah, He saw to it that Lot and his family escaped because of the faithful intercession of Abraham. I also want to see that Lot was still making his own decisions, rather than doing what God specifically told him to do. (Genesis 19:17-18) "And it came to pass, when they had brought them forth abroad." This is the angel of the Lord that delivered Lot, and his family up for God out of the overthrow of Sodom and Gomorrah. "He said, Escape for thy life; look not behind thee, don't stay in the plain; escape to the mountain, lest thou be consumed. (18) And Lot said unto them, Oh, not so, my Lord:" Can you imagine arguing with the Lord in the midst of this falling all around you, and he has the gall, so to speak, to stand up and say, oh no Lord, not that. I know you have been very gracious, and have magnified your mercy to me, which you showed me in saving my life, but "I can't escape to the mountain lest some evil take me and I die." The mountain corresponds to the mountain of the heavenlies, and yes, the beast and evil is up there, because that is Satan's territory, but if God says to go up there, isn't He responsible to give us absolute victory over the enemy? Of course he is, and the apostle Paul tells us that over and over in the beautiful book of Ephesians, where we read these things. Lot just could not step out and believe God, and so he wanted to go into this city which is near unto me, it's just a little one. Lot wanted those walls around him to feel some kind of security, and people are that way today; they want some kind of guarantee and

security, rather than just swinging out into the glorious depths of the grace of God, and taking Him at His word and at His promise.

(Genesis 19:20) "The city is near to flee unto, and it is a little one: Oh, let me escape thither, (is it not a little one?) and my soul shall live." Well, God chose this heavenly land, but God cannot and will not force us to do anything we don't want to do. God leaves that choice to us, and it's up to us whether we choose to go the right way, and the way He has ordained for us, or whether we want to choose our own little old comfort zone, rather than just stepping out by faith and believing God. The rest of this chapter records the disaster of Lot's life. He had two sons born of an incestuous relationship with his daughters, and they became the forefathers of the Ammonites, and the Moabites who were enemies of Israel. Now, I want to notice, lest we think these things only happen to the worse of sinners, Peter's testimony of Lot, is that God delivered that just man. Now, there are many today that just cannot handle the truth of eternal life, and simply will not accept that Lot was a saved man, but according to Peter's words, he most assuredly was. He delivered **just** Lot, and that don't mean plain old Lot, it means justified Lot, who was a believer. (2 Peter 2:7-8) "And delivered just Lot, vexed (troubled) with the filthy conversation (manner of life) of the wicked:" All the time that Lot chose to stay down there in Sodom and Gomorrah, and he didn't enjoy this is what seems so strange, and yet we find the same thing today. Lot didn't enjoy his time in Sodom, but he still stayed there, and there are people today living under the bondage and influence of the world, and I'll tell you, they are not happy, but they still stay there and why? I don't know. They have the opportunity, and God will get them out, but choose to stay, and so Lot was troubled with their filthy conversation, (8) "For that righteous man," and that's what Peter called him, a righteous man, and that term is not ascribed to a sinner. "That righteous man dwelling among

them and seeing and hearing vexed his righteous soul from day to day with their unlawful deeds:" and so yes, Lot was saved and made these mistakes and wrong choices as a saved man. We can do that, but I trust that we simply do not, because there is another way.

(Numbers chapter 14) Our next example is Israel, and God wanted them to go into the same land which Lot could have had. He could have walked up and down it like Abram did, and now some over four hundred years later, God is leading the whole nation of Israel into the land of Canaan, and you will notice: (1) "And all the congregation lifted up their voice, and cried; and the people wept that night." I want to see here seven results of unbelief, and how these are things that did not need to happen to Israel, but they did because of their unbelief, and they made these wrong choices.

Number 1 - The first thing is they wept, and when people do not believe God, and take hold of the riches and treasures that He offers to them, I'll guarantee you, there is going to be weeping and wailing. Now they may hide behind a facade of all of their smiles, joys, partying, and all of these things, but they are just as miserable and empty inside as they can possibly be, and so there was weeping and crying that night because they made the decision not to go into the land of Canaan. They made the decision not to lay hold of these choice treasures of the Lord, and their weeping was not the only result of that wrong choice.

