

[Hebrews 1:8-12] I want to center our thoughts this morning on verse 9 and in particular the first part of this verse, where it says, “Thou hast loved righteousness, and hated iniquity...” The word “iniquity” has to do with lawlessness. Lawlessness means simply that you can live like you want and not worry about prosecution, retribution, or consequences.

[Hebrews 10:26-31] “We”: The personal pronoun “we” includes the author and those to whom he is writing. This warning is not to unsaved people, but it is to the saved who have been weaned from the milk of the Word.

“Sin”: This word is a present, active, plural, participle. The present tense indicates that this sin is actively practiced in the present; it’s ongoing action; it’s durative.

“Willfully”: The word “willful” carries the same meaning and attitude of an elder in 1 Peter 5:1-2, which says, “The elders which are among you I exhort,... Feed the flock ..., taking the oversight... willingly; ... of a ready mind;” An elder takes the oversight of a flock because it is the ***right thing to do!*** The willful sin is a sin that one believes is the right thing to do and that he has the right to do. ***The willful sin is sin (or sins) practiced by those who are lawless.*** This is what lawlessness is!

Back in Hebrews 1:9, it says, “Thou hast **loved righteousness**, and hated iniquity...” The Lord loves righteousness. That is something that is important to keep in mind and focus upon.

Will we be persecuted for righteousness? Matthew 5:10 tells us that we will. [Matthew 5:10; “Blessed *are* they which are persecuted for righteousness' sake: for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.”] The Lord loves righteousness because it has to do with the Kingdom of the Heavens. Righteousness has to do with the rule of the heavens over the earth. Those who love righteousness as He does can expect opposition.

[Matthew 5:20; “For I say unto you, That except your righteousness shall exceed *the righteousness* of the scribes and Pharisees, ye shall in no case enter into the kingdom of heaven.”] Again, reference is made to the Kingdom of the Heavens, and it is a reference to ***entering into*** the Kingdom of the Heavens.

We are to seek His righteousness. [Matthew 6:33; “But seek ye first the ***kingdom of God***, and his righteousness; and all these things shall be added unto you.”] “All these things” is a reference to food, clothing, and shelter; all the essentials of life will be yours. The Lord is saying, “If you take care of what is important to me, I will take care of what is important to you”. This word “seek” in this verse is in the present tense; it’s present, active, imperative; it’s a command! We need to be diligent in continuously seeking the righteousness that is of faith and an entrance into the Kingdom of the Heavens; ruling and reigning with Christ.

1 Timothy 6:11 tells us that we have to pursue righteousness! [1 Timothy 6:11; “But thou, O man of God, flee these things; and follow after righteousness, godliness, faith,

love, patience, meekness.”] Paul tells Timothy in this verse to follow after righteousness. Here is a man of God, who is saved and in the family, and Paul is telling him to seek and pursue righteousness. Last week, we discussed that this word “follow” is a very interesting word in that it could be translated “persecute” or to pursue relentlessly. We need to have passion in pursuing righteousness, which is of faith. What else do we need to be pursuing? Godliness, faith, love, patience, meekness. These are all attributes that we need to be following, and pursuing, and developing in our lives if we want to be pleasing to the Lord.

[2 Timothy 4:7-8; “I have fought a good **fight**, I have **finished** my course, I have **kept** the faith: Henceforth there is laid up for me a **crown of righteousness**, which the Lord, the righteous judge, shall give me at that day: and not to me only, but unto all them also that love his appearing.”] We to seek first the kingdom of God and his righteousness by fighting a good fight, by finishing the course, and by keeping the faith. That is how you do it. If you will do that you can be assured of a crown of righteousness. Why do we need a crown? If we enter into the Kingdom of the Heavens, we need a crown to show our authority, which is under the Lord of course. We need to show that we have the authority to rule and reign. He is the King of kings. As a king or a lord we are in charge judging ten cities, five cities, whatever the case may be.

