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Revelation

Chapter 15 - Revealing the Heart of Divine Wrath God's Wrath Comes Out of Holiness (vs. 5-8)

Revelation 15:5-8: After these things I looked, and the temple of the tabernacle of testimony in heaven was opened, and the seven angels who had the seven plagues came out of the temple, clothed in linen, clean and bright, and girded around their chests with golden sashes. Then one of the four living creatures gave to the seven angels seven golden bowls full of the wrath of God, who lives forever and ever. And the temple was filled with smoke from the glory of God and from His power; and no one was able to enter the temple until the seven plagues of the seven angels were finished.

Well, this wonderful passage in Revelation in this wonderful book is revealing so many things to us. It clearly is revealing to us the heart of man, and how it is

desperately wicked and sick, and how it's so destructive. When Scripture talks about dissipation, i.e. waste, man has wasted the world, and he has wasted his life. And with that waste, it's brought all kinds of pollution and hardship and trials and sorrow. And I mean, the list goes on. We see that revealed in the Book of Revelation. And unfortunately, I think, oftentimes when people read through the Book of Revelation and they read those things, they think that they're reading what God is doing. God is revealing what man has been doing. And so, all that horrific stuff that you begin to read about, is really the man welcoming those evil, malevolent forces in his own life and in the realm of the world. What we do see in Scripture about God is that at His throne, and it's a wonderful picture really at the very beginning where you see the throne of God in Revelation 4, you see these peaceful surroundings. And in particular, we make reference to that wonderful sea of glass. And it is a picture of God calming the hearts of man and how wonderful it is that God brings peace in our lives. And that's His desire to do that. You even see Jesus right before He's resurrected, and He comes to His disciples,

and He breathes on them the Holy Spirit, and He says, "Peace I give to you." And it's His desire to give us peace, and it has been always.

As we come to the wrath of God, it really is at the end of Revelation that the wrath of God comes into play, and we begin to understand and realize why God is angry. Now, what's wonderful about this particular chapter is it starts off explaining to us that, first of all, the wrath of God has an end. That is to say, the wrath of God is not what God is about. So, when you see in Scripture and it says things like, "His anger is but for a moment, but His lovingkindness for a lifetime," it really is telling us that God is about lovingkindness. Wrath is something that He has to do in order to produce something good in our lives. And so, how wonderful it is that it starts off that when these bowls are finished, it'll be the end of the wrath of God. And that's extremely comforting to me to realize that God's life is not about wrath. And as we were talking about our own lives, that God has not called us to wrath. Of course, as we oftentimes quote James 1, the anger of man doesn't accomplish the righteousness of God. We

couldn't be angry and accomplish anything good. God can, but we can't. But what we understand is that God has never called us to hang on to wrath. He does want us to be angry. As Scripture says, be angry, but don't sin. Don't let the sun go down on your anger. And so, like with God, anger should just be for a moment. But our lovingkindness then should take over because that's the goal. The goal of our life should be to proclaim good news. And good not only means beneficial, but it means virtuous, and it means that which brings happiness as well. So, God has called us to that kind of work. I mean, I'm glad when God called me, He didn't say, "Okay, now it's going to be your job to beat up all the bad guys." I mean, at my age, you'd get tired doing it. But what He has done is, He says, "I'm going to give you the job of giving good news." And that's what we get to do all the time. And according to Romans, the way that we actually defeat evil is by doing good. So, what a great way to war.

So, as we come into this, we begin to see the picture of God and the anger of God, and we're going to see it from the proper perspective in which it was meant to be seen.

So, first of all, verse 1, we understand that it has its limitations, it's not forever, and it's for a short time.

The second thing we see in the passage is that God's wrath literally reveals the truth about Him, as well as it's going to reveal the truth about man. But more than that, it is revealing the truth about His wrath, because God's wrath is really demonstrating His righteousness. As we have oftentimes looked in Scripture, and we understand that this Book of Revelation is written largely to the seven churches in Asia Minor, or we could kind of segue into that. God is writing to us as a church. The question is, why do I need to know about the bowls of wrath of God? Well, you need to know about the righteousness of God and what He gets angry about and why He's angry.

And if you look with me in Chapter 15 in particular, the declaration as the wrath of God is being introduced.