Number 2 - (2) "And all the children of Israel murmured against Moses and against Aaron." You will notice here that when people do not lay hold of the things of God and go the way that they should, they make a wrong choice and more often than not, they murmur against God's leaders, and it's always someone else's fault. We've seen that quite a bit in these lessons, and so let us not get in the habit of blaming someone else for responsibility that we must take.

Number 3 - (Numbers 14:2 continued) "The whole

congregation said unto them, Would God that we had died in the land of Egypt! or would God we had died in this wilderness!" The third thing this choice brings is a defeatist attitude where that you just give up and quit. Nobody can do all of this, there's no one that can live a righteous life, and it would just be better for us to have died in the land of Egypt, or the wilderness. God never did intend that, and so this was their idea.

Number 4 - (3) "And wherefore hath the LORD brought us unto this land, to fall by the sword, that our wives and our children should be a prey?" At first, they blamed God's leaders and now in the fourth one, they blame the Lord Himself. Eventually, that's what it is going to come down to; people are going to blame God for their problems, but they may take it out on us. Jesus said in (Romans 15:3), "The reproaches of them that reproached thee fell on me." They can't get to God, and so often times they take it out on us, because we are the closest representatives, so don't be surprised if you may feel the brunt of that from some people. They will never take the responsibility for their problems, and then they blame the Lord for their difficulty.

Number 5 - (3) "Were it not better for us to return into Egypt?" The only life that they know is what they had in the world, and so people say well, there's nothing better than this, lets go back to the world, and that's exactly what they do. They turn to their own self effort, and ingenuity, and then begin to fight their own battles.

Number 6 - (4) "And they said one to another, Let us make a captain, and let us return into Egypt." So, they're going to choose another captain. Well, they'll have to, because God will never lead you back to the world, and if you go back to Egypt, you're going to do that on your own. So, people begin to choose their own captains or leaders, and begin to follow others that are in no wise spiritual. Perhaps they choose someone that just agrees with them, or makes them feel better about the choice they have made, but God is never going to lead you back to Egypt.

Number 7 - (10) "But all the congregation bade stone them (Joshua and Caleb) with stones." Rather than admitting their own wrong and correcting it, unbelief always retaliates against the righteous messengers of God who testify of faithfulness and goodness. Well, you will notice here, (10) "And the glory of the LORD appeared in the tabernacle of the congregation before all the children of Israel. (11) And the LORD said unto Moses, How long will this people provoke me? And how long will it be ere they believe me, for all the signs which I have shewed among them?" You see, God had already proven himself over, and over as to who He was, and what He could do, but there comes a time when God has had enough. Now, I can't tell you when that time is in your life and you can't tell for me, but I do know there comes a time when God will draw a line and say, that's enough, I'm not going to have this foolishness any more. There also comes a consequence for our murmuring and complaining, and God pronounced it here, and says it's not going to continue in verse (12). "I will smite them with the pestilence, and disinherit them, and will make of thee (Make of you Moses) a greater nation and mightier than they," and I want to notice that God could have made a nation of Moses, and still kept His promise to Abraham, but Moses was a very faithful man. He fell on his face and interceded for these people, and God didn't just kill them right then and there, but even Moses with all his intercession could not overcome all of this. So, all this first generation of these people did die in the wilderness, with the exception of Joshua and Caleb, and they got to go into the land because they made the right choice. I will say again, that if you purpose in your heart to know God's truth, and lay hold of His treasures, He will move heaven and earth to make sure that you come into it, even if only for the minority of two. God did that, and these two men came into that choice inheritance.

Now, I think many Christians today are like the children of Israel. They're Christians, but they just wander

around with no direction, real desire or fire, and they have no dedication. It seems they have no ambition, there's no growth, or real knowledge of God and His ways, or spiritual increase at all. This will be the difficulty that every Christian is going to experience if he refuses to go into this land of the heavenly things that God has given to us. It is, and begins with a choice such as, will I lay hold of these lessons?