[Matthew 5:6 tells us that the hungry will be satisfied. It says, “Blessed *are* they which do hunger and thirst after righteousness: for they shall be filled.”] Living in the United States we don’t really get hungry or thirsty very often. Maybe we get sort of thirsty sometimes, but we have not really experienced the hunger that some countries have. These two basic elements in a human’s life will drive him to do most any thing. If you are hungry enough, you will steal to get something to eat. If you are thirsty enough, you will drink polluted water to satisfy your thirst, even though it may kill you. The point is this, though: “Blessed are those who hunger and thirst after the righteousness.” Not just any righteousness, but the righteousness which is of faith. “They shall be filled” or better “they shall be satisfied”. If you are pursuing the righteousness which of faith, that satisfaction will be realized in the age to come. The crown of righteousness is that satisfaction. You don’t get the crown of righteousness if you don’t fight, if you don’t finish, and if you do not live by faith. You don’t get it unless you do these things!

The Lord loves righteousness! If you live a righteous life, and you do that by living a life that pleases God, the rewards are beyond comprehension.

God loves righteousness, but he hates what? He hates iniquity; he hates lawlessness. [Hebrews 1:9; “Thou hast loved righteousness, and hated iniquity [anomia; lawlessness];”] The Lord hates lawlessness. It says, “Thou has loved righteousness, and hated iniquity. The word “iniquity” is the word “lawlessness”.

We have already looked at lawlessness a little bit, but let’s look at it a little more. [Judges 17:6; “In those days *there was* no king in Israel, *but* every man did *that which was* right in his own eyes.”] “Every man did that which was right in his own eyes”. That is lawlessness. There was no king. What does that mean? God was not in charge of them

any more. Between the book of Judges and 1 Samuel, there was no king; there was no authority. God was not their king and they began to do that which was right in their own eyes; they did what they wanted to do. We find that taking place today.

These things concern the end of this age. [Matthew 24:3; “And as he sat upon the Mount of Olives, the disciples came unto him privately, saying, Tell us, when shall these things be? and what *shall be* the sign of thy coming, and of the end of the world [age]?”] His disciples were gathered around Him and Jesus was talking about the temple being torn down. The disciples came and asked, “Tell us, when shall these things be? and what shall be the sign of thy coming, and of the end of the age?” He told them many things but one thing in particular is found in verses 11 and 12 of Matthew 24.

[Matthew 24:11-12; “And many false prophets shall rise, and shall deceive many (who say Lord, Lord). And because iniquity [lawlessness] shall abound, the love (obedience) of many (who say Lord, Lord) shall wax cold (to disobedience and lawlessness).”] These false prophets are the ones who are going to deceive many people. They are the ones who are going to say, “Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in thy name?” These that make this defense are lawless. “Why did you do something?” What’s the answer? Well, it usually starts with, “But...”, or “Because I wanted to”. Lawlessness shall abound. It is not only abounding in our world and in our government, it is abounding in the Church. The Word of God has no authority in the Church. They are taking away “thus saith the Lord.” They are making their own opinions and ignoring what the Word of God says. This happened in the days that Matthew lived and it is happening today. When it says, “The love of many shall wax cold”, this is talking about obedience. The Lord said, “If you love me, you will obey me”. If our love for the Lord is waxing cold, it simply means that he is losing authority in our lives. When our love for him waxes cold, we are becoming disobedient, and disobedience leads to lawlessness.

We are also told there will be a falling away. [2 Thessalonians 2:3; “Let no man deceive you by any means: for *that day shall not come*, except there come a falling away first, and that man of sin [lawlessness] be revealed, the son of perdition [destruction];”] “Let no man deceive you.” Even though he may say he is a prophet, don’t let him “deceive you by any means”. The word “sin” in this verse is “lawlessness”.

Lawlessness and apostasy have already started. [2 Thessalonians 2:7; For the mystery of iniquity [lawlessness] doth already work: only he who now letteth *will let*, until he be taken out of the way.”] “The mystery of lawlessness doth already work.” Lawlessness is already operating. Lawlessness is a mystery. The mystery to me is why anyone who knows the Lord would ever want to become lawless in his life. The mystery of lawlessness was working in the day of Paul and it is working today. I just think of the days of Lot. As it was in the days Lot they were not lawful, but lawless. As judgment came in the days of Lot, so judgment is coming in this day.