It says this in verse 3,

(Revelation 15:3) “And they sang the song of Moses, the bond-servant of God, and the song of the Lamb, saying, “Great and marvelous are Your works, O Lord God, the Almighty; Righteous and true are Your ways...””

And what you're going to see is that the wrath of God is a declaration of His righteousness. Now, it's a declaration of His truth and His sincerity and His genuineness. Now, when it says, true are His ways, it's not just referring to the fact that God doesn't lie. It's referring to the fact that God is genuine. He's sincere. When He writes to the churches, He's letting them know that “You're not being genuine about your love for Me. And you're not being genuine about your love for one another. And you're being insincere, and you're letting all kinds of...” So, one of the problems that we see, if we go back all the way to the beginning where He's talking to the seven churches in Revelation, you see churches like Thyatira. And Thyatira in particular is allowing evil to come into the church. And it describes this woman Jezebel, which is reminiscent of the Old Testament, and one that was bringing in all kinds of false cults and immorality. It was starting to penetrate the church and everything. But here's what He said. It's an interesting phrase, “You tolerate the woman Jezebel.” That's a very interesting phrase, because once again, it's one of the things the world has against the church; they say, “You're not tolerant.” We're not supposed to tolerate

evil any more than you're supposed to tolerate somebody beating up somebody and stand there and do nothing. You're not supposed to be tolerant of somebody hurting somebody. And so, the thing that we realize, and if you go back there, if you remember when He's talking to the church of Thyatira, you see, and He introduced Himself with the bronze blaze as if His feet are on fire. What is that depicting? He's feeling passionate about this.

Righteousness, as is written in 1 Corinthians 13, when Paul begins to describe what love is all about, one of his great statements in the text is, "Love does not rejoice in unrighteousness." So, we have to come to the conclusion that when God gets angry when unrighteousness is reigning, it's an act of love. So, Scripture's revealing to us, "Righteous are Your ways," and finally, somebody that's genuine. I think it kind of took back Nicodemus when Nicodemus comes to Jesus at night because he's afraid of everybody. Of course, he's a main guy himself. I mean, chief Sanhedrin of sorts. And so, he comes to Jesus at night and he begins to question, "Nobody can do the things that You're doing unless you're from God." I've

often made mention of, well, if you understand the Gospel of John, we're at the very beginning stages of Jesus' ministry. So, Jesus has not done any miracle except the changing the water into wine, which was at a wedding, which we're pretty sure Nicodemus wasn't even there. So, there's only one miracle. So, when Nicodemus comes to Jesus and he says, "Nobody can do what You do and be from God," we know exactly what he's talking about because if you look at the end of John 2, before we go into John 3 with Nicodemus, Jesus has gone into the temple and He's turned over the tables. Nobody does that. I mean, Nicodemus goes, "Nobody bucks the system. Nobody gets angry at the guys that's taking advantage of people. Nobody stands up for what's right because they're too afraid." I mean, you have this great temple that's two football fields in length. I mean, there's a massive structure and people that are only really important can walk around the ivory halls. And Jesus goes in there and starts trashing the place because they're exploiting poor people. And He says, "You can't do this." And Nicodemus says, "Nobody does this. I've never seen anybody so true, so sincere, so genuine. Nobody does this

unless you're from God.” And so, what a wonderful picture of anger because somebody is hurting and taking advantage of somebody. And that's the picture that Revelation wants us to understand, that the anger of God is righteous and true. And the celebration in heaven is that He's going to do something that is wonderful.

Revelation 3, where it talks about the church of Sardis; look at this with me, and we can obviously go through all the churches, Laodicea being a really good one to pick on. But if you look at the beginning of Revelation 3, it talks about this church of Sardis, and of course, one of the churches that He's writing to. And He says, “I know what you're doing.” Of course, in each case, He's telling the churches, “I know what you're doing.” But more than that, He knows your heart. And He knows why you do what you do.

And His point to the church of Sardis is this, if you'll pick up with me,

(Revelation 3:1) “To the angel of the church in Sardis write: He who has the seven Spirits of God and the seven

stars, says this: 'I know your deeds, that you have a name that you are alive...'

