

Lessons We Can Learn from Protestantism

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Years ago when I was attending Ambassador College, one of my professors made a statement that I've always remembered. He said that all learning in life is experiential, but one of the keys in life is that we don't always have to be the one having the experience. His point was that if we're wise, we don't have to learn everything the hard way. We can observe the examples of others, both good and bad, and note the examples of those who did well, who made good decisions that turned out well, and copy their examples. We can also take note of those who made bad decisions that didn't work out so well, and learn lessons from them, too, so that we don't repeat their mistakes. This observation is what's behind the saying, "Those who don't learn the lessons of history are condemned to repeat them." It's based on the very idea that if we don't learn from negative examples and we go down those same paths, we're going to face that kind of pain.

What we're going to do today is look at a particular group, you might say a religious movement, with whose conclusions I think we in the church of God would very much disagree. We'll look not just at their conclusions (some of which we'll use as examples), but more largely at the principles behind how they've come to these flawed conclusions in interpreting the Bible. We can learn from these types of things, and we'll see as we go through that although we would disagree with much of the theology of this movement, in many ways we've made some of the same mistakes. Here in the United States the Protestant movement is one of the major religious groups, and a number of particular organizations have sprung from it. It's not my purpose to disparage any of these groups or put them down, I just think we should learn by example. So the sermon today is titled:

Lessons We Can Learn From Protestantism

I think if we looked at their general theology, we would disagree in major ways with the conclusions they come to, but I think we can also very importantly learn from some of the mechanics, the logic, and the approaches they use in interpreting the Bible and arriving at their flawed conclusions, so that we don't make the same mistakes. To begin, let's notice how God makes the very big point that He wants us to learn from prior examples. Turn over to 1 Corinthians 10.

1 Corinthians 10:1 *Moreover, brethren, I do not want you to be unaware that all our fathers were under the cloud, all passed through the sea,
2) all were baptized into Moses in the cloud and in the sea,
3) all ate the same spiritual food,
4) and all drank the same spiritual drink. For they drank of that spiritual Rock that followed them, and that Rock was Christ.*

5) *But with most of them God was not well pleased, for their bodies were scattered in the wilderness.*

6) *Now these things became our examples, to the intent that we should not lust after evil things as they also lusted. (NKJV)*

He's saying here that He wants us to pay attention to negative examples and learn the lessons so that we don't repeat the same mistakes. Verse 7.

7) *And do not become idolaters as were some of them. As it is written, "The people sat down to eat and drink, and rose up to play."*

8) *Nor let us commit sexual immorality, as some of them did, and in one day twenty-three thousand fell;*

9) *nor let us tempt Christ, as some of them also tempted, and were destroyed by serpents;*

10) *nor complain, as some of them also complained, and were destroyed by the destroyer.*

11) *Now all these things happened to them as examples, and they were written for our admonition, upon whom the ends of the ages have come. (NKJV)*

We're going to come back to this in a minute, but notice in verse 11 two things are stated. These things happened, and they were recorded, and I'll explain in a minute why I make that significant, but just pick up in verse 12.

12) *Therefore let him who thinks he stands take heed lest he fall.*

13) *No temptation has overtaken you except such as is common to man; but God is faithful, who will not allow you to be tempted beyond what you are able, but with the temptation will also make the way of escape, that you may be able to bear it. (NKJV)*

As we've read, God specifically wants us to learn from examples. The reason I pointed out what is stated in verse 11 is that I must admit a lot of my life I read over it and didn't really think through the significance of everything we can learn from this verse. We have the Old Testament, and all these examples were written down for us to learn from, but it wasn't just a situation where God saw all this happening, and thought, this would be good to write down to share with other people. No, it says all these things happened and they were written down. He orchestrated this for this purpose.

Think about this for a moment; as we all know, the ultimate purpose for creating mankind—the whole physical realm, and human beings, created in the image of God—is to give us a chance to be born into God's family to become God beings. That's why God did all of this. If you think about that, if that's the purpose of making mankind in the first place, why wait 4,000 years before you send Christ down to be the sacrifice who enables salvation for mankind? Why not just do it to begin with? Why not be quicker on the draw and get right to it? Why do this for 4,000 years, and then even when He does that, you still don't offer salvation to everybody—you're just working with the firstfruits? In addition to that, 2,000 years now have gone by and we still haven't offered it to

everybody—why do that? Why make this relationship with Israel, that was a physical covenant (salvation wasn't even in the equation) and then have this relationship for hundreds, if not thousands of years, and then they're going to have to come back and be resurrected and offered salvation again later—why do it like this?

All these things happened as examples. Think about that—this is how much investment, how much planning God put into this, so that when everyone was offered salvation and given the chance to be born into His Kingdom, they have all this experience written down; all these testimonies, all this evidence and helps along the way, to ensure everyone the best chance possible of making it successfully into His Kingdom. So if you think about that, it's just the magnitude of how much planning and how much love God put into this, trying to set us up for success, because that is what He's done. If you were just trying to get on with it and be quicker, wouldn't you have offered salvation way earlier to mankind? Why drag this out so long? It's because He wants us to have all these tools so that we have the best chance of success. That's how much He loves us and wants to see us make it. I think that's just a valuable thing for us to think about.

As I mentioned, the purpose of this sermon is so we can learn from the example of Protestantism. Again, it's not my purpose at all to disparage those who have been deceived, but I think if we look at the mechanics of how they've come to a lot of flawed conclusions about the Bible, we can learn from the overall principles so that we don't make the same mistakes. To look at it from that perspective, I'm sure a lot of you are familiar with the fact—if you're at all familiar with general Protestant theology—that they come to a lot of flawed conclusions, one of the big ones being that the law is done away with: You don't have to keep the commandments, Christ did it all for you—you don't have to keep the Sabbath, you don't have to keep the holy days, all that is just done away. We would all agree these are very, very flawed conclusions. Let's just look at the dynamics of how they came to be.

One of the biggest things they do is violate one of the most basic principles of biblical interpretation that I know the church of God has taught my entire life. The way I'll introduce this is to just tell you the story of how I learned this lesson as a kid growing up in the church. I had a "difficult scripture" question; there was an elder in our congregation (he oversaw our youth program and was a good friend of our family) and after services one day, a question was bugging me so I marched up to him, Bible in hand, and addressed my question to him. The specific question I asked was irrelevant for our purposes today but the lesson he taught me was extremely valuable, and it's something I've remembered all of my life.