Our next example is Jonathan. This is in my estimation, one of the saddest stories in the scripture, because Jonathan is a tremendous man of faith. If you go back and study his life, this was no small character. This was no mere novice so to speak, in believing God. He had some tremendous successes as a warrior overcoming impossible odds just because he trusted the Lord, but in (1 Samuel 23:15-18) we read, "And David saw that Saul was come out to seek his life: and David was in the wilderness of Ziph in a wood. (16) And Jonathan Saul's son arose, and went to David into the wood, and strengthened his hand in God." Jonathan and David had a tremendous friendship and bond between them, and Jonathan took that place, even though that he knew that his father Saul was trying to kill David. Jonathan protected and defended him, and said unto David, (17) "Fear not; for the hand of Saul my father shall not find thee; and thou shalt be king over Israel (and you can underline this next part), and I shall be next unto thee; and that also Saul my father knoweth." And they two made a covenant before the LORD: and David abode in the wood (and you can underline this last part), and Jonathan went to his house. And the sad end to that story is that Jonathan was with his father Saul, and he died with him. Now, that's bad enough when we view it in the natural, but when we view it in the spiritual, it is even more devastating, because the place that Jonathan pictures is that of the bride of Christ when Jonathan said, "and I shall be next unto thee." The bride is going to be right there with Christ when He is on His throne, but I fear that many Christians are making

exactly the same mistake and choice. David went into the wilderness to a life of privation, suffering, rejection, and hardship, but "Jonathan went to his house" (1 Samuel 23:18). This was a house of ease in the palaces of his father, and all of these various things. He chose that way instead of suffering rejection with David, and if we do not choose to suffer rejection with the Lord Jesus Christ, we are not going to reign with Him either. We must choose the path of the wilderness in order to come to that place. We saw this last one yesterday, so I'll just be very brief. (Luke 15:11-13) "And he said, A certain man had two sons: (12) And the younger of them said to his father, Father, give me the portion of goods that falleth to me. And he divided unto them his living. (13) And not many days after the younger son gathered all together, and took his journey into a far country, (and you can underline it again) and there (he) wasted his substance with riotous living." Now, this inheritance that he had in the beginning could have been a real boom and blessing to him, but what I'm saying here is that we can waste the opportunities and the provisions that God gives to us, and once they are wasted, many of those things are never reclaimed or recovered. As we noticed in the story yesterday, God can take this beyond into the spiritual realm. The prodigal son had some losses, pain, and sorrow that he didn't need to go through, but if we don't have to do that, then why in the world make such a foolish choice? Why in the world go through such a thing as that? And so, these were never returned. This is a contrast of choices which were made by faith according to God's principles and values. We've seen some of those that men made according to their own idea, and they didn't come out well at all, but I want to notice first of all, a man by the name of Moses. A powerful man of faith, and a man of God, but Moses was just like everybody else. His life was built one block at a time, and he was not always the very spiritual man so to speak. Sometimes, we tend to look upon those worthies of faith,

as though they were someone from another planet, and we have nothing in common that can identify with them, but when you read the scripture of these old testament worthy's of faith, you realize they were people just like we are. They were subject to mistakes just like we are, had their frailties and shortcomings just like we do, and if God could work in their lives and bring those things to pass in them, He can do the same thing in us. He's still the same yesterday, today, and forever (Hebrews 13:8), and so there is nothing so unique about any of us that God cannot perform the same thing. Now, Moses is the one that we want to discuss here for just a moment. (Hebrews 11:24-27) We want to see eight right choices that this man made and they were all because of faith.

Number 1 - (Hebrews 11:24) "By faith Moses, when he was come to years," and that becomes a very important part of our view of ourselves, because you see, Moses didn't have any choice in the matter when he was cast into the river in the little ark of bulrushes, or when it was Pharaoh's daughter who plucked him out of that; all of those things were beyond his control. Now, there are things, and conditions into which we are born that we don't have any control over, because it was God who saw to it, that we were born into a certain family, and had certain parents. Sometimes, God changes parents and things of this nature, but what I want to notice is this. There is a time when everyone of us come to years, and what I mean by that is, there comes a day when we cannot blame our past for the way that we are. Just because I had an alcoholic parent, which I didn't, but that's an example, and I've heard that before. Well, my parents were abusers, my parents were this or that, they were out of the sixties, there were drugs, and it doesn't make any difference at all. You got here, and there comes a time that you come to years, and you can no longer hide behind the facade of what happened before. The decision now is mine to make, and what did Moses do? (24)

"When he was come to years (it was his choice to refuse), he refused to be called the son of Pharaoh's daughter." Moses didn't make a choice based on fear, and he didn't make a choice based on anger for his adopted mother. We don't read of any kind of bitterness, or anything like that as to why and how he made this choice, but he didn't do that. He chose for something, and not simply against something else, and that's what the life of faith is all about. He refused to be called the son of Pharaoh's daughter. Now, looking at it in the natural, he could undoubtedly have been an heir to the throne of Egypt, but he literally chose not to reign over Egypt, and I hope you and I make the same choice, because the problem will be that Egypt will reign over us.