Now, what we're talking about is the external show of a church. Obviously, the church is very popular. It's probably well populated. They probably have grand structures, perhaps, but they're well known. And it's all about how they look to everybody else.

But He's saying,

"... but you are dead."

I mean, they're a lively bunch. They probably have really very entertaining services. But He says, "You're dead."

Now, what He's talking about is the heart. "You're not being real with Me. You're not being genuine with Me."

So, He says this,

(Revelation 3:2) "Wake up, and strengthen the things that remain, which were about to die; for I have not found your deeds completed in the sight of My God.

(Revelation 3:3) 'So remember what you have received and heard; and keep it, and repent. Therefore if you do not wake up, I will come like a thief...'

Why does He describe Himself that way? “Oh, God's so mean. He's so mean. He just wants to steal things from me.” No, you missed the point. Why is God going to come like a thief? Because when God comes, that church is going to realize that they've worked for everything that was nothing. And they're going to stand before God because it's all been show, nothing's been real. And He says, “When I finally come into your presence, you're going to have nothing. And you're going to wonder, ‘Why do I have nothing?’ I'm not going to let you do that.” And it's the grace of God that gets upset. Because, really, when you think about it, when we live a superficial walk with God, we're robbing ourselves. I mean, you're robbing yourself of joy, you're robbing yourself of peace, you're robbing yourself of confidence, of hope. I mean, think of all the things that you're robbing yourself of, and the greatest is a relationship with God. And all the things that you're doing in your life is just waste, and you're going to come up empty-handed at the end of your life. Should God be angry about that? Yes, but He's angry for you. And so, as we see all these things that He's reminding the churches about is that this wrath of God is for us.

And the wrath of God, if you look in Chapter 15, at the very beginning, it says,

(Revelation 15:1) “Then I saw another sign in heaven, great and marvelous, seven angels who had seven plagues, which are the last, because in them the wrath of God is finished.

(Revelation 15:2) And I saw something like a sea of glass mixed with fire...”

So, what's the passion of God? That's very easy. The passion of God is to give you peace. The passion of God's heart is to demonstrate His love for you that you would have. And this is what moves Him. So, Scripture is actually letting us know and revealing the truth about His wrath within these first few verses.

As we come to verses 5 through 8, what we're going to see is God's wrath comes out of a place. And the place that it comes out of is what is so graphic within the passage and should be, once again, stirring our hearts. People will read a text like this and they go, “Okay, so heaven is a bunch of temples,” and no, that's not what He's talking about at all. He's given you pictures of His

heart, and He's showing you what these pictures are. I mean, look, if God were to try to explain to us the depths of who He is in words in which we couldn't fathom, what good would that do? But what He does is He pulls out things that are familiar. How do we know that He's doing that? Go back to the seven churches of Asia Minor. Every example that He gives is an example in that particular church's sphere of influence and surroundings that they're very familiar with. So, when He talks about Christ coming with the bronze and the fire, well, these are people that worked with bronze and fire. When He talks about water that is lukewarm and you'll spew it out of the mouth, well, Laodicea lived in a place where the water was rancid because it was coming down from the hill and it was full of sulfur and they knew what it was like to not drink the water. So, in every case, He puts the setting in a familiar so that you can relate to Him. I mean, there's nothing new here. When He spoke in parables, what was He doing? Well, He was giving you heavenly visions, but earthly examples. Because if He started explaining to me about heaven, I'd go, "I'm not getting it." He goes, "Oh, that's right. You don't know what those are." But what He

does is, He says, “Okay, so you've seen the flowers in the field? You see how I clothe them? You don't think I'm going to take care of you? See the birds? Does anybody take care of them? I do.” I mean, I've never seen a bird with a tin can. Have you? So, it's the graciousness of God to do these things. But He's given us these pictures so that we can understand. The same thing is true with His heart. And God doesn't have to explain Himself to us, but He does. And how wonderful that is.

So, if you pick up with me, in Chapter 15, and if we'll pick up in verse 5, and as we look at verses 5 through 8, what we'll begin to see is God's wrath and where it comes from.

The passage reads this way,

(Revelation 15:5) “After these things I looked...”