So I laid out my question to him and asked him, how do you make sense of this? He looked back at me and said, James, always remember this; if you remember this principle it will keep you straight on these kinds of subjects. You always want to use your easy, straightforward, clear scriptures as your guides to help you interpret the difficult ones. Always use that method because whatever the difficult scriptures are saying, they're not going to directly contradict your easy, straightforward, very clear

scriptures; you know that one thing for sure. He said, if you always interpret in that direction it will help guide you and keep you straight. He said never, ever, go the other way around. Never start off with your difficult, your speculative, your harder-to-interpret, dogmatic ideas, and then turn around and try to twist this straightforward stuff to match it. Don't ever do that—it will lead you into the ditch.

This is the primary way that Protestant theology has developed, because what they do is start off with the writings of the Apostle Paul (the Bible directly tells us that he wrote the hard-to-understand things), and they make dogmatic conclusions about them, and then try to interpret the rest of the Bible to match that conclusion and thus come up with very, very flawed conclusions. Let's turn over to 2 Peter 3 and we'll see that Peter directly warns us that Paul wrote things that can be hard to understand.

2 Peter 3:14 *Therefore, beloved, looking forward to these things, be diligent to be found by Him in peace, without spot and blameless;
15) and consider that the longsuffering of our Lord is salvation—as also our beloved brother Paul, according to the wisdom given to him, has written to you,
16) as also in all his epistles, speaking in them of these things, in which are some things hard to understand, which untaught and unstable people twist to their own destruction, as they do also the rest of the Scriptures. (NKJV)*

He said they basically take not only Paul's writings and twist them, they twist the rest of the Bible. Look at how Protestant theology has developed. Not only do they make very flawed conclusions about what Paul had to say, but they use those conclusions as the basis for their biblical interpretation. Then they try to twist the general epistles, the gospels, the other parts of the Bible that are much more straightforward, much more clear and easy to nail down, and interpret it all to match what Paul is saying. That is reverse biblical interpretation. That's a guaranteed way to wind up in the ditch. You always want to start off with your foundational things and use them as your basis to understand the difficult.

Let's look at some examples to see how this works. Turn over to the book of Galatians, chapter 3. If you're familiar at all with how Protestant theology is developed, the book of Galatians is a favorite for them. They typically tend to start off here in interpreting a lot of their ideas, and you'll see today why that is, because there are statements here that are made that if you do not use proper biblical interpretation—if you don't clarify things by using the rest of the Bible in context, and a lot of the other things we're going to look at today—you can come to some very flawed conclusions. With some of the statements here, you can see how they could be interpreted to come up with the ideas they typically come up with.

Galatians 3:1 *O foolish Galatians! Who has bewitched you that you should not obey the truth, before whose eyes Jesus Christ was clearly portrayed among you as crucified?*

2) This only I want to learn from you: Did you receive the Spirit by the works of the law, or by the hearing of faith?

- 3) *Are you so foolish? Having begun in the Spirit, are you now being made perfect by the flesh?*
- 4) *Have you suffered so many things in vain—if indeed it was in vain?*
- 5) *Therefore He who supplies the Spirit to you and works miracles among you, does He do it by the works of the law, or by the hearing of faith?—*
- 6) *just as Abraham “believed God, and it was accounted to him for righteousness.”*
- 7) *Therefore know that only those who are of faith are sons of Abraham.*
- 8) *And the Scripture, foreseeing that God would justify the Gentiles by faith, preached the gospel to Abraham beforehand, saying, “In you all the nations shall be blessed.”*
- 9) *So then those who are of faith are blessed with believing Abraham.*
- 10) *For as many as are of the works of the law are under the curse; for it is written, “Cursed is everyone who does not continue in all things which are written in the book of the law, to do them.”*
- 11) *But that no one is justified by the law in the sight of God is evident, for “the just shall live by faith.”*
- 12) *Yet the law is not of faith, but “the man who does them shall live by them.”*
- 13) *Christ has redeemed us from the curse of the law, having become a curse for us (for it is written, “Cursed is everyone who hangs on a tree”),*
- 14) *that the blessing of Abraham might come upon the Gentiles in Christ Jesus, that we might receive the promise of the Spirit through faith. (NKJV)*

If you just take these statements, and you don't take the rest of the Bible into consideration to interpret the statements, you can see how people can come away with the conclusion that the law was a curse. It was hard and difficult, and Christ came and was loving and merciful, and He took that curse away so you don't have to keep that old law—He doesn't want you to have to do that. You can see how they could come up with this and the idea that it could all be about faith, and as long as you have a belief in Christ and you trust in Him, then it's all done for you.

As I mentioned, we can't just start off looking at the difficult, and then try to interpret everything else to match it. We have to stop and take a look back at what the more clear areas of the Bible say, and then look at the difficult in the context of those. Let's start off noticing that the gospels, the general epistles, and a lot of the other parts of the Bible are much more straightforward on this subject, and are very clear that the interpretation I just mentioned—of the law being done away with—is not at all what Christ's intention was. Let's first notice what Christ Himself had to say about this, and turn over to Matthew 19:16.

Matthew 19:16 *Now behold, one came and said to Him, “Good Teacher, what good thing shall I do that I may have eternal life?”*

17) *So He said to him, “Why do you call Me good? No one is good but One, that is, God. But if you want to enter into life, keep the commandments.” (NKJV)*

He's saying, if you want to make it into the Kingdom, if you want to receive salvation, one of the things you have to do is keep the commandments, so Christ is not agreeing with this interpretation of Paul. Continuing in verse 18,

18) He said to Him, "Which ones?" Jesus said, "'You shall not murder,' 'You shall not commit adultery,' 'You shall not steal,' 'You shall not bear false witness,' 'Honor your father and your mother,' and, 'You shall love your neighbor as yourself.' (NKJV)

Pretty clear what commandments He is talking about—He's making a list of the Ten Commandments. Verse 20.

20) The young man said to Him, "All these things I have kept from my youth. What do I still lack?"

21) Jesus said to him, "If you want to be perfect, go, sell what you have and give to the poor, and you will have treasure in heaven; and come, follow Me."

22) But when the young man heard that saying, he went away sorrowful, for he had great possessions.

Obviously Christ didn't paint the picture of, just believe in Me and have faith, and it's all done for you. No, He said you have to be willing to keep the commandments; in fact, you have to be willing to face pain and sacrifice, and show that I'm first in your life, and you're willing to face some pain to do that. It wasn't this picture at all of what we see with that interpretation of Paul. Notice also what Christ said in Matthew 5. He made it very clear in resolving this whole question about whether or not He was doing away with the law.

Matthew 5:17 *"Do not think that I came to destroy the Law or the Prophets. I did not come to destroy but to fulfill.*

18) For assuredly, I say to you, till heaven and earth pass away, one jot or one tittle will by no means pass from the law till all is fulfilled.

