

Weaving the Word

Denouncing three Cities

October 14, 2018

Welcome to where we're learning to balance God's kindness and sternness!



Are you afraid of the Lord?

Using an olive tree as an analogy, Paul warns ...



Do not be arrogant, but be afraid. For if God did not spare the natural branches, [His chosen people] he will not spare you either. ["But, I thought perfect love drives out fear." (1 Jn 4:18) It does. But, "driving" is a process with a starting point. And, the *fear* of the Lord is the *beginning* of wisdom. (Prov 1:7)] **Consider therefore** the **kindness** and **sternness** of God [those terms also translate: *gentleness* and *roughness*]: sternness to those who *fell*, but kindness to you, **provided that you continue in his kindness.** [Jesus said, "If you continue in My word, then you are truly disciples of Mine; and you will know the truth" (Jn 8:31-32 NAS)] Otherwise, you also will be cut off. – Romans 11:20b-22 NIV



We're following Jesus' 3.5 year ministry, chronologically; and, we're in Jerusalem just before Passover, one year before the cross.

Now, several weeks prior, Jesus sent the Twelve into Judea, while 72 other disciples prepared the towns of Galilee to receive Him.

The Lord appointed **seventy-two** others and sent them two by two **ahead of him to every town and place** [in Galilee (Mt 11:1)] **where he was about to go.** [They healed the sick and cast out demons in His name, and declared that the Kingdom of God was near. And, they warned and noted the places where He wasn't welcome] He told **them** [the 72], "... when you enter a town and are not welcomed ... I tell **you** [the 72], it will be more bearable on that day [of Judgment (v. 14)] for Sodom [of Sodom and Gomorrah infamy] than for that town. "Woe to you, Korazin! Woe to you, Bethsaida! [That's where Jesus healed Peter's mother-in-law, and the entire town (Jn 1:44; Mt 8:14-17)] For **if the miracles that were performed in you had been performed in** [the foreign nations of] **Tyre and Sidon, they** would have repented long ago ... And you, **Capernaum**, [Jesus' home office, and the hub of His ministry] **will you** [people] **be lifted up to the skies** [like Lazarus in the parable of the Rich Man and Lazarus (Lk 16:19-21)]? No, **you** [people] **will go down to the depths** [like the rich man]. "**He who listens to you listens to me; he who rejects you rejects me; but he who rejects me rejects him who sent me.**" [Jesus embeds homing beacons in here to lead us to Ezekiel chapters 3-4, where (600 years prior) God left Jesus a message] – Luke 10:1, 10-16 NIV

Jesus said: “the Son ... can do only what he **sees** his Father doing,” (Jn 5:19) and, “the Father who sent me commanded me what to **say** and how to say it,” (Jn 12:49) and “I judge only as I **hear**, and my judgment is just, for I seek not to please myself but him who sent me.” (Jn 5:30) He had eyes to see and ears to hear; and, here’s how He received His all those not-so-secret instructions:

“Son of man, I am sending you to the children of Israel ... impudent and stubborn children. ... do not be afraid of them nor be afraid of their words, though ... you dwell among **scorpions** ... speak with My words to them. For **you are not sent to a people of unfamiliar speech** [i.e. **foreign nations** (like Tyre and Sidon in Phoenicia)] ... Surely, **had I sent you to them, they would have listened to you.** [Hey, **that’s** what Jesus says to the 72] But the house of Israel **will not listen to you**, because **they will not listen to Me** [Jesus added the 72 to this list: “**He who listens to you listens to me; he who rejects you rejects me; but he who rejects me rejects him who sent me**” (Lk 10:16)] ... Son of man, **receive into your heart all My words that I speak to you, and hear with your ears.**” – Ezekiel 2:3-6, 3:4-10 NKJ



Well, he who has ears to hear let him hear: **if we want ears to hear the Father, we must receive all His Word into our heart.**

He who refuses to receive every word, rejects Him who sent Jesus.



At the end of His ministry tour in Galilee, Jesus secretly goes alone to Jerusalem, to the Pool of Bethesda, where He quietly heals a weak man who has no idea who healed him. (Jn 5:5-13)

Since the seventy-two went ahead of Jesus to prepare the towns for His whirlwind tour; they hadn’t had a chance to regroup and debrief.

The seventy-two **returned** [to Jesus] with **joy** and said, “**Lord, even the demons submit to us in your name.**” [This is **HUGE**; instead of calling on God, they used Jesus’ name ... **with omnipotent results!** So, He’s either the “prince of demons,” as accused in Capernaum, or “His name will be called ... **Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace.**” (Is 9:6) And, to help them realize how His name carries God’s authority] **He replied, “I saw Satan fall like lightning from heaven.** [“So, who am I? When Satan was cast down from heaven, I was there. Had a great view. So ... **who I Am?! And, who gave you the authority that only God can give?”] **I have given you authority to trample on snakes and scorpions** [there’s Ezekiel’s “scorpions”] **and to overcome all the power of the enemy;** [So, who am I? Here’s another hint: under **My authority**] **nothing will harm you. However,** [as wonderful as that is] **do not rejoice that the spirits submit to you** [that’s the **sternness** of God], but [bigger picture here boys; rejoice in His **kindness**] **rejoice that your names are written in heaven.** [Because, if I am who you think I am, I do **that too!**” – Luke 10:17-20 NIV**

Now, Matthew picks up the story, but has Jesus saying basically the same thing that Luke says He said when He sent these guys out.