Now, King James will probably more accurately put this phrase in appropriately. It says, “I looked, and behold,” and NAS didn't somehow for some reason. But the point is, and if we're just accurately translating it, “I looked; you need to look.” John's going, “You've got to see this,” would be another way of putting it.

I remember one year, we were driving down to Orlando, and I'm just looking out the side of my car window, and I'm watching the spaceship go, and I'm doing this (waving my hand) to Connie. I didn't know what to say. It looked so close. And when you see something great, I mean, you need somebody to watch. So, that's the feeling that we get. So, automatically, this is a charged, I mean, highly emotionally charged text. And he says, "You've got to see this thing."

And he uses this interesting word,

"...and the temple of the tabernacle of testimony in heaven was opened."

Now, wow, he just said a whole bunch of stuff here.

When he starts off with the word "temple," it is a familiar word. And you have to remember, he's not largely talking to Jews. These are churches in Asia Minor. Now, there are some Jews there, but these are Gentiles. These are Greeks, largely a mix of Romans, and especially in Ephesus, from the east, because it really was a place that had all kinds of faiths and mysticism and all kinds of things. But one of the things that they all had in common

with their religion, is they had temples. And to use this particular word, and this particular word that's used is "*naos*," is a word that describes not simply the temple at large, but it focuses specifically on the center part in the temple. Now, in the Jewish temple, that would be the Holy of Holies. But in the Greek temples, it would be where they placed their God. It would be like in the center. Well, the Holy of Holies was that sense of where God dwells type thing. This is what is wanting to be emphasized. It is the dwelling, and look, whether a Jew or a Gentile, you would understand what he's talking about. We're going into God's heart. We're going into the center of His thoughts. We're going into the heart of God. We're going to find out how He thinks. What a great picture this is. Now, as if that wasn't enough, he then adds "tabernacle." And "*skēnē*" within the passage, is making reference to a tent with skins. Well, for us, when we go into the heart of God and we see, if you and I could peel back and look into what God loved the most, let me tell you what it would be. It would be His Son. And the reason why we understand in the Old Testament that the tabernacle was made out of skins was that it was

prophetic that the Word would become flesh someday and dwell among us. And the reason why it was a tent was that you could move the tent, therefore dwelling, tabernacling, among us. And God's heart is with His Son, "This is My Son in whom I am well pleased. Listen to Him. This is My Son that I love so much." And as Jesus would say, "My Dad really loves me because I laid down My life for the sheep." He has taken His skin, His life. Talk about putting skin in the game. He literally has done this. And that is, if you look at the next word, that is the testimony. The testimony is what Christ has done for us. And so, heaven begins to open up, and we begin to come into the presence and the heart of God, and we go, "What's on your heart?" He goes, "My Son. And the testimony that He displayed." It should not surprise you that the word "testimony" is actually where we get the word "martyr". So, the word itself makes reference to not only the fact that He's a credible witness, but that He's willing to lay down His life for what He believes, and that's exactly what Jesus did for us. So, in the context of Chapter 15, what are we talking about? We're talking about the wrath

of God. Where's the wrath of God coming from? His love for His Son, and what was done to His Son.

There's an interesting passage, if you look with me, in Matthew 21. Jesus is telling a parable within the passage.

And it reads this way,

(Matthew 21:33) “Listen to another parable. There was a landowner who PLANTED A VINEYARD AND PUT A WALL AROUND IT AND DUG A WINE PRESS IN IT, AND BUILT A TOWER, and rented it out to vine-growers and went on a journey.

(Matthew 21:34) When the harvest time approached, he sent his slaves to the vine-growers to receive his produce.

(Matthew 21:35) The vine-growers took his slaves and beat one, and killed another, and stoned a third.

(Matthew 21:36) Again he sent another group of slaves larger than the first; and they did the same thing to them.

(Matthew 21:37) But afterward he sent his son to them, saying, ‘They will respect my son.’

(Matthew 21:38) But when the vine-growers saw the son, they said among themselves, 'This is the heir; come, let us kill him and seize his inheritance.'

(Matthew 21:39) They took him, and threw him out of the vineyard and killed him."

Could you imagine?

(Matthew 21:40) "Therefore when the owner of the vineyard comes, what will he do to those vine-growers?"