19) Whoever therefore breaks one of the least of these commandments, and teaches men so, shall be called least in the kingdom of heaven; but whoever does and teaches them, he shall be called great in the kingdom of heaven.

20) For I say to you, that unless your righteousness exceeds the righteousness of the scribes and Pharisees, you will by no means enter the kingdom of heaven. (NKJV)

He makes it very clear that He didn't come to do away with the law—He makes that very, very clear—so we have to take that into consideration as we're interpreting Paul's statements. He also makes another interesting statement; He says none of this is going to pass away until all things are fulfilled. In other words, this is the rule book, and this is going to apply as long as we have human beings and a plan of salvation; there's never going to be a point where this stops being the rule book and these rules stop applying. Also notice in James 2, this whole idea of whether it's all just about faith and just

believing in Christ, and that's all you need to do—notice this is very directly addressed in James 2, verse 14.

James 2:14 *What does it profit, my brethren, if someone says he has faith but does not have works? Can faith save him?*

15) *If a brother or sister is naked and destitute of daily food,*

16) *and one of you says to them, "Depart in peace, be warmed and filled," but you do not give them the things which are needed for the body, what does it profit?*

17) *Thus also faith by itself, if it does not have works, is dead.*

18) *But someone will say, "You have faith, and I have works." Show me your faith without your works, and I will show you my faith by my works.*

19) *You believe that there is one God. You do well. Even the demons believe—and tremble!*

20) *But do you want to know, O foolish man, that faith without works is dead?*

21) *Was not Abraham our father justified by works when he offered Isaac his son on the altar?*

22) *Do you see that faith was working together with his works, and by works faith was made perfect?*

23) *And the Scripture was fulfilled which says, "Abraham believed God, and it was accounted to him for righteousness." And he was called the friend of God.*

24) *You see then that a man is justified by works, and not by faith only.*

25) *Likewise, was not Rahab the harlot also justified by works when she received the messengers and sent them out another way?*

26) *For as the body without the spirit is dead, so faith without works is dead also.*
(NKJV)

Notice here, I'm sure a lot of what I just covered is not really news to anybody in the church of God—we don't typically fall for the idea that the law has been done away with. What I want you to see is more the mechanics of this, where they started off with looking in the difficult parts of scripture; as Peter tells us, Paul wrote things hard to understand, and some developed a dogmatic idea about that and then tried to twist the rest of the Bible around to match it, ignoring a lot of very clear, very straightforward statements that would shed light on the whole subject.

It's easy for us in the church of God to think that even if the Protestants do that, we would never do any such thing! Let's challenge that assumption for a moment. How many of you out there hearing this sermon (I know I'm certainly guilty of what I'm about to say) are guilty of, for literally decades of your life, taking your interpretation of one difficult scripture, John 5:37, and assuming it was absolute, dogmatic proof that no human being in existence had ever heard the voice of God the Father, at any time whatsoever—period. Then you used your interpretation of that one scripture, and in going back through, every time you saw a reference to hearing God's voice, thought, that has to be Jesus Christ, right? It couldn't possibly be any other way, and you even took scriptures from the New Testament—there's a handful of them—where you hear a voice, saying, this is my beloved Son (He's talking about Jesus Christ), with whom I'm

well pleased, and logically there's only one Individual in all of existence who could ever say Christ is His Son—and even Peter himself says this is the voice of the Excellent Glory, in 2 Peter 1:17—but we decided, no, that can't be God the Father, it's got to be an angel talking for him, it's got to be something else.

Our entire basis of the whole assumption was one scripture that we misunderstood. Maybe at one point in your life, you started thinking, wait a minute, does it really say what I think it does, because what it says is, you haven't—it doesn't say that no one ever has, it says, you haven't. If you step back and ask, what other scriptural support do I have to back up this other?—I don't have any others because there is only one in the entire Bible that says that, so what did we do? We took a dogmatic stance on *one* difficult scripture, and rewrote massive sections of the rest of the Bible to match it. Can we in the church of God fall into these mistakes? I sure did—I'm guilty of doing that for most of my life. I'm ashamed of it now but I have to admit that I did it, and I think a lot of us are in the same boat. So as we look at these examples, it's easy for us to look at the Protestants and say, I've known that stuff all of my life and I wouldn't make those mistakes. I'm not so sure; sometimes we have made similar mistakes, just not on the same subjects.

Let's consider a couple of keys in dealing with these types of issues. One of the bigger issues we must address is the issue of context. There are two different types of context that we are going to examine. Normally, when we think of context, we think in terms of studying a particular passage of scripture, the chapter that it's written in or the book it's written in, who's stating it, what they are talking about at that time, and that's an important part of context—we're going to examine that in a minute. But there's another important part of context we need to consider as well, and that's the context of the Bible in general. In other words, how does a particular subject or idea that we're considering match with the overall principles and doctrines of the Bible?

We can't look at one particular subject in isolation, pull it out, and not consider the foundation and everything else around it without its context. This is something that the Protestant world typically does, and they tend to look at the New Testament in isolation, ignoring the Old Testament. Let me give you an example from my childhood to illustrate this. I grew up as a kid, through the 1970s and early '80s, in a small town in southern Alabama. It was a very conservative, very Protestant-focused area, back before God was kicked out of the schools.

You could have prayer in school, Bibles could be in school, and there were no lawsuits over that typically then. It was not unusual for religious groups to come to the school and pass out an abridged form of the Bible to us as kids. It is interesting to note what they did pass out to us. It was the New Testament, together with Psalms and Proverbs, and typically the rest of the Old Testament was completely missing because they considered it irrelevant—what was missing wasn't important. In their opinion, all you really needed was the New Testament. So you're now going to be looking at subjects in isolation, ignoring the foundation from which they come. As we're going to see, in an example of how they developed a lot of their theology, they fall into some of these

mistakes of not being familiar with the Old Testament. Thus they are not well-versed in the foundation upon which these subjects are based, and so they go off into the ditch as a result.

Let's look at Galatians 3 again, and this time we're going to start in verse 19.