Number 2 - (Hebrews 11:25) "Choosing rather to suffer affliction with the people of God." He didn't choose a life of ease, but a suffering way, an unpopular way, and a foolish way in the eyes of the world. Can you imagine the fellows that grew up with Moses if he told them of this decision, how their eyes would have bugged out when he announced his choice that had no desire for the throne of Egypt? Could you imagine how dumb that seems to some people? Yet, this is the choice that this man made, and it was not just a choice not to reign, but he actually choose pain, rather than so called pleasure.

Number 3 - Notice: (25) He chose that, rather "than to enjoy the pleasures of sin for a season," and I want to talk about the pleasures of sin just for a brief moment because you see, sin does bring a certain pleasure to the flesh, and there is certain bodily stimulation that is just wonderful. God made us that way, and He created it to be enjoyed in certain confines of marriage and so forth, and there is a pleasure in that, but it is only for a season, and that season is very, very short. Not only that, but it can have a very painful and bitter harvest, and again I use the example of David. He enjoyed the pleasures of sin for a season, and sometimes that's only for one short night, or part of a night, or something of this nature, but as we've

already noted, David reaped the consequences of that for the rest of his life. The things you need to realize, is that you can have the same pleasure without sin if you wait on God. If you want a good account of how David suffered, he lost his son, and that was a time of grief and sorrow, but if you want to find out how David felt inside after that adulterous relationship with Bathsheba, read (Psalm 32), where you read how deep that man hurt, I mean way down deep inside. Scripture tells us, it was for about a year before he finally confessed that sin, and got the victory over it. So, there is a certain pleasure of sin, but it certainly lasts for a mighty short season, and it's just not worth it when you have to endure these things. Well, I want to notice we have the same choice today. Many of those choices are made in our youth, and we do not stop to consider at the time the pain which comes from some very irresponsible and even reckless decisions; but you see, though the pleasure of sin may be there for a short season, those consequences go on, and on, and they just seem to last forever

Number 4 - (Hebrews 11:26) "He esteemed the reproach of Christ greater riches," and we've been talking about some of those wonderful riches that Abraham and others enjoyed, and of course these are not riches at all to the world. You see, this is where we have to make the choice if we're going to listen to God's ways, or are we going to look at the values that the world offers, because the value system of the world is only temporal? God's riches are eternal, but what we're talking about here are the things that are not seen. Moses made this choice by faith by choosing things that he could not see, and we must do the same thing.

Number 5 - (26) "He esteemed (chose) the reproach of Christ, and he esteemed that greater riches than the treasures in Egypt." The treasures in Egypt or the world are those things that you can see right out here, and they are so obvious that you can feel, touch, and experience them. Some people sell out their whole lives just for that

sensual activity, those various treasures and riches that they would like to have, but again the very best of them simply do not last. What I want to notice here is that our value system must change from the inside out. These are things that we must come to appreciate inwardly, and those are the spiritual blessings of the Lord, and they will indeed last forever.

Number 6 - The way that Moses was able to do that, is the same way that we are going to be able to do it. (26) "He had respect unto the recompense of the reward." In other words, he had to look beyond his present time and situation. Now, that's hard for us to do at times because you know, it's right here in front of us, but this is a part of the process of walking by faith. We have to look beyond this present time, and look to those things which are going to bring eternal reward. Now, this is where I want to notice that. How are we going to know what these rewards and riches are? Well, there's only one way you find out, and that's by knowing the scripture. This is why that we must spend great deals of time in God's word and as you read the scripture, it is amazing the riches that He is going to show you. I've been thrilled over these things as God showed them to me but you see, by faith we realize that there is eternal benefit for things beyond our sight, and anything that we could even imagine. Paul was caught up to the third heaven and he said, I saw things that are just unlawful (or not possible) for a man to utter. (2 Corinthians 12:4) He couldn't find words to describe them, and we have such things. John saw those wonderful things there in the book of Revelation, and there are spiritual treasures that we can enjoy throughout eternity, but to repeat, we must appreciate them now, and there is no substitute for digging for them in the wonderful pages, and the blessing of God's word.