I'll just stop here. Stop thinking about this for just a minute and let me just put in *your* son. You sent your son and they killed him. What would you do?

"They said to Him, "He will bring those wretches to a wretched end, and will rent out the vineyard to other vine-growers who will pay him the proceeds at the proper seasons."

(Matthew 21:42) Jesus said to them, "Did you never read in the Scriptures,
'THE STONE WHICH THE BUILDERS REJECTED, THIS BECAME THE CHIEF CORNER stone;

THIS CAME ABOUT FROM THE LORD, AND IT IS MARVELOUS IN OUR EYES'?

(Matthew 21:43) Therefore I say to you, the kingdom of God will be taken away from you and given to a people, producing the fruit of it.

(Matthew 21:44) And he who falls on this stone will be broken to pieces; but on whomever it falls, it will scatter him like dust."

(Matthew 21:45) When the chief priests and the Pharisees heard His parables, they understood..."

They're not dummies.

"... they understood that He was speaking about them."

And what did they want to do? Seize Him. Right, of course. What we're dealing with is a moving moment in the heavens. Now, I say "moment". There's no time, but the picture is helping us see the heart of God. What is God thinking about? When He's thinking about the righteousness of His Son, a Son that loves Him, a Son that does the right thing, but He's also thinking about how He was treated.

And so, the way that it reveals is, watch the passage, (Revelation 15:6) “And the seven angels who had the seven plagues...”

Plagues being all kinds of afflictions.

Now, let's just stop there just a second. This word is very clear. I mean, you can use the word “plagues,” and it would be accurate. In fact, the word itself in the Greek almost sounds like the word “plague”. But the word itself is not as much referring to like a disease as it is something else. And here's the way the word is usually defined: blows, stripes, beating. What do you think's in those bowls? How horrible it was that we would take His Son and put stripes and blows and beatings on Him. Those are blows that I deserve. Those who reject Him are saying, “We'll take them.” And God has given it to them.

But it's an interesting picture,

“And the seven angels who had the seven plagues came out of the temple...”

They came from the heart of God. So, we know right away that this is not a source of somebody just being angry.

This is a righteous source. This is a holy source. This is a right source. And because it's coming from the heart of God, it has to be rooted in love.

We read in the Old Testament, you don't need to turn there, but Habakkuk 3:2, where God is able to remember mercy in His wrath. But there's a great passage in Hosea, and if you just keep your finger here, and if you look at that passage with me, Hosea 11. I oftentimes think about this text because in this text, God is literally saying, as clearly as He can say it, "I'm not like you." Thus the word "holy," right? I mean, holy means there's nobody like Him. So, the opposite of holy would be common. So, God is saying within this passage, "I'm not like you." The context is, a context of love for Israel, for Ephraim. He uses the picture of Ephraim, which is a picture of God giving and making His people prosper.

And if you look at the very beginning, it says,

(Hosea 11:1) "When Israel was a youth I loved him, And out of Egypt I called My son."

You have this wonderful picture, and it says,

(Hosea 11:2) “The more they called them, The more they went from them; They kept sacrificing to the Baals...”

In other words, “I sent prophets to them, and I said, ‘Come on, son.’ And they go, ‘I don't want to come, I don't want to come.’”

And it says this,

(Hosea 11:3) “Yet it is I who taught Ephraim to walk...”

Remember raising your kids? Remember when your kids start rebelling against you and these memories flash in your head? “Well, you don't remember when I put you on my shoulders and carried you around, and you don't remember when I woke up in the middle of the night?”

And the kids going, “No.”

“Yet it is I who taught Ephraim to walk, I took them in My arms; But they did not know that I healed them.”

You think about all the things that you did for somebody that you loved.

(Hosea 11:4) “I led them with cords of a man, with bonds of love, And I became to them as one who lifts the yoke from their jaws; And I bent down and fed them.”

And then you begin to hear the heart of God.

His phrase is, as He goes on,

(Hosea 11:5) “They will not return to the land of Egypt;
But Assyria—he will be their king
Because they refused to return to Me.”

(Hosea 11:7) “So My people are bent on turning from
Me.”

“Why aren't you coming back to Me?”