Galatians 3:19 *What purpose then does the law serve? It was added because of transgressions, till the Seed should come to whom the promise was made; and it was appointed through angels by the hand of a mediator.*

20) *Now a mediator does not mediate for one only, but God is one.*

21) *Is the law then against the promises of God? Certainly not! For if there had been a law given which could have given life, truly righteousness would have been by the law.*

22) *But the Scripture has confined all under sin, that the promise by faith in Jesus Christ might be given to those who believe.*

23) *But before faith came, we were kept under guard by the law, kept for the faith which would afterward be revealed.*

24) *Therefore the law was our tutor to bring us to Christ, that we might be justified by faith.*

25) *But after faith has come, we are no longer under a tutor. (NKJV)*

Notice here it's talking about the law coming in and leading us to Christ. A law was being put into effect until the Seed came—until Christ came and fulfilled His sacrifice. Now, there's a common Protestant argument that connects with this, and it's going to illustrate the concept of not being familiar with the foundation and looking at a subject in isolation. That is a setup for falling into false conclusions. How this is often interpreted through Protestant eyes is, the law was added at Mount Sinai; God gave these commandments to Ancient Israel then, but as soon as Christ came later and fulfilled His sacrifice, now we don't need the law. Now we have Christ, and we just believe in Him and follow Him, and this typically is the logic they put across. It's easy to fall into this kind of trap, and think that all of God's law was added at Mount Sinai if you're not familiar with the Old Testament—if you don't know the foundation well enough to know this doesn't stack up. Turn over to Genesis 26.

Genesis 26:4 *And I will make your descendants [this is God talking to Abraham] multiply as the stars of heaven; I will give to your descendants all these lands; and in your seed all the nations of the earth shall be blessed;*

5) *because Abraham obeyed My voice and kept My charge, My commandments, My statutes, and My laws.” (NKJV)*

Notice God is referring to Abraham when He says, he kept My laws. If laws aren't in effect, how is Abraham going to keep them? There has to be a law already in effect, that Abraham is aware of and obeying, for this statement to make any sense. So obviously we're not talking about a law that came into effect at Mount Sinai, it obviously greatly predates that. In fact God's law goes back much further than this as well. Turn to Ezekiel 28:11. We're going to cover some scriptures specifically referring to Satan.

Ezekiel 28:11 *Moreover the word of the LORD came to me, saying,*

12) *“Son of man, take up a lamentation for the king of Tyre, and say to him, “Thus says the Lord GOD: ‘You were the seal of perfection, full of wisdom and perfect in beauty.*

13) *You were in Eden, the garden of God; every precious stone was your covering: The sardius, topaz, and diamond, beryl, onyx, and jasper, sapphire, turquoise, and emerald with gold. The workmanship of your timbrels and pipes was prepared for you on the day you were created.*

14) *“You were the anointed cherub who covers; I established you; you were on the holy mountain of God; you walked back and forth in the midst of fiery stones.*

15) *You were perfect in your ways from the day you were created, till iniquity was found in you. (NKJV)*

In other words, He’s saying, until sin was found in him. What is sin? Sin is the transgression of God’s law. How is that possible, if there was no law in effect then? Obviously, God had laws in effect even before mankind was created. If you’re familiar with the foundation of the whole subject, and you don’t just view something in isolation, you can spot these contradictions and realize that this idea of the law not coming into existence until Mount Sinai is not going to work, because we’ve got too many other scriptures that say the law long predated Mount Sinai. Then we realize that the interpretation is flawed and we start looking for an explanation that will actually work. If we then look at that subject and go, okay, we’ve got to find a law then that’s being spoken of that would be until Christ came, that was added because of transgressions, and it would expire when Christ’s sacrifice came into the equation. What would that be? The answer to that is in Hebrews 9.

Hebrews 9:1 *Then indeed, even the first covenant had ordinances of divine service and the earthly sanctuary.*

2) *For a tabernacle was prepared: the first part, in which was the lampstand, the table, and the showbread, which is called the sanctuary;*

3) *and behind the second veil, the part of the tabernacle which is called the Holiest of All,*

4) *which had the golden censer and the ark of the covenant overlaid on all sides with gold, in which were the golden pot that had the manna, Aaron’s rod that budded, and the tablets of the covenant;*

5) *and above it were the cherubim of glory overshadowing the mercy seat. Of these things we cannot now speak in detail.*

6) *Now when these things had been thus prepared, the priests always went into the first part of the tabernacle, performing the services.*

7) *But into the second part the high priest went alone once a year, not without blood, which he offered for himself and for the people’s sins committed in ignorance;*

8) *the Holy Spirit indicating this, that the way into the Holiest of All was not yet made manifest while the first tabernacle was still standing.*

9) *It was symbolic for the present time in which both gifts and sacrifices are offered which cannot make him who performed the service perfect in regard to the conscience*

10) *concerned only with foods and drinks, various washings, and fleshly ordinances imposed until the time of reformation.*

In other words, the sacrificial system was imposed with an expiration date in mind. This was a law that pertained to the sacrificial system, that was put in for transgressions but had an expiration date on it. Now we have a viable explanation that answers what we were dealing with in Galatians and that doesn't contradict the rest of the Bible.

That's what we have to do—if we look at a subject in isolation and don't consider the foundational principles and all of the rest of the Bible, and how it fits in, we can come up with very flawed conclusions. If you consider the rest of it and think, okay, this doesn't match the foundational principles, and you start looking for an explanation that does, it's going to square up so that all the pieces will fit together. When we're looking at a jigsaw puzzle—and I know Rick was joking a few sermons ago about pounding on a jigsaw puzzle when you have a piece that doesn't quite fit, so you want to force it to fit—well, sometimes we can fall into doing that. We want that piece to fit so much that we just hammer on it to try and make it fit, rather than saying, wait a minute, that doesn't add up; maybe I need to step back and reevaluate this and realize I may have made some mistakes here; maybe this isn't exactly right and that's why all the pieces aren't fitting together, and that's the lesson we need to look at in this. The example here also sets us up for our next question, and that's going to be in regard to specific context.

We're going to need to look at the specific context of the book of Galatians, and why it was written, to understand what is being discussed here. To build some of the foundation of that (and I think Hebrews 9 sets us up well for this), one of the things you're going to see talked a lot about in the book of Galatians is the subject of justification and then that being explained. As we already read in the book of Galatians, Paul is going through and explaining, you have this law pertaining to the sacrificial system, and it's added because of transgressions, and it expires when Christ's sacrifice is applied, thus you're going to see the subject of justification explained very well. Realize, as we go through what we just read in Hebrews 9, we have this elaborate sacrificial system that was a part of the Old Covenant system. Think of this in terms of how you sought to be in a right relationship with God under the terms of the Old Covenant. How did you do that? How did you atone for your sins, in that sense?—through offering up sacrifices.

If you go back and study the sacrificial system through the Old Testament, a phrase you will see repeatedly throughout all the chapters that talk about that is, "to make atonement". In other words, how they sought to make atonement was through sacrificing and rituals, and, as we know, this didn't truly cover their sins; this would not have offered anyone salvation. That was not even the terms of what that deal was about. How you sought to be made right with God was through these rituals; that's how you made atonement. In the New Covenant, it's the sacrifice of Christ because that

truly atones for our sins, whereas the sacrificial system just taught the need for there to be a real Savior to do this, and that's what really reconciles us with God, and enables us to receive salvation. What we need to understand is the specific context of the book of Galatians and what Paul is trying to address here, because that becomes an important key to understanding what he is discussing.