What is the first occurrence in the NT of lawlessness? [Matthew 7:21; “Not every one that saith unto me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven; but he that doeth the will of my Father which is in heaven.”] There is something interesting about the

word “lawlessness”. The first occurrence of the word “lawlessness” is in Matthew chapter 7. What is significant here is that Matthew 7 is part of the Sermon on the Mount. The Sermon on the Mount begins in Matthew chapter 5 and ends in Matthew chapter 7. What does the Lord deal with in this message? He deals with that which he loves and he deals with that which he hates. He deals with the righteousness which is of faith and He deals with the lawlessness of many.

These were workers of signs. [Matthew 7:22; “Many will say to me in that day, Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in thy name? and in thy name have cast out devils [demons]? and in thy name done many wonderful works?”]

They have done these wonderful things, but they are lawless! [Matthew 7:23; “And then will I profess unto them, I never knew you: depart from me, ye that work iniquity [lawlessness].”] Here, in verse 21, we have a reference to entering into the Kingdom of the Heavens. “Except your righteousness exceed the righteousness of the scribes and the Pharisees you will not enter into the Kingdom of the Heavens. Then, verse 22 deals with the workers of signs; the signs of prophesying, the casting out of demons, and miracles. These are signs that were worked in the day when Jesus was preaching and in the days just after that and in particular during the period of the book of Acts.

Signs, wonders, and miracles were being performed during the book of Acts and we have looked at that in the past. The reason that they were given signs, wonders, and miracles was to authenticate the man of God. Not everybody had a Bible. The only real Bible was the Old Testament in Hebrew and in Greek. The Bible was not completed until around 90 AD. The word of God was not complete and you could not check out a man based upon what he was saying, because you did not have a Bible to use to check him out. All that a man had to do to prove he was a man of God would be to raise the dead. They were given signs, wonders, and miracles, but they were only for a time. There are going to be those who do these signs, wonders, and miracles, and they will be judged lawless.

The Lord says, “I never knew you”. I assure you that our God is not dumb. Our God knows everything; he is omniscient. What he is saying is that I do not recognize you because of your lawless behavior. He tells these that work these signs to depart. He is not sending them to the lake of fire. These people are not lost. Satan knows that a house divided will not stand. I assure you that Satan is not casting out Satan. Satan is not dividing his house. These people are saved people, and they are doing something that God does not want them to do, and God allows it to happen. Why does he allow that to happen? I don’t have the answer for that, but he does allow it to happen. I think that he allows it to happen to allow us to make choices in our own life as to whether we are going to be obedient or not. What choice do I want to make? I want to pursue the righteousness which of faith and the sign gifts do not promote faith. The sign gifts promote feelings, experiences, and seeing, and these are not of faith; they are of the flesh.

[Hebrews 2:3-4; “How shall we escape, if we neglect so great salvation [heavenly inheritance in the kingdom]; which at the first began to be spoken by the Lord, and was confirmed unto us by them that heard *him*; God also bearing *them* witness, both with

signs and wonders, and with divers miracles, and gifts of the Holy Ghost [Spirit], according to his own will?”] Now, we know that at one point in time, there were signs following them. [Mark 16:20; “And they went forth, and preached every where, the Lord working with *them*, and confirming the word with signs following. Amen.”] The Word was confirmed with signs. That is how the Word of God was confirmed and that is how God worked with them when they were preaching.

But, signs stop. [1 Corinthians 13:8; “Charity never faileth: but whether *there be* prophecies, they shall fail [inactive]; whether *there be* tongues, they shall cease [stop]; whether *there be* knowledge, it shall vanish away [inactive].”] Paul is telling us that what was normal during the book of Acts is going to change gradually. Love is not going to fail or become inactive but prophecies will become inactive. Whether there be tongues they will stop and the word of knowledge is going to become inactive as well. This knowledge that will become inactive is referred to as the word of knowledge found in 1 Corinthians 12:8 and not the understanding of the Word of God. The words “vanish away” and the word “fail” are the same Greek words. Paul is exercising the gift of prophecy in letting the Church at Corinth know that these sign gifts would become inappropriate in the ministry of the Word of God.