Then you can hear this wrestling, and this is one of the reasons why I love the passage. You hear the wrestlings of God in this, and He says this in verse 8,

(Hosea 11:8) “How can I give you up, O Ephraim? How can
I surrender you, O Israel? How can I make you like
Admah? How can I treat you like Zeboiim? ...”

And you go, “Well, God, aren't you mad?” And He says, “Yes, the fires are burning.” And you go, “What kindled it?”

Look at the end of verse 8,

“...All My compassions are kindled.”

I wasn't expecting that.

(Hosea 11:9) “I will not execute My fierce anger; I will not destroy Ephraim again. For I am God and not man...”

“I understand that's the way man would handle it, but I'm not going to handle it that way because I'm God. And My name is love. And I don't do things that way.” That's a great passage. So, the picture that is being given in Revelation is, yeah, His wrath is coming. But where is it coming from? The temple of a heart of love for His Son and for His people.

You know, we read in Revelation 12, and if you were to think of it in these terms, and it's a great picture that is painted in Revelation 12, but look, if a serpent threatened the life of your child, if a serpent came up and bit the heel of your son, injecting the poisons within your son, and you began to see, from what I understand, things begin to happen pretty rapidly. They say the best thing that you could do for a person that just got a snake bite is have some keys. Because the best thing for you to do is get out of there and go to the hospital. But you begin to watch your child suffer, things begin to swell, and fevers begin

to come; a sickness and a pain that begins to take hold. And they actually, in many cases, refer to it as like something striking or, as it were, blows.

It tells us in Genesis 3 that the serpent will strike the heels of the Messiah, and strike he did, and blows he did give. There's no doubt about that. But if you can imagine as a parent watching your child suffer the pains as the serpent sits over there coiled, ready to do it again, what would your feelings be? You see, if God were indifferent, He wouldn't care, but He's not. He's passionate about His love. So, what are you going to see coming out of the temple? Well, watch.

(Revelation 15:6) “And the seven angels who had the seven plagues came out of the temple, clothed in linen, clean...”

By the way, it's clean, but the word “linen” is actually flax. And you know what the word is referring to? A wick. And you know why? Because you light wicks. And so, it's referring to the flame of God. Seraphim actually means angels. Seraphim actually means flaming ones. But what you see is the passion of God, the fervor of God coming

out. And is it just any kind of passion? No, it's clean passion.

And as the phrase says,

“... and bright...”

Or “shining bright” would be the word that is being used.

“... and girded around their chests with golden sashes.”

Because really what is it depicting? A heart protecting that which is most valuable. And it's a picture of value. Because when you consider gold, one of the things about the quality of gold is that it's an enduring quality. So, when we talk about the love of God, it's an enduring quality. It doesn't tarnish. It remains the same. And really the more testing, the brighter it gets, the more wonderful it is. And certainly, that's a great picture.

And it says in verse 7,

(Revelation 15:7) “Then one of the four living creatures...”

And I personally believe it was actually the third of the four. Remember there were four living creatures, which is an interesting depiction of, as I think Revelation 7 says, the four corners of the world, which the creatures refer to

all of creation. If you were to say, “What do they represent?” They represent all of creation. And as one of them had something different, I mean, remember one like had a face of a lion and a calf, but remember one had the face of what? A man.

“Then one of the four living creatures gave to the seven angels seven golden bowls full of the wrath of God, who lives forever and ever.”

That's a present active genitive case. And the reason why I'm emphasizing this is that it literally is a case that's showing ownership. Genitive case is a case demonstrating ownership. So, what is it saying? God owns life. He's the only one. Can you imagine people insulting God, insulting His Son? In Him was life. He owns it. And yet, they were trying to take His. The declaration here, you can't help but walk away and feel the intensity of this moment in which God is revealing, why would you do that? I mean, you go back to Deuteronomy, it says, “I give before you life and death, choose life.”

And so, as the passage reads, “full of the wrath of God,” who literally owns life, if I could put it this way, and eternal life forever.

(Revelation 15:8) “And the temple was filled with smoke...”