As we're going to see, the issue of whether or not one should keep the Ten Commandments is not even the debate. Neither side in the controversy that he is addressing is arguing that we don't have to keep the commandments—that's not even the subject. Once you understand that, you can properly interpret his statements. What we want to look at now is specific context.

Turn back over to Galatians, chapter 1. As I mentioned before there are two general types of context to take into consideration when interpreting scripture. One, as we've discovered, is the overall context of the Bible. You can't take any subject in isolation, extract it away from all the other foundational principles of the Bible, look at it alone and think that you're going to come up with accurate conclusions. If you do that what you'll oftentimes find is you have this great idea but then you start comparing other major portions of the Bible and think, wait a minute, I have to pound those pieces; they don't fit because they're contradicting the other ones. When you do that, you have to sit back and reevaluate, but we'll get to that point in a minute—I'm getting ahead of myself.

Notice specific context. You look at a book and ask, what's it written about, who it is written to, what's being addressed in this particular subject, because that helps you understand the statements when you view them in context. To understand the book of Galatians, we have to understand why it was written and what Paul was trying to address. Start off in Galatians chapter 1, verse 6.

Galatians 1:6 *I marvel that you are turning away so soon from Him who called you in the grace of Christ, to a different gospel, 7) which is not another; but there are some who trouble you and want to pervert the gospel of Christ.* (NKJV)

We're going to notice as we go through this, what is Paul referring to as a perversion of the gospel of Christ? Keep that question in mind.

8) *But even if we, or an angel from heaven, preach any other gospel to you than what we have preached to you, let him be accursed.*
9) *As we have said before, so now I say again, if anyone preaches any other gospel to you than what you have received, let him be accursed.* (NKJV)

We're going to skip over the rest of chapter 1 but if you read through this later you'll see that Paul is recounting his personal history, of how he persecuted the church, then was humbled and called to be an apostle. When we get to chapter 2, he's basically recounting his version of the story around the Acts 15 conference. We're not going to go back through Acts 15 and cover that, but I think a lot of you are probably familiar with

what that story was about. If you look into Acts 15, particularly in verse 5, you'll see what the controversy was.

There were Pharisees who had come into the church—it says they were now believers, and that's in no way a reference to believing only in Christ and in New Covenant Christianity, because these guys wanted to bring in a lot of the Old Covenant system that wasn't continued in the New Covenant. You'll see two things mentioned; it says they were trying to teach others that you had to be physically circumcised and that you had to keep the law of Moses. These were the two things that the debate was about. This is what Paul is addressing here. They were basically telling them that New Covenant Christians had to keep both of these at the same time as pursuing salvation through Christ. As we just read, like the sacrificial system, that was until the reformation, until Christ—the Seed—came; that's when that stops.

The key here is to think about and remember what I said about justification—how did you seek to be in a right relationship with God under the terms of the Old Covenant? Again, this didn't offer salvation to anybody, but in terms of dealing with your sins, how did you deal with them to be in a right relationship with God under the terms of the Old Covenant? You offered up sacrifices. Again, “to make atonement” is a statement made repeatedly in the Bible. Just search that term in a Bible search program, and you'll see a ton of hits come up in the Old Testament, all about the sacrificial system. How do you do that under New Covenant Christianity? It's not through offering up sacrifices, because now we have the sacrifice of Christ. What they are doing is putting these together and completely confusing the subject. Pick up in chapter 2, verse 1.

Galatians 2:1 *Then after fourteen years I went up again to Jerusalem with Barnabas, and also took Titus with me.*

2) *And I went up by revelation, and communicated to them that gospel which I preach among the Gentiles, but privately to those who were of reputation, lest by any means I might run, or had run, in vain.*

3) *Yet not even Titus who was with me, being a Greek, was compelled to be circumcised. (NKJV)*

He's telling you that physical circumcision was part of the whole controversy he is addressing here.

4) *And this occurred because of false brethren secretly brought in (who came in by stealth to spy out our liberty which we have in Christ Jesus, that they might bring us into bondage),*

5) *to whom we did not yield submission even for an hour, that the truth of the gospel might continue with you.*

6) *But from those who seemed to be something—whatever they were, it makes no difference to me; God shows personal favoritism to no man—for those who seemed to be something added nothing to me.*

7) *But on the contrary, when they saw that the gospel for the uncircumcised had been committed to me, as the gospel for the circumcised was to Peter*

- 8) *(for He who worked effectively in Peter for the apostleship to the circumcised also worked effectively in me toward the Gentiles),*
- 9) *and when James, Cephas, and John, who seemed to be pillars, perceived the grace that had been given to me, they gave me and Barnabas the right hand of fellowship, that we should go to the Gentiles and they to the circumcised.*
- 10) *They desired only that we should remember the poor, the very thing which I also was eager to do.*
- 11) *Now when Peter had come to Antioch, I withstood him to his face, because he was to be blamed;*
- 12) *for before certain men came from James, he would eat with the Gentiles; but when they came, he withdrew and separated himself, fearing those who were of the circumcision.*
- 13) *And the rest of the Jews also played the hypocrite with him, so that even Barnabas was carried away with their hypocrisy.*
- 14) *But when I saw that they were not straightforward about the truth of the gospel, I said to Peter before them all, "If you, being a Jew, live in the manner of Gentiles and not as the Jews, why do you compel Gentiles to live as Jews?"*

This is what the controversy is about here, trying to place these requirements on New Covenant Christians, and that's what he is trying to address with the Galatians. This is what he refers to as a perversion of the gospel. It's because they are trying to combine these together with New Covenant Christians and it completely muddies the whole subject of justification.

If you go through this book (we just saw through chapter 3 how that's addressed), and if you go through chapter 4, what does it cover?—the difference between the Old Covenant and the New Covenant. You get into chapter 5, we're talking about the Holy Spirit—that's something that is offered through the New Covenant through salvation. You can see the whole subject of what he is trying to address here.

The important thing to notice is that neither side is arguing about whether or not you need to keep the commandments—that's not even the debate. So once you understand the specific context and realize that's not even the subject of what they're arguing about, that's not even what Paul is trying to address, rather he is clarifying the subject of what is required for justification for salvation, and that's why this whole subject has been muddied and that's why he is trying to straighten it out—that's what he is specifically addressing.