Number 7 - (Hebrews 11:27) "By faith he forsook Egypt," and you will notice, it was not fearing the wrath of the king. There are different reasons that we do various things, and it is important that we do things for the right

reason. He refused Egypt's treasures, but you will notice that he also left Egypt, and this is the point that I want to make here. God took Israel out of Egypt in one night, but it took forty years for God to get Egypt out of Israel, and that means that God literally has to change our desire and longing to where we do not even want the things of the world. Sometimes, I think and just tell the Lord, if you're trying to make me despise and to hate this world, I think you've done it, we can go now, and you know, that's just kind of the way it is. The world just has nothing for us any longer, and it has to be that way. God has to work that in our lives, but there are people that tell you they love this world, and they just don't want to leave it. I don't want to leave before God's time, but I'll tell you that I'm ready to be with Jesus, and so we must get rid of that hold that Egypt has over us, in order to be able to come to the place where God wants. It's said of Moses that He left Egypt, and we have to leave Egypt in spirit, where that Egypt simply does not have a hold on us, and so forsaking Egypt really means that the desire to be there no longer exists. We don't have that intense, and burning desire for the things of the world.

I want to notice here again that Moses didn't make this decision out of fear. Saul feared the people and made a wrong decision, and as I said, sometimes people make choices out of fear, guilt, anger, and sometimes revenge. People make a lot of decisions because of those negative reasons, but we need to make our decisions on the one positive note of faith because we believe God, and this is the decision, and the choice that is going to be made, and it will be right.

Number 8 - (27) "He endured." That means he was strong and steadfast, "as seeing Him who is invisible," and that's the revelation that we must have of God. We must believe, and know that He is a reality, and not just some figment set up to make us feel better, but there is the reality of God. You remember the definition of faith will come in here. (Hebrews 11:1) "Now faith is the substance

of things hoped for, it is the evidence of things not seen." So Moses (as we must be) was strong and steadfast simply because he believed God, the invisible one, but He was just as real as though Moses could actually reach out and touch, and see Him, and so we can only endure, or maintain a right choice by faith, and I've seen that at times.

You know, people in the heat of an emotional moment make this choice, oh yes, but then when they're tested on it they go back, and this is where it takes faith in God's word to maintain that choice. Some of you may have made some choices here at the youth camp, and may have determined that you're going to make some changes. I see some things that are wrong, things where that God has been left out, and I've have made some choices that I'm going to change. I would encourage you to maintain, and follow through with it after you leave the wonderful spirit of camp here. Follow through with that and be strong, steadfast, and endure after you go and leave the youth camp.

(Hebrews 11) And then there are some special unnamed examples that we find here. When you read through some of these, there's nothing really spectacular recorded about these individuals according to the standards of the world, but there are some wonderful testimonies as you read down through (Hebrews chapter 11), and some of these things are just wonderful. There are names like Abraham, Sarah, Jacob, and others that are shown, listing their accomplishments by faith. Paul just kind of lumps some of these together, but they are no less important than the ones that he goes into, and I think sometimes, that we as individuals fall into these unnamed examples, because they're just about us common folk. Sometimes, we feel like we're just a little insignificant, and that no one even knows we're around. I haven't done anything spectacular, I haven't parted the water of the Red Sea, brought down manna from heaven, or any of these different miracles and things like that, so we feel like

we're just common, insignificant and unknown people, but these are the people that Paul talks about. They are shown as being extreme examples of wonderful faith, walking by faith, and obtaining these glorious treasures for eternity.