[1 Corinthians 13:9; “For we know in part, and we prophesy in part.”] These signs were important in their day, because the prophets were teaching the word of God without a copy of the Word of God to go by, for others to check them out with.

[1 Corinthians 13:10; “But when that which is perfect [complete] is come, then that which is in part shall be done away [fail, inactive].”] In verse 10 it says “that which is perfect” or complete or when all the parts come together, “then that which is in part shall be done away” or fail or vanish away. This is the same word that is used twice in verse 8.

Signs are child’s play! [1 Corinthians 13:11; “When I was a child, I spake as a child (small phrases), I understood as a child (in parts), I thought as a child (in parts): but when I became a man, I put away childish things (prophecies, tongues, word of knowledge).”] Paul says, “When I was a child, I spake as a child, I understood as a child, I thought as a child: but when I became a man, I put away childish things”. What childish things did he put away? He put away prophecy, he put away tongues, and he put away the word of knowledge. How does a child talk? In little phrases, or parts. How does a child think or understand? In parts; a little at a time. When the child matures, then he is able to put all the parts together as a whole.

Did you know we can become addicted to lawlessness? [Romans 6:19; “I speak after the manner of men because of the infirmity of your flesh: for as ye have yielded your members servants to uncleanness and to iniquity [lawlessness] unto [leading to] iniquity [lawlessness]; even so now yield your members servants to righteousness unto [leading to] holiness.”] Here we see that lawlessness leads to further lawlessness. I really think that lawlessness is addictive. You can become addicted to lawlessness, just like you can become addicted to alcohol, drugs, cigarettes, or other destructive things.

You can become addicted to sin. There are people today that are trying to justify their behavior by saying they were born that way or that what they have is a disease. You become addicted to alcohol or any sinful behavior by indulging. It is just like drugs. I would not sniff one grain of cocaine for fear of becoming addicted to it. Obviously there is pleasure that received from these drugs or people would not be doing them. I was addicted to tobacco at one time. [Perhaps “habituated” is a better word.] It took a long time to get rid of the urge to smoke, and that was back when a carton of cigarettes only cost about \$12, unless you could find them on sale. Breaking that addiction was one of the hardest things I have ever done. I think I would just as soon spend time locked in a phone booth with an angry bobcat than to break that addiction. Lawlessness is addictive and it leads to further addiction to lawlessness. We need to become addicted to righteousness. We need to be pursuing righteousness, which is of faith. We need to pursue it. We need to do something; this is works; this is a process. We need to be justified; we have to pursue righteousness. [James 2:24; “Ye see then how that by works a man is justified [present, passive; durative; is being justified], and not by faith only.”] Faith in and of itself does not make us righteous or justified. Righteousness is achieved through works. We don’t achieve that through being addicted to lawlessness.

It may seem hopeless, but we are redeemed from that addiction to lawlessness! [Titus 2:14; “Who gave himself for us, that he might redeem us from all iniquity [lawlessness], and purify unto himself a peculiar people, zealous of good works.”] He gave himself for us, that he might redeem us from all iniquity or lawlessness. He has given us the ability and the authority to be released from the addiction of lawlessness. It does not take twelve steps to do it. He has delivered us from that addiction if we want it. Part of being redeemed from lawlessness is that he has given us things to keep us busy living a purified life; pursuing righteousness and faith; pursuing godliness; thinking on things that are pure, honest, lovely, etc.

We need to be addicted to righteousness. [Romans 6:22-23; “But now being made free from [the] sin (of lawlessness), and become servants to God, ye have your fruit unto holiness, and the end everlasting life. For the wages of [the] sin *is* death; but the gift of God *is* eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord.”] “Being made free from the sin”. There is the definite article “the” before sin in the Greek. Because of the definite article “the” before the word “sin”, and sin being singular in number, it is the sin of lawlessness because of the context and also because of 1 John 3:4. (Whosoever committeth sin transgresseth also the law: for sin is the transgression of the law; CLV - Everyone *who *is* doing [the] *sin is doing *lawlessness also, and [the] *sin is *lawlessness.)

