

# (Through the Bible) Numbers 21-28

by Chuck Smith

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*Chuck Smith's sermon explores the journey of the Israelites in the wilderness, their complaints against God, and the foreshadowing of Christ's salvation through the brass serpent.*

**Duration:** 1:29:34

**Scripture:** Genesis 12:2, Numbers 23:19, Numbers 23:23-24, Malachi 3:6, Matthew 6:33

**Topics:** "God's Providence", "Israel's History"

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## Description

In this sermon, the speaker uses a football game as an analogy to explain how God sees our lives. He emphasizes that God's purposes remain steadfast and sure, even though it may appear that He changes His plans. The speaker also mentions the book of the wars of the Lord, which is a missing book in the Bible that describes the wars God fought. The sermon concludes with a reference to a well called Bear, where the Lord provided water for the Israelites.

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## Transcript

Let's turn in our Bibles to Numbers chapter 21. Now, the children of Israel have been in the wilderness for about 39 years, and they are now beginning to make their move towards the Promised Land. We're coming down to the end of this long sojourn in the wilderness.

Miriam is dead, Aaron is dead, and most of those who came out of Egypt who were 20 years old at the time they left Egypt are now dead. And as they are moving now towards the land, they have, you remember, circumvented Edom. Now, they're coming up on the eastern side of the land itself, not coming directly through the southern part of the land of Israel, up through Hebron and that area, but they're going clear around.

In fact, they went around Hebron. I mean, they went around Edom and are circling in and coming in above, actually, the area of Galilee, the Golan Heights area, up in there. They made a big circle around and they're going to come in to the land from the eastern part, from about the Dead Sea north, approximately.

In fact, when they make their first initial thrust into the land, it will be at Jericho, which is just north of the Dead Sea region. But they've encircled Edom and now are coming towards the land and they are dealing then with the Moabites and the Amorites who lived up in that northern area. The southern part was Edom, north of Edom was Moab, north of Moab were the Amorites.

And so, they are circled clear around and coming in from another direction. It must have been quite a journey with that many people, well over a million and a half people. It surely was an interesting experience.

And when King Arad, the Canaanite which dwells in the south, heard that Israel came by the way of the spies, then he fought against Israel and took some of them prisoners. And Israel vowed a vow unto the Lord and said, if you will indeed deliver this people into our hand, then I will utterly destroy their cities. So, the Lord hearkened to the voice of Israel and delivered up the Canaanites and they utterly destroyed them and their cities and they called the name of the place Hormah.

And they journeyed from Mount Hor by way of the Red Sea to compass or to circle the land of Edom and the soul of the people were very discouraged because of the way. It was a hard route. It was a long way around rather than coming directly into the land and it was discouraging for them because of that long route encircling around Edom.

So, they were smitten by these Canaanites and they said, God, you just help us and we'll totally wipe them out. And God helped them and they wiped them out. And now they made this big compass circling around Edom, not passing through Edom, coming up the rift valley by the Dead Sea, but passing clear around that thing.

Now the people spake against God and against Moses and said, why have you brought us out of Egypt to die in the wilderness? For there is no bread, neither is there water, and our soul loatheth this light bread. Now again, they are complaining against God. Why have you brought us out of Egypt to die in the wilderness? We have no bread.

We have no water. And we're sick of this manna, this light bread. Now as we pointed out this morning, in every circumstance of life there are things that you can complain about.

I'm sure that if you want to, you can find something to gripe about in any situation that you face. So also, in every situation that you face, you can find something to be thankful for. And there are people who in every situation are looking for that for which they can gripe.

And there are those people that in every situation, they are looking for those things for which they can give thanks. In other words, there are people that are always looking on the good side, and there are people that are always looking on the drab side of life. People who are chronically complaining, people who are chronically giving thanks.

It becomes a pattern of a person's life. Now it is God's will that your pattern be that of thanksgiving. In everything give thanks, for this is the will of God concerning you in Christ Jesus.

And God wants you to live a thankful life. God wants you to appreciate what He has done for you. Now, it is true that manna became no doubt a very monotonous thing.

It wasn't very flavorful. It was sort of a mild, bland food. But yet it was extremely nutritious.

All that they needed to sustain them was in it, as far as vitamins, minerals, and so forth. It was an excellent food. It was angels' food according to Psalm 72 or so.

He fed them with angels' food. And yet, the people chose to complain instead of to give thanks. Oh God, You're so good.