Then Jesus began to denounce the cities in which most of his miracles had been performed, because they did not repent. “**Woe** to you, Korazin! **Woe** to you, Bethsaida! If the miracles that were performed in you had been performed in Tyre and Sidon, they would have repented long ago in sackcloth and ashes. – Matthew 11:20-21 NIV

It's another example of where it seems someone got it wrong; but, it's very intentional.

The key to unlocking it is the word "[Woe](#)".

"Woe" is used as an expression of grief or denouncement.

Luke tells us that Jesus had a private, heartfelt, moment before sending out the seventy-two, saying: "I tell **you**, it will be more bearable on that day for Sodom than for that town. **"Woe** to you, Korazin! **Woe** to you, Bethsaida!" Now, what Jesus prophesied has sadly come to pass. So, when they regroup, Matthew tells us that: "Jesus began to **denounce** the cities in which most of his miracles had been performed, because they did not repent. '**Woe** to you, Korazin! **Woe** to you, Bethsaida!'" Luke doesn't have any of *that*.

Jesus bookends the tour of the seventy-two with a real-life example of His kindness and severity!

And you, **Capernaum**, will you be **lifted up** to the skies? No, you will **go down** to the depths. If the miracles that were performed in you had been performed in Sodom, it would have remained to this day." – Matthew 11:23 NIV

Those embedded homing beacons are leading us to Isaiah:

They worship **the work of their own hands**, [**yad** (the name of the pointer used for teaching God's Word)] ... the day of the Lord of hosts shall come upon everything **proud** and **lofty**, upon everything **lifted up** — and it shall be **brought low** ... **Sever yourselves from such a man, whose breath is in his nostrils; for of what account is he?** [ERV: "Stop trusting other people to save you. Do not think too highly of them; they are only humans who have not stopped breathing yet"] ... Trust in the Lord ... for He **brings down** those who dwell on high, the **lofty city** ... He **brings it down** ..." [that's His sternness] Let **grace** [that's His kindness] be shown to the wicked, yet he will not learn righteousness ... Lord, when **Your hand [yad] is lifted up**, [exalted] they will not see. ... the Lord with His severe sword, great and strong, will punish Leviathan ... that **twisted serpent** ... **Woe** to the **crown of pride** [as opposed to the crown of life (James 5:12)] ... Behold, the Lord has a mighty and strong one ... who will bring them **down** ... with **His hand [yad]**. The **crown of pride** ... will be **trampled underfoot**; [which is what Jesus gave the 72 authority to do: "to trample on snakes and scorpions"] – Isaiah 2:8, 12, 22, 26:4-11, 27:1, 28:1-3 NKJ



We tend to emphasize one aspect of God's nature over the other. As we grow we learn that our stove is an awesome appliance that makes our favorite foods and fills our home with aromas. *And*, it'll burn us with hot oil and scalding water if we don't fear and respect the elements that make it a stove.

Our awareness of one balances our awareness of the other.

If we focus *only* on God's *tender* side, we'll come to see Him as a softy on sin, and fail to notice how powerfully he opposes it. Yet, if I focus *only* on God's *rough* side, I'll fail to find forgiveness, and intimacy, and the joy of my salvation.

All kindness, and I'll be liberalistic and self-condoning.

All sternness, and I'll be legalistic and self-condemning.

Remember how Jesus had revealed himself to the ungrateful man who He'd healed at the pool of Bethesda, and told him to ...

"... Stop sinning or something worse may happen to you." [Well] The man went away and told the Jews that it was Jesus who had made him well. So, because Jesus was doing these things on the Sabbath, the Jews persecuted him. – John 5:14-16 NIV

But, when they come to let Him have it, He publically denounces His rejecters, in front of all who've come to Jerusalem for the Passover from every town that received Him and embraced Him.

Love is something more stern than mere kindness. Kindness cares only that pain is removed, not that healing is achieved. But a doctor often has to *cause pain* in order to heal.

People want a God who shows mercy without demanding change.

But, that's a perverse desire for less love rather than more.

Consider therefore the **kindness and sternness** of God: sternness to those who fell, but kindness to you, **provided that you continue in his kindness.** [Though we consider His sternness, we continue in His kindness (as His love drives out our fear)] Otherwise, **you** also will be cut off. And if they do not persist in unbelief, they will be grafted in ... [So, **don't be arrogant; be afraid**] – Romans 11:20b-23 NIV



The Lord doesn't want His children terrified. He wants us awe-struck. Kind of like walking on that glass-floored Skywalk 4,000' above the Grand Canyon.

Not to be outdone, China built a skywalk.

And they added glass cracking effects, *just for fun.*



It's easy to forget how fearfully dependent we are on God's goodness and grace.

Fear is a good starting point.



But, **we don't continue in God's sternness.**

We continue in His loving kindness.

But, our awareness of His sternness should cause us to cling to the security of His kindness like the railing on a glass skywalk.