[“And become servants to God, ye have your fruits unto holiness, and the end everlasting life [or life for the coming kingdom]. For the wages of the sin (lawlessness) is death, but the gift of God is life [in the coming Kingdom] through Jesus Christ our Lord”.] The death in this verse is the loss of life in the Kingdom or being told to depart from me ye that work lawlessness. We are to become addicted to righteousness, being delivered from the addiction of lawlessness. Being free from lawlessness we can become bond slaves unto God. We can have life for the Kingdom age. That is what everlasting [eternal] life is

all about. It's about ruling and reigning with Christ, not spiritual salvation; this is talking about works.

The Lawless shall be removed. [Matthew 13:41; "The Son of man shall send forth his angels, and they shall gather out of his Kingdom all things that offend, and them which do iniquity [lawlessness];"] When the Lord said to those who were not doing the will of the Father in Matthew 7:21, "depart from me ye that work iniquity", he was removing the lawless from the Kingdom. The lawless are the ones who offend those who are trying to do the will of the Father.

In our lives, we must let grace reign! [Romans 5:21; "That as [the] sin hath reigned unto death, even so might grace reign through righteousness unto [leading to] eternal life by Jesus Christ our Lord."] "That as lawlessness hath reigned unto death", because there is the definite article before the word "sin". As lawlessness reigns; being addicted to lawlessness means that lawlessness is in charge of your life. When lawlessness reigns, you are going to lose a life that you will want to enjoy in the coming kingdom of our Lord. You are going to lose a life of ruling and reigning with Christ; you can count on it!

Paul continues when he says just as lawlessness reigns, "Even so might grace reign". Even so might grace reign through what? Righteousness. What righteousness? The righteousness that the Lord loves. The righteousness which of faith. What is my motivating factor? What is it that I am taking in to help me become addicted righteousness that which the Lord loves? Having a desire to stand in his presence approved. Having a desire to hear, "Well done thou good and faithful servant, enter into the joy of thy Lord". Grace might reign through righteousness leading to life for the Kingdom age by Jesus Christ our Lord.

[2 Timothy 2:22; "Flee also youthful lusts (experiences, signs): but follow [pursue] righteousness, faith, charity, peace, with them that call on the Lord out of a pure heart."] We will look at this in closing. Here, Paul tells Timothy "Flee also youthful lust". In thinking about that exhortation to pursue righteousness, faith, love, etc, it gave me a little different slant on youthful lusts. When we were a youth, in 1 Corinthians 13, what were we doing? We were pursuing the sign gifts weren't we? And Paul told Timothy to flee these youthful lusts. People that are into the sign gifts are into the experience and have become addicted to those experiences. They may say, "I have had these experiences and I am not going to change". Remember the Lord has redeemed you from those experiences that will put you in the company of those who are addicted to lawlessness. When you continue in the experiences provided by the sign gifts, you have abandoned faith. You are not pleasing the Lord. You are not doing the will of the Father. In 1 Corinthians 13:11, Paul said, "When I was a child I spake as a child". I had youthful lusts. "I understood as a child. I thought as a child, and when I became a man I put away the childish things". I put away youthful lusts. Those childish experiences are so strong, that you have to flee from them as Joseph did when Potipher's wife grabbed his coat. Joseph fled youthful lusts.

May the Lord help us not to be caught up with those who try to tell you that you do not have all that God wants you to have. Have you ever heard that before? I have heard that. "I want all that God wants me to have!" I want to live by faith. I want to love the righteousness which of faith, and I want to hate lawlessness. If I don't, I will become addicted. If you don't love righteousness and hate lawlessness, you will become addicted as well. May the Lord help us not to be deceived by false prophets!

Easter – Acts 12:4; Passover; Pascha.