There's a passage in the Old Testament, if you look with me, in Isaiah 6. Once again, if you can keep your finger in Revelation, it'd be a help for me just to be able to talk faster. But in Isaiah 6, if you look, what a great scene it was in which Isaiah comes before the Lord. And it was a time in which he needed great encouragement because kings were being changed over, and it wasn't going to go for the better. It was going to go for the worse. So, when things happen that you realize that volatility and all kinds of problems might be around the corner, what do you need to see? This is what you need to see. You need to see God is on the throne. That's what you need to see.

And the passage reads,

(Isaiah 6:1) “In the year of King Uzziah's death...”

So, a fairly good king is now dying. None of them were really great, but a fairly good king was dying.

“... I saw the Lord sitting on a throne, lofty and exalted...”

That's comforting. He's in control.

“... with the train of His robe filling the temple.”

(Isaiah 6:2) Seraphim (flaming ones) stood above Him, each having six wings: with two he covered his face, and with two he covered his feet, and with two he flew.

(Isaiah 6:3) And one called out to another and said...”

You could just hear them, “There's nobody like Him.

There's nobody like Him.” You could see the other one

going, “There's nobody like Him.” The other one, “I've

never seen anything like Him. There's nobody like Him.”

And they just say this, and how often do they say that?

Well, they never stop saying it. And the foundations of

the thresholds trembling at the voice of him who called

out, while the temple was filling with smoke. And what is

the conclusion that Isaiah feels? “I've never seen anything

like this. I've been talking about things. I've been

preaching about things. I had no idea what I was talking

about.” That's exactly what's going to happen to your pastor. I'm going to get up to heaven, and I'm going to go, “Okay, I misrepresented this, because I had no idea.” Isn't that wonderful to look forward to something like that? With the smoke, you're feeling this presence, and you're feeling this heat, and you're feeling this passion. One of the statements that's made, I think it's in Revelation 8, is there's a smoke in heaven, and you begin to smell the aroma of the saint's prayers. That's a wonderful picture, isn't it? And it's just kind of an encompassing thing. And the smoke is something you can see, but you can feel it, and you can breathe it.

(Isaiah 6:6) “Then one of the seraphim flew to me with a burning coal in his hand...”

And he touched me, and he said, “Now, I want you to give this message. Go tell this people that they're going to hear stuff.” But isn't it wonderful how this picture begins to reveal the holiness of God? And when you see the smoke that's coming up, it says the smoke from what? Well, I'm glad it doesn't say it this way: The smoke from the anger of God. It doesn't say that, does it? The smoke

from the majesty and the splendor. When it talks about “*doxa*” in the Scripture, it's talking about splendor and magnificence and the weight of who He is and the brightness of His glory. It is bringing this great smoke that's coming out of the temple.

And it says,

“... with smoke from the glory of God and from His power...”

Now, the word “power,” “*dynamis*” that's used is where we get the word “dynamite,” by the way, in English. But it can be used to really express great strength, there's no doubt about it. But where we lose the understanding is it doesn't stop with just great kind of power, strength that we oftentimes think of, but it makes reference to the excellence of somebody's nature. It makes reference to the great power of their invincible, matchless glory. So, it's making a point of, I've never seen such strength of character. If you've ever been with a person that you really sensed that there was a strong sense of righteousness, you could almost feel yourself in the smoke, if I could put it this way, of “I'm in the presence of

somebody with integrity.” You could almost feel the presence of that. And this is what Scripture is wanting us to know, that what we're feeling is not anger, but the magnificence of His character that's beginning to move the heavens and the power and everything is beginning to shake within the glory of God.

And it says, and I like the way that it ends,

“... and no one was able to...”

No one had the power. It actually uses the word “*dynamis*” in a sense, so nobody could, with their own power, enter in, nor did they have the character to enter into this.