Undoubtedly, these would be the unknown, and insignificant individuals as we know in our world today that would probably be very much persecuted and criticized, and we know what that is all about. You will notice in (Hebrews 11:35). "Women received their dead raised to life again: and others were tortured, not accepting deliverance; that they might obtain a better resurrection." Now, women received their dead raised to life again, and of course that would be a spectacular thing and we would understand that, but you'll notice Paul says others, and we would fit into the category of these others. They were tortured, but notice the next part of that verse. "Not accepting deliverance," and I've pondered that over the years, and they were tortured because they didn't accept deliverance. It seems that there was a way out for them, but they chose not to accept it, and I'd always thought that perhaps they didn't choose to compromise. If they had compromised they could have had deliverance, but I don't think it's just limited to that. I think they chose to refuse even the deliverance they could have had from the Lord because you see, we come to a place in our lives where we are willing to stay in the difficulty until God has worked what He wanted to work. There can be a premature deliverance, or way to get out so to speak, but the reward is not going to be as great, and I think this is what we're talking about here. They actually refused deliverance until God worked in them what He wanted to work. You will notice that they might obtain a better resurrection, and it means a more glorious resurrection.

(Hebrews 11:36) "And others had trial of cruel mockings and scourgings, yea, moreover of bonds and imprisonment:"

(Hebrews 11:37) "They were stoned, they were sawn

asunder," and that was probably Isaiah according to tradition, "they were tempted, they were slain with the sword: they wandered about in sheepskins and goatskins; being destitute, afflicted, tormented;"

(Hebrews 11:38) "(Of whom the world was not worthy :) they wandered in deserts, and in mountains, and in dens and caves of the earth." I think there's a good chance these were David's mighty men. I see some of the things that happened to them, but notice the conclusion.

(Hebrews 11:39) "And these all, having obtained a good report through faith." Now, you look down through that list, and you think of some of those things that you may have gone through, and they may not have been so spectacular to other people, but you know they're there. So, they are indeed a part of this life of faith, and so we don't read in any of these, that they were necessarily those of fame and fortune, but they were identified by these different things that they went through.

(Hebrews 11:39 continued) "And these all, having obtained a good report through faith, (here's the key) they received not the promise." They didn't enter in, and they didn't have that which they were waiting for at that time and we need to realize the same thing, is that the real reward of faith is coming after we leave this world, but we must occupy in that spirit of faith while we are here. These were not rewarded with instant gratification, and this is the one thing that you and I are going to have to come to grips with. If we are going to walk by faith and make the right choice, we're going to have to get over this syndrome of having to have instant gratification. We're going to have to be willing to wait, and all these people were willing to do that.

(Hebrews 11:40) These were exactly as we are. "God having provided some better thing for us, that they without us should not be made perfect;" that is having their glorified bodies, and so, are we willing to walk by faith? Are we willing to take all of these things that we have noticed here, and to receive the reward of them later?

Beware of the temporal value system of the world; it may pay great dividends right now, but that is all.

It is so important that we don't become obsessed with suffering, and sometimes people seem like they do and if you read through Paul's message, you'll find that he announces it and never takes us unawares. He never tries to deceive us by any stretch of the imagination, but he does not want us to become obsessed with the suffering in this walk of faith. There are all of these things that we have noticed in these verses here in Hebrews, but in (Romans 8:16), I want to notice some differences. Here again, it is our choice as to which one we get, but again we're going to have to project beyond what we have and see in this life over into eternity, so you'll notice in (16) "The Spirit itself beareth witness with our spirit, that we are the children of God," and that applies to every person that has accepted Christ. The Holy Ghost bears witness with our spirit, and that is to assure us that we're Christians, and we know it is just simply a matter of knowledge. There's no difference in us as far as outward appearance, except a possible glow on our face or something like that, but when one becomes a Christian, you can stand him side by side with a sinner and there's no apparent physical change, or difference. You can't prove by any physical thing, or just by looking that I'm a Christian: look at the button that God put up here. You can't do that, and so the spirit bears witness with our spirit that we are the children of God. Alright, if you are a child of God, then you are an heir, and an heir of God. That is your birthright which God has given you, just by virtue of the fact that you're born into His family. Anyone that has experienced a new birth is an heir of God, and you can stop there if you want to, or you can go on to this better reward, "**and joint heirs with Christ,**" but this one requires something from us. This one requires a choice and decision on our part, and that decision is this: **If so be that we suffer with Him that we may be also glorified together.** There are many sufferings in this world

because of foolishness, downright stupidity, and wrong decisions, but all suffering in this world is not suffering for Christ. Simply stated, suffering for Christ is going through things because we have made the decision to submit our lives to the Lord. If our suffering fits under that category, then anything that we go through including physical suffering and all of this is suffering for Christ, and this has reward if we suffer with Him, but the reward is that we may be also glorified together, but notice.