Once we understand that specific context then we don't fall into these misinterpretations and get tripped up on the difficult, and then try to turn around and interpret the straightforward to match our interpretations of the difficult. If we do that, that's when we wind up very much in the ditch.

Another thing we need to realize is when we make these types of mistakes, we typically run into contradictions. An easy example of this—I've framed this sermon looking at the Protestants and how their theology is flawed, so if you're familiar at all with the

Protestant Reformation, the name Martin Luther probably rings a bell. He is seen as one of the main leaders of the Protestant Reformation and a lot of his theology was based around this idea that Christ did everything for you, so all you have to do is just believe in Him. Luther even went so far as to say you could actively be a murderer—not something you did in the past that was repented of, but rather that if you still believed in Christ and you trusted in Him, you were still going to get salvation.

It's no surprise then—we read earlier out of the book of James in chapter 2 where it specifically says, if you just say you have faith and you don't have any works and you're not showing obedience by your actions, it doesn't mean anything—that's not going to work. Obviously that is a huge contradiction to Martin Luther's theology. It's no surprise that Luther referred the book of James as an "epistle of straw". In other words, he thought it shouldn't have even been in the Bible. He was ready to take an entire book of the Bible and say, let's not look at that one, just kind of get that out of the way—because it contradicted his ideas.

Oftentimes people today, particularly in the church of God, don't follow the example I mentioned earlier, in which an abridged Protestant bible was handed out with the Old Testament not even in it—we don't typically tend to take a book and say, just push that aside and don't even look at it, and then try to throw it out of the Bible. But we are guilty sometimes of ignoring things that don't match with what we want to believe.

Let me give you a recent example I've come across this past year or two a number of times. Ever since the Pacific Church of God started preaching about the role of God the Father in the Bible, as you can imagine this has brought up a lot of questions and controversy of that nature. Over the last year or two, I've gotten the opportunity to respond to (I've lost count of how many emails and papers and other things that have come my way that I've had to respond to) but there's a particularly interesting observation I've noticed in several arguments people have made. Several individuals, in making their case that Christ was the God of the Old Testament, would make the statement (and they would make a real big issue out of this particular statement) that in Jeremiah 31 and Hebrews 8, both passages make it very clear it's the same God being who makes both covenants.

That's actually very true and I completely agree with that statement, but they would typically point that out to make the argument that Christ is both God beings. I would typically respond by saying, I completely agree with you on Jeremiah 31 and Hebrews 8 because they both clearly say it's the same God being. But let's take into consideration this handful of scriptures that directly states that Christ is the Mediator of the New Covenant. A mediator by definition is the middleman. That's the individual who facilitates between the other parties making a covenant. You can't be the mediator and be one of the parties in the covenant at the same time—it just doesn't work. If you agree that it's the same God being, and Christ is the Mediator of this covenant, that means the Father makes this covenant; that means the Father is the same individual in both covenants. Instead of acknowledging, wow, you have a point here, what typically happens is these same individuals who thought that was a very important point and

went into a lot of energy to develop it, suddenly don't want to talk about it anymore. They want to talk about something else and get on a different subject, and won't look at that one because the pieces aren't fitting anymore—this is what typically happens. We have to deal honestly with contradictions when we see something like that.

Let me share with you something an individual who attended the Feast with us a few years ago mentioned. My experience has certainly not been as universal as this gentleman's but I have to say there's unfortunately too much truth to this. He made the comment in conversation, that in all his years in the church there are three things that he had never heard a minister in the church of God say: "I don't know"; "I was wrong"; and, "I'm sorry." Unfortunately there was a lot of truth to that. I would certainly not say that I've never heard these statements, in fact I've heard many ministers say them. I've had my opportunities to say them too. But again, unfortunately in our history, that has sometimes been the approach, where we would insist we knew everything and weren't willing to say, maybe I don't know, I don't have all the answers, or, I was wrong—I messed up on that and I'm sorry I messed up on that. We have to be willing to honestly look at these things.

When we see contradictions, we should take a step back, and say, maybe I need to look into that some more, maybe I don't have all the answers right now, or maybe my prior interpretation doesn't work now because I see too many contradictions. We have to honestly address those, is what I'm saying. I don't realistically believe in this lifetime that we're ever going to have it all figured out. When some people insist they want to follow this guy, or this group, because they've got it all exactly right, honestly my response is typically, good luck. If you're looking for someone who's got everything figured out and has not made mistakes on anything in the Bible, good luck with that one. I think you're going to be searching a long time; I don't believe that guy exists. I don't believe, with the exception of Jesus Christ, that guy has ever existed, because we're all fallible human beings. I would definitely say Christ had it all nailed down, and if He said, that's the way it is, then that's the way it is. But everyone else is a flawed, fallible, human being and we all make our mistakes—we just don't have everything figured out. Any of them who claim that they do, run. Run for your life. That's a big warning sign if they're claiming that one.

Another thing that we need to be aware of on this subject, and it's a natural human tendency, is our weakness to oftentimes prefer narrative over evidence. In other words, following a story that sounds good to our human nature regardless of whether or not it matches with scripture. Let me give you an example outside the realm of scripture, just to illustrate how this is so much a part of human nature. If you think back to 1995, I'm sure that particular year, for a lot of us in the church of God, would immediately bring to mind all the turmoil in the church. If you look at that year from the perspective of the average American, though, one of the big things that most everybody remembers about it is the O.J. Simpson trial. If you were living in the U.S. at that time and you weren't in a coma or completely isolated from TV or other media, you heard about the O.J. Simpson trial. One of the striking things about that case was an absolute mountain of evidence, including forensic evidence. There was the blood evidence at the crime

scene, O.J. Simpson's blood was found at the crime scene, the blood from both victims was found in his vehicle and back at his house, there was a history of domestic violence that was documented—there was a mountain of evidence that painted a very incriminating picture.

A couple of years ago, the FX television network did a miniseries on that trial. Again, obviously, I can't say whether all the details that they laid out were exactly right, but I think if you're familiar at all with the trial, what I'm about to show you matches what we know to be true. There was a scene in which O.J.'s legal team are all sitting around a table and they're discussing how to approach this case because they have this mountain of evidence they have to overcome. The actor who plays Johnny Cochran makes a very interesting statement. He looks at all of them and says, guys, you got to understand, juries oftentimes don't make their decisions based on evidence, they go with narrative. All we have to do is tell them a more appealing, more convincing story. That's exactly what he did and it worked.

In spite of this huge mountain of evidence, what did he do? He told them an appealing story. It was all a narrative about racism and it was all a conspiracy against O.J.—so all this evidence didn't matter. He wound up talking a jury into acquitting a guy who later wrote a book titled, If I Had Done It, which basically, hypothetically, told the story that he did it. It was blatantly obvious.