You haven't failed. The manna is there every morning. Lord, You've supplied us all the way.

You've sustained us, Lord. You've been so good to us. No.

Oh, this stuff. I'm sick of it. Manna, manna.

And people are that way. And God, in judgment because of their complaining, sent fiery serpents among them. They were all so deadly.

And as they would bite the people, the people would go into convulsions and die. And they realized that it was a judgment of God because of their complaining. They came to Moses and they said, we have sinned in that we have spoken against God and against You.

There was a confession of their sin. That's always important. The Bible said, if you seek to cover your sin, you're not going to prosper.

But whoso confesseth his sin shall be forgiven. You try to hide your guilt. You try to deny your guilt.

God can't do anything for you. But if we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us of our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness. Now, there are sometimes when people confess sins, but it isn't really a true confession of their heart.

Pharaoh said, I sinned against the Lord. But he went back and did the very same thing over again. Here the people said, we have sinned.

They recognized that their complaining was a sin. That God's judgment had come upon them. Moses, pray for us.

Ask God to help us. And so Moses prayed. And instead of God just ridding the snakes out of the camp, God said to Moses, now make a brass serpent.

Put it on a pole and set it up in the middle of the camp. And it shall come to pass, whenever a man is bitten by a snake as he is dying, if he will look at this brass snake on the pole, he'll be healed. So God let there be something that the people could do.

In other words, you can live or die. It's your choice. Living is very simple.

All you have to do is look at this snake, this brass serpent on this pole, and you'll be healed. You'll live. Dying is very simple too.

All you have to do is not look, and you're going to die. Someone said, what must I do to be lost? Nothing. Just keep living like you are.

Doing the things you do. And you'll be lost. What must I do to be saved? All you have to do is look at Jesus Christ in faith, in trust, believing in Him.

Salvation is very simple. And so, Moses made this brass serpent, put it on the pole, and it came to pass that as the people were bitten by these snakes, if they would look upon this brass serpent, they would be

healed. They would live.

And thus, God gave an interesting foreshadowing of the cross of Jesus Christ. The serpent is always a symbol for sin, because Satan came in the form of a serpent in the Garden of Eden. Brass is always a symbol of judgment.

They confessed we have sinned. The brass serpent on the pole was a symbol that your sin has been judged. Now, if you'll just look at the brass serpent, the place where your sin was judged, you'll be healed.

Later on in Hezekiah's day, the people had made this brass serpent. They kept it. It was an interesting artifact.

And they kept it as they journeyed into the land and as the judges and kings through all this period, they kept this brass serpent. And at the time that Hezekiah was king over Judah, the people were worshiping this brass serpent. They had made an idol out of it.

They were covering and offering prayers before it, worshiping the brass serpent. What does it indicate when a person begins to worship an idol? Number one, it indicates that he has lost his consciousness of God's living presence. I'm no longer conscious that God is present with me.

Thus, I am looking for something that will remind me of the presence of God. And so I get some kind of a little reminder, a memento, some kind of an image or whatever that can remind me of God's presence. But the fact that I need an object shows that I've lost the consciousness of the presence of God.

Number two, it indicates that somehow deep inside, I am longing for that which I have lost. I'm longing for a meaningful relationship with God. I'm longing for a meaningful consciousness of God.

And thus, I am setting up reminders, things that can bring my attention and my mind to the fact of God's presence. Thus, it is always a sign of spiritual deterioration or degradation. And at the time that Hezekiah became king, he took this brass serpent that Moses had made and he broke the thing in pieces because the people were bowing down, worshiping and praying before it and all.

And he broke the thing in pieces and he said, Nehushtan! Dummies! It's not a god. The Nehushtan means a thing of brass. It's not a god.

All it is is a piece of brass. You know, it's tragic when people begin to worship a building or begin to worship objects. We had a church one time in which we were remodeling the platform and we decided to remodel the pulpit.

I was going to build a new pulpit. And this lady came up and said, Brother Smith, oh, you can't replace that pulpit. Oh, brother so-and-so made this and oh, there have been so many anointed sermons.

Oh, it would be terrible if you didn't make that pulpit. Oh, you know, on and on. And oh, I knew that there was going to be a church split because we wanted to replace the pulpit.

Churches split over the dumbest things because people are so dumb. They get attached to things because they've lost the consciousness of God's vital presence in their life. Oh, I remember the sermon that was preached.