(Romans 8:18) "For I reckon that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory which shall be revealed in us," and what I want to notice is "I reckon." That means that each one of us must come to that place where we put this personal evaluation on it.

When he says I reckon, it means you have to make this personal, that this is my opinion though no one else were around, this is my assessment of this situation that I have to see and feel this. "I reckon that the sufferings of this present time." We have to evaluate it that way, to count the sufferings of this life not worthy to be compared with the glory that shall be revealed in us. If we can make that personal evaluation and assessment, we can reign with Christ, walk by faith, and make these right choices.

(Proverbs 24:30-34) "Finally, these are the verses that are on the front of your cover. I went by the field of the slothful and by the vineyard of the man void of understanding; (31) And, lo, it was all grown over with thorns, and nettles had covered the face thereof, and the stone wall thereof was broken down. (32) Then I saw, and considered it well: I looked upon it, and received instruction. (33) Yet a little sleep, a little slumber, a little folding of the hands to sleep: (34) So shall thy poverty come as one that travelleth; and thy want as an armed man. Verses 33 and 34 are the reason for the disaster in these other verses. It's all broken down, and it's just in ruin because there was "a little sleep, a little slumber, a little folding of the hands to sleep." A choice to do nothing is a choice, and a choice to ignore what we have seen,

and experienced in this camp is a choice.

(James 1:19) "Wherefore, my beloved brethren, let every man be swift to hear," and I am so hopeful that there have been hearing ears in the camp, that God has spoken many of these things to your heart, and indeed to my heart. "Swift to hear, Slow to speak, slow to wrath:"

(James 1:20) "For the wrath of man worketh not the righteousness of God," though the world thinks it does.

(James 1:21) "Wherefore lay apart all filthiness;" that's all the ungodliness of the flesh. "And superfluity of naughtiness" is translated as excesses of malice

(bitterness or hate), but it's not enough just to lay those things aside as we have pointed out. What we must also do is to make the choice to receive with meekness, the engrafted word, and when you see that word meekness, you're just talking about dependence upon the Lord, and that's exactly what we're doing. We are receiving with this dependence, a complete spirit of dependence on the Lord to work these things in my life and to make them real, profitable, and permanent to glory in eternity. It is able to save your souls, and that means much, much more than being saved from hell. It's any deliverance you may need in life, and it doesn't make any difference what it is, God's word has the answer for it. The word of God will deliver you in any difficulty, or bondage wherein you may find yourself.

(James 1:22) "But be ye doers of the word;" and that doesn't mean do's and don'ts. That means you just let God's word operate in your life, and change you from the inside out. Be a doer of the word, and not a hearer only, deceiving your own selves.

(James 1:23) "For if any be a hearer of the word, and not a doer." In other words, if this message doesn't become practical, and begin to show outwardly in his life, "he is like unto a man beholding his natural face in a glass;" just holding up a mirror and looking at this face, and he may see all sorts of things. He may see blackness, all sorts of imperfections, blemishes, and all of these

things, but the mirror that we're talking about is a real unique mirror. Paul describes it there in (2 Corinthians 3:18). That as we look into the mirror of God's word, we not only see what we are, we see what Christ is, and what happens when He begins to change us into that same image. That's a tremendous mirror, and God is able to do that, but notice what happens if a person is only a hearer of the word, and not a doer.

(James 1:24) "He beholds himself, and he goes his way." Now, he sees all that's wrong that needs to be corrected and changed, but he makes this decision, "and straightway forgets what manner of a man he was." He forgets about all of these things that God pointed out that need to be done.

(James 1:25) However, "whoever looks into the perfect law of liberty, and he continues therein," and my prayer for the entire youth group that we have addressed, is that you will continue therein. It's not hit and miss, it's not just for Sunday, it's not just for Wednesday, it's not just for a time when you get into trouble, and it's not just for a time that is convenient. We must continue to make God's word a way of life, and continue therein. Alright, this fellow "is not a forgetful hearer, he's a doer of the work, and this man shall be blessed in his deed," and that is a direct promise right out of the word of God for you, and so when we get to the end of the line, our lives won't have to look like the ruin that you see on the front page of this booklet (a handout at the summer camp). They can be a tremendous full and complete building, which God has built to reflect the glory of God.

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