Now, the picture is this, that, and I have to admit that I'm at loss for words myself, because of the fact that, I mean, who could explain what God's going through? But the picture is of one going through a very deep, emotional moment. And it's kind of the picture of, if we go back to Job, and you remember his friends, and they all started wanting to make a comment. And in some way, they were trying to enter into his life. They were trying to enter into his moment. And God says, “You know, you were better

off just not saying anything. Because had you not said anything and just admitted it to Me..." I mean, there are certain moments that you're going through suffering, and those around you... I mean, I've had moments of great sorrow, and I'm watching people around me, and it's surreal, because they're laughing over here, they're telling jokes over there, and it's all you can do to not feel bitterness. But God in His grace is just saying, "You'll never be able to understand the depth of love that I have." I mean, Jesus begins to explain to us in John 17, "My Dad really loves Me, and I really love Him. And the day is coming when you'll begin to know Our love, and the love that He has for you. But this is a moment in which the heavens are being stirred and we're just stepping back and look, nobody can get this." Now, the end result is that nobody's going to be able to enter till what? Till the affliction's done. There's a pain that one is going through. And it's a pain that none of us can really understand. And the day is going to come when it's going to be all done, and there's going to be the fellowship, but there's a lot of pain going on.

There's a passage that is strange to me, but if you turn with me to Colossians 1, and we'll end with this text, in which Paul makes reference to the church. But the way that he references the church is he parallels it to the body of Christ. Well, can we put it another way? The skin of Christ. We'll put it another way. The tabernacle of Christ. And that's what's on the heart of God. His Son is suffering blows. If you were watching your son suffer blows and somebody wanted to talk to you about a football game, could you talk to them? Your mind couldn't go anywhere else. They can't relate to you. They can't come into this conversation. It's not something for them to understand. So, Paul writes this in Colossians 1,

(Colossians 1:17) “He is before all things, and in Him all things hold together.

(Colossians 1:18) He is also head of the body, the church; and He is the beginning, the firstborn from the dead, so that He Himself will come to have first place in everything.

(Colossians 1:19) For it was the Father’s good pleasure for all the fullness to dwell in Him,

(Colossians 1:20) and through Him to reconcile all things to Himself, having made peace through the blood of His cross; through Him, I say, whether things on earth or things in heaven.

(Colossians 1:21) And although you were formerly alienated and hostile in mind, engaged in evil deeds,

(Colossians 1:22) yet He has now reconciled you in His fleshly body through death...”

Through His blows, by His stripes, we are healed.

Now, here's one of the most bizarre texts you'll ever read. Because I've talked to people about this and they go, “Wait a minute, I thought the work was finished on the cross.” And Jesus is very clear in John 19:30, it is finished. No doubt about that. He's dying on the cross. It's done. But now, you're reading Revelation, it's like, why are we rehashing this? And it's interesting that when you read the beginning of Revelation, if you remember reading Chapter 1, you'll read, the day is coming when Christ will come, and every eye will see Him, the One who they pierced. That's what it says in Chapter 1.

Hebrews writes an interesting phrase in which he makes a statement in Chapter 6, don't go on sinning willfully, because when you do, you crucify Christ again. That's an interesting phrase.

Paul will say something in this passage in Colossians 1:24, “Now I rejoice in my sufferings for your sake, and in my flesh I do my share on behalf of His body, which is the church, in filling up what is lacking in Christ’s afflictions.”

When you read in John and you read that passage in which Jesus declares, “It is finished,” you need to understand the Greek word or the Greek character that's involved in this, in which He puts it in what is called the perfect tense. Now, the perfect tense, in taking the word “finished,” refers to a completed action, it is finished, with a resulting state of being. So, what Christ did, done. But there's a resulting state of being. In other words, there's a consummation of this. And Christ suffered on the cross as the head. But every believer that suffers is part of His body, and we're finishing up the suffering. The passage makes reference to the fact that God is so focused on getting this complete. He's tired of seeing His children

suffer. He's tired of seeing them taken advantage of. And this is where His focus is. And to me, the passage brings a tremendous amount of comfort because it shows my God focused on me and His love for His children, His body, the church. And He says, "We're going to finish this thing. It's going to get done." And you can see an interesting picture. I'm kind of making fun here, but an angel might come, "I have a question." He goes, "Stay out. I have something I'm focused on." And so, remember that as you think about God's love for you.

Closing Prayer:

Father, we give You thanks for these wonderful passages that reveal to us the heart of God and places us literally into Your presence. With our heads bowed and our eyes closed, we think about Your love for us, and sadly to say, we think little about our love for You. But today we're going to reflect on that because a God that loves us so much, how could I not love You back? Why would I be afraid to talk about You? Why would I not share Your love

with other people? Allow the Spirit of God to speak to your heart.