Oh, it was so powerful. And the pastor held on to that pulpit and his knuckles were white and the anointing of God was on him. Oh, don't get rid of the pulpit.

Well, the pulpit was ugly. And we were modernizing the whole... Well, it was the ugliest platform you ever saw. Just old-fashioned ugly broken down chairs.

And the whole thing was just ugly. So we wanted to modernize the whole thing. Got some nice modern chairs.

And so, I built a new pulpit, but I built it right around the old one. Used the old one as a base and I just put new wood around it and modernized it and all. New design to it.

And it matched the rest of the platform then. And this woman came to church and just about had apoplexy when she saw the new pulpit. She came storming up to me, eyes flashing.

She said, I told you that that pulpit couldn't go. I said, wait a minute, wait a minute. Come here.

Come here. I want to show you something. And I took her around and I showed her behind the pulpit.

Here's the old ugly pulpit. You know, everything was there. It's still the same pulpit.

I just built around it. And it sufficed her. Oh, praise the Lord.

We've still got our pulpit. Nahushtan! Take an axe to it. It's just a thing of wood.

There's nothing holy about it. It's just an old broken down piece of furniture. People get attached to the... Oh, that's where I accepted Jesus.

Oh, you can't do anything to that church, you know. It was interesting when we were in the little sanctuary a block away. And we had grown to the place where we were going to have to move.

And so, the only thing we could do is put up a big old circus tent. And so that's what we did. Put up the circus tent out here.

And people were going around saying, oh, I hope we don't lose this neat, warm feeling when we move into a tent. Oh, that tent. I don't know.

I just hope we don't lose this beautiful, beautiful feeling that we have when we move into a tent. After two years in the tent, and this church building here was completed, they're saying, oh, I hope we don't lose this beautiful, warm feeling in the tent when we move into a building. As though it were a building or a tent.

The beautiful, warm feeling comes from the love of Jesus Christ working in our hearts and in our lives. And we could be meeting out on the grass or down at the beach. Anywhere.

And that neat, beautiful, warm feeling would be there because the beautiful, neat, warm feeling isn't in the building. It isn't in furniture. It's in the hearts of God's people.

And it's sad when people lose that consciousness of God or begin to equate the presence of God to a place, to a building, to an artifact, to a piece of furniture, or to a brass serpent or something else. Hezekiah wisely broke that thing in pieces and said, no, it's just a thing of brass. It's not a God.

Now, if you go to the St. Ambrose Cathedral in Milan, Italy, you can see the glued together pieces of brass and the people going up and offering their prayers and kissing the glass cover and so forth again. Because according to their story, someone picked up the pieces and now they've got it on display and they're using it again. Nehushtan.

But more important, in the New Testament, Jesus tells us the true significance for this brass serpent lifted on a pole. For when Nicodemus came to Him at night and sought the way of salvation, Jesus said, Nicodemus, there's only one way, man. You've got to be born again.

Nicodemus said, born again? What do you mean? I'm an old man. I can't go back to my mother's womb and be born a second time. What do you mean born again? Jesus said, Nicodemus, there are two births.

One physical, one spiritual. And that which is born of the flesh is flesh. That which is born of the Spirit is spirit.

Don't be uptight because I tell you you've got to be born again. But how can these things be? And Jesus, in answer to the question of how can a man be born again, how can these things be, answered Nicodemus and said, For as Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, so must the Son of Man be lifted up that whosoever believeth in Him should not perish, but have eternal life. That's how a person is born again.

By looking to the Lord Jesus Christ as He was lifted up on His cross and see that there God has judged my sins. And Jesus bore the judgment of God for my sins. As the brass serpent was the symbol of sin being judged, it was looking forward to God judging man's sins upon the cross.

And God laid upon Him the iniquities of us all. And He bore the sins of the world. And there God judged the sins of the world on the cross of Jesus Christ.

And now you who are dying because of this deadly affliction of sin, all you have to do to live is to look to the cross of Jesus Christ and see that God has judged your sin and believe in Him. So the brass serpent on the pole in the wilderness was looking forward to the judgment of sin upon the cross when Jesus would be lifted up there upon the cross and bear once and for all God's judgment for man's iniquities. And so, the children of Israel set forward and pitched at Obad.