My point is, how many people were convinced by hearing a positive narrative that sounded right to them? Think of that in terms of Protestant theology because how do they normally sell their argument? It's all about God loves you, He doesn't want you to keep that mean old law, He wouldn't want you to have to lose your job over trying to keep the Sabbath, and have to give up the foods that you like, and be ostracized from your friends because you can't keep Christmas and Easter—no, He wants you to be comfortable, He loves you, so He wants everything to be good and easy. Sounds wonderful, doesn't it? It's a very enticing sales pitch—I get to have my cake and eat it too; everything works out well for me and God wants me to be totally comfortable. It doesn't match this book at all [speaker points to his Bible] but it sounds wonderful. How many people have we seen who will buy into a narrative like that and not want to follow the evidence, not search through scripture?

In the same time period, around 1994 and '95, when all the changes were happening in the church, there was a gentleman I had grown up with—we were in the same church area, and had known each other all of our lives—who was buying into these changes. We were talking on the phone a few times, and honestly, knowing him, I think the narrative was the most seductive thing to him. He was an individual with a very driven, workaholic personality, so not having the restrictions of the Sabbath meant he now could work all the time. Now he could run his business and not have to worry about Christmas issues, or Easter—he could send Christmas cards to his customers, he could eat whatever foods he wanted—that was a very seductive kind of thing.

We're talking on the phone and he's telling me why he thinks a lot of what is being introduced is positive, and I was specifically talking with him about the Sabbath. I mentioned to this gentleman—and Rick will get a kick out of this because he always jokes that one of my broken-record statements is “The best predictor of future behavior is past behavior”; I work as a recruiter and that's one of my favorite statements—anyway, I appealed to this gentleman with that statement, and pointed out that if we look in the Bible, you have the whole issue with circumcision. Circumcision in the Old Testament was a big deal and now we have circumcision of the heart and this change is made. I said to him, not only do we have the documentation explaining this, we have the controversy that came about because of it, and the book of Galatians addresses this as people try to make this change and argue about it.

So if the Sabbath were pushed aside as well, where is the documentation? Where is this included, because when I talk about the best predictor of future behavior being past behavior, what you've got with God and Christ are two individuals about whom we know the Bible tells us, They don't change. They're very consistent in how They deal with everything. When the other things were changed and altered, we have them explained in scripture. It's all laid out, and logically so, and not only that but the controversies that came about as people were struggling with these changes are included as well. So if we got to the point where the Sabbath got thrown to the side, let's remember that the Pharisees wanted to stone Christ over just doing healings on the Sabbath. If they came along and said, you don't have to keep the Sabbath anymore, don't you think that would have caused a big stink? Wouldn't there be a trail of documentation mentioning that? Where is the evidence, is basically what I was asking him.

I wanted to see, was he going to dig in and address the evidence? Well, he didn't. I honestly don't think he ever really looked that much at it because what he wanted was the narrative. The narrative sounded wonderful to him—now I can eat whatever foods I want to, I can work on whatever days I want to, I don't have to tithe, I can now spend all my money as I want to—the narrative sounded fantastic and it sold him, and the evidence didn't matter. We as human beings can do the same thing. Even the church of God—again, pick the subject of what we can look at—can get sold on these things and we have to realize the Bible warns us about not leaning to our own understanding, and not saying, that sounds good, that feels good to me, and I want to believe it. No, we always have to go with, what does it say on the page, not just what sounds right to our human reasoning. Turn with me over to Proverbs 3, verse 5.

Proverbs 3:5 *Trust in the LORD with all your heart, and lean not on your own understanding;*

6) *In all your ways acknowledge Him, and He shall direct your paths.* (NKJV)

So how do we avoid not leaning to our own understanding? Follow the evidence, not the narrative. In other words, the evidence of scripture, by asking, what do the words on the page say, not what sounds good to my ears and to my emotions and to my human reasoning, because those can be very, very deceptive. The Bible repeatedly warns us about this as well. Turn over to Proverbs 14, verse 12.

Proverbs 14:12 *There is a way that seems right to a man, but its end is the way of death. (NKJV)*

In other words, it can sound good to us; it clicks with our view of things and our emotions and our human perspective, but it's wrong and it doesn't turn out right. How do we sort these out? We go with what scripture says, not with what sounds good to us. As I mentioned, if you think about how the narrative of Protestant theology is sold to most people, it's a very seductive narrative: God loves you so He wants everything to be easy and comfortable for you; He did all this for you so you can just be comfortable and just believe in Christ, and you don't have to go through anything difficult. Sounds wonderful, doesn't it? It's based on a very flawed idea of what love is.

When we as carnal human beings look at the subject of love, we tend to ask the wrong question. We tend to ask the question, does it feel good? Because for us, love is warm and fuzzy, and makes everybody feel good and happy. That's not the right question. The question is, does it do good? To illustrate that, let's look at what the Bible tells us is one of the most significant acts of love. Turn to John 3:16.

John 3:16 *For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have everlasting life.*

17) For God did not send His Son into the world to condemn the world, but that the world through Him might be saved. (NKJV)

Think about this; this is held up as one of the ultimate acts of love. Look at this from both perspectives—from that of the Father and of the Son. Who is feeling warm and fuzzy, and having a warm, fuzzy, happy day through this? Nobody. This is the Father having to basically sit back and watch His Son be falsely arrested, tortured and murdered for something He didn't deserve at all. He has the power the whole time to stop it but does not do so for the ultimate good.

I won't take the time to turn to Matthew 26 but we know it's very well recorded exactly what Christ thought about it all. It was an agonizing thing He did not want to go through. We have it recorded three times, that He goes back and begs, please, Father, is there some other plan B so that I don't have to go through this nasty, ugly experience? I do not want to do this. He ends each time with saying, but Your will be done. Whatever thing You think is right and best, I'll submit to it. Nobody on either side was having a warm, fuzzy, positive day. Why was it love? Because it did good, because of what it ultimately resulted in.

We have to think of it in those terms because if you think about it just in terms of people who debate the existence of God or not—is there a just God in the world, and who debate atheism and these types of things—one of the subjects that people have a very hard time dealing with is pain and suffering. If there is a just, loving God, how can there be so much suffering in the world? You can see oftentimes people use that very argument to argue that there can't be a God, and this can't be just because if there was

a God, this couldn't happen. First of all, what's their definition of love?—does it feel good. That's where they're coming from, not does it do good. We also have to realize, the Bible tells us repeatedly, that's not how it puts it across. First of all it tells us that God, even though He is a loving parent, is going to discipline us, you might say, even spank us, if we look at it from a child's perspective—to correct us, to mold us. Let's notice how this concept is stated in scripture; turn over to Hebrews 12, verse 3.

Hebrews 12:3 *For consider Him who endured such hostility from sinners against Himself, lest you become weary and discouraged in your souls.*

4) *You have not yet resisted to bloodshed, striving against sin.*

5) *And you have forgotten the exhortation which speaks to you as to sons: "My son, do not despise the chastening of the Lord, nor be discouraged when you are rebuked by Him;*

6) *For whom the Lord loves He chastens, and scourges every son whom He receives."*

7) *If you endure chastening, God deals with you as with sons; for what son is there whom a father does not chasten?*

8) *But if you are without chastening, of which all have become partakers, then you are illegitimate and not sons.*

9) *Furthermore, we have had human fathers who corrected us, and we paid them respect. Shall we not much more readily be in subjection to the Father of spirits and live?*

10) *For they indeed for a few days chastened us as seemed best to them, but He for our profit, that we may be partakers of His holiness.*

11) *Now no chastening seems to be joyful for the present, but painful; nevertheless, afterward it yields the peaceable fruit of righteousness to those who have been trained by it. (NKJV)*

It's telling us here that yes, God chastens us and causes us pain, but why is it love, why is it good? Because of what it does. Because of how the movie ends, so to speak, because of how we grow as a result of it. We don't enjoy the process of going through trials by any means. What is our prayer when trials hit us? Lord, please take it away! Can you remove this from me? God looks at it oftentimes as blessings—why?—because of what it develops in us.

We also have to realize that it's not just an issue of God correcting us when we're wrong or, you might say, chastening us when we need to be corrected, because the Bible also tells us that we have to suffer as Christ suffered. That's a big subject I'm not going to be able to go through in detail today, but if you search all throughout the New Testament, it repeatedly tells us, if you want the definition of suffering as Christ suffered, it's 1 Peter 2:19-24. It specifically tells you, it's not suffering because of your sins when you've done wrong, it's taking it patiently when you suffer even when you have been righteous. We see in Romans 8:16-17 that we'll be glorified with Christ if we suffer as He suffered. Another interesting verse to look at is 2 Timothy 3:12.

2 Timothy 3:12 *Yes, and all who desire to live godly in Christ Jesus will suffer persecution. (NKJV)*

That's an all-inclusive statement. It's telling you that we have to face this. We need to realize it's part of the Christian life, but again, we can fall into this same issue of having the wrong definition of love, looking at what sounds good to us as a narrative, and thinking, a loving God wouldn't want to do that. How many times have you or other Christians in your life gotten hit with a very difficult trial, then started to ask, is God just, is He loving? How could He do this? I'll readily admit I've done that in my life as well; I'm not beating on anyone who has, but what are we doing when we do that? We're thinking, this doesn't feel good, and it couldn't be love because it hurts and is unpleasant to go through. You understand, we have to realize this is part of the Christian walk, and again, it's not based upon does it feel good, it's does it do good.

There's a book in the Bible specifically dedicated to dealing with this subject. I want to have a chance to just briefly touch on this today; it's the book of Job. If you look back in our history in the church of God, every one of the mistakes I've talked about today we did historically in our interpretation of that book. How many years did you hear Job being equated with self-righteousness? As if this was a book about self-righteousness, and he was the poster child for self-righteousness, and God had to put him through all of this just to humble him enough so he could be converted. I can only briefly touch on this today but think about that. God Himself says from the very beginning of the book that Job is a blameless and upright man who fears the LORD and shuns evil. By the biblical definition, how do you become blameless in God's eyes?

If you want an answer, read the first couple of verses of Romans 8. You do that through conversion. We don't do that through our physical righteousness, that's not even possible. Throughout the book what do his friends argue? Their whole argument is, Job, you've got some secret, horrible sin, and if you would just repent of it, God would forgive you and make all the pain go away. You see, to them it was never about Job learning through suffering, even when he'd done righteously. What was God's assessment of their argument at the end of the book? You did not speak the truth of Me as My servant Job did; now go and ask him to pray for your forgiveness and then when he prays for you, I'll forgive you; you don't want Me to deal with you according to your actions. Notice that this was a righteous man, by God's own definition, who went through all of this in spite of his righteousness. He stumbled along the way, he certainly made his mistakes as he was coping through all of this, but why was this love? Because of the end intended by God.

Turn over to James 5 and verse 10.

James 5:10 *My brethren, take the prophets, who spoke in the name of the Lord, as an example of suffering and patience.*

Notice who is going to be singled out as our example of suffering and patience:

11) *Indeed we count them blessed who endure. You have heard of the perseverance of Job and seen the end intended by the Lord—that the Lord is very compassionate and merciful.* (NKJV)

Notice how he is pointed out as an example we should study. For years in the church of God, what did we do? We associated this man's name with one word: self-righteousness. Now I'm going to read you the definition of the one word that the New Testament associates with this man. It says of the patience of Job, the Greek word is *hupomone*, Strong's #5281, and according to the Complete Word Study Dictionary of the New Testament by Spiros Zodhiates, here's how it's defined: *A bearing up under; patience, endurance as to things or to circumstances. Hupomone is associated with hope, and refers to that quality of character which does not allow one to surrender to circumstances or succumb under trial.*

So what did we do with the man whom the Bible set apart as an example of suffering as Christ suffered? We completely misinterpreted the Bible so that he wasn't even converted and he became the poster child for self-righteousness. We made every one of the mistakes that I've mentioned today. We in the church of God can make these same errors as well, we just tend to do it sometimes on different subjects.

So it's easy for us to say, those Protestants—they make those mistakes! We ought to say, not so fast; yes, we want to recognize their mistakes but we want to look at ourselves and see where we might mess up. When we look at biblical interpretation we need to take these principles into account.

You can't start off with the difficult, make your dogmatic conclusions about the speculative, the difficult, the hard to understand, and then turn around and try to make the rest of it match that. You're going to wind up in the ditch.

You can't look at a subject in isolation. You can't take it away from the foundation of the rest of the Bible and not take into consideration how you're looking at it. You can't ignore the specific context.

You certainly can't ignore contradictions. Contradictions are things that scream at us, that say, "Houston, we've got a problem!", and we need to take a step back and reevaluate them, because we don't always have the answers.

We're never going to have all the answers in this life. If you're looking for the guy that's got everything figured out, good luck, I don't think you're going to find him.

In this life we are always striving to learn and to grow in grace and knowledge, and we don't always have the answers, we don't always know everything. We need to learn these lessons so that we don't fall into the same mistakes. As the old saying goes, those who do not learn the lessons of history are condemned to repeat them.