And then they were now starting this journey on around, and it tells of various places where they were camping. Verse 14, and it said, Wherefore, it is said in the book of the wars of the Lord. Now, that's an interesting book.

I've never read it. And I suppose it's been lost and we probably won't find it. But there's a missing book.

The book of the wars of the Lord. But did you know that the Lord had wars? And what He did at the Red Sea, the brooks of Arnon and so forth. And so they came on around and they went to Beer.

Now, the word Beer means well. B-E-E-R. It's well.

Beersheba is a well. They just came to Beer, the well. That is the well that the Lord spoke to Moses about.

And He said, Gather the people together and I will give them water. Then Israel sang this song, Spring up, oh well, within my soul. No, they didn't sing that part.

So, here's where you got the lyric for that song. Spring up, oh well. And they encouraged the people to sing unto it.

Sing unto that well. And the princes dug a well. And the nobles of the people digged it by the direction of the lawgiver with their shovels.

And from the wilderness, they went to Matanah. And then on to the top of Mount Pisgah, from which they were able to look over the land that God had promised as they were now in the country of Moab. Now, Israel sent messengers to the king of the Amorites asking for permission to pass through his land as they did to Edom.

The king of Edom refused. He came down to meet them with his army, but because the Edomites were actually relatives to them, they just went away peaceably and went all the way around Edom. But they weren't really related to the Amorites, and so when the king Sihon of the Amorites came out with his army, Israel smote him with the edge of the sword and possessed the land from Arnon to Jabok, even unto the children of Ammon, for the border of the children of Ammon was strong.

So they took over the area that was being possessed by the Amorites. Now, this is from the area east of the Sea of Galilee, north of Moab. And Jabok comes into the Jordan just south from Galilee.

And so that area of the present-day Golan Heights, but not up as far as Syria, on the eastern side of the Sea of Galilee was the area where the Amorites dwelt. That is the land that the children of Israel conquered. And later, part of the tribes settled in that land.

It's great cattle country. And the Reubenites, the tribe of Reuben, were great cattlemen and also were the tribe of Gad. And so half of the tribe of Gad and the tribe of Reuben settled and remained permanently.

Well, as permanent as the Israelites remained, they remained though on that eastern side of the Jordan River and settled that area up in there. Israel took all the cities and dwelt in all the cities of the Amorites. In some of the major cities, Hezbon, which was one of the major cities.

It was actually the capital city of the area of the Amorites. And so they declared their victory and so forth in sort of a song or proverbs. And so then they turned and they went by the way of Bashan.

And the king of Bashan came out to meet them with all of his people. And the Lord said to Moses, Fear him not for I have delivered him into your hand and all of his people and his land. And you'll do to him just like you did to Sion the king of the Amorites.

And so they smote him and his sons and the people and there was none left alive. And they possessed his land. So they're beginning to possess that land there on the northern end of Israel and on the eastern banks of the Sea of Galilee and the Jordan River.

And so the children of Israel set forward and pitched in the plains of Moab, moving now south from this position, on this side of the Jordan River or on the eastern side of the Jordan River by the city of Jericho. And Balak, the son of Zippor, saw that Israel, all that he had done to the Amorites, and Moab was very afraid of the people because they were many. And Moab was distressed because of the children of Israel.

And Moab said to the elders of Midian, Now shall this company lick up all that are round about us as the ox licks up the grass of the field. And Balak, the son of Zippor, was the king of the Moabites at that time.

And so he sent messengers unto Balaam, the son of Beor, to Pethor, which is by the river of the land of the children of his people, to call him, saying, Behold, there is a people that has come out from Egypt.

Behold, they cover the face of the earth. They abide over against me. Come now, therefore, I pray thee.

Curse me, this people, for they are too mighty for me. Peradventure I shall prevail that we may smite them and that we may drive them out of the land. For I know that whom you bless is blessed and whom you curse is cursed.

And so the elders of Moab, with the elders of Midian, departed with the rewards of divination in their hands. And they came to Balaam and spake to him the words of Balak. And he said unto them, Stay here tonight, and I will bring you word again.

And the Lord shall speak unto me. And the princes of Moab stayed with Balaam. And God came to Balaam and said, Who are these men that are with you? And Balaam said unto God, Balak, the son of Zippor, the king of Moab, has sent them unto me, saying, Behold, there is a people that has come out of Egypt which covers the face of the earth.

Come and curse me, them, that I might be able to overcome them and drive them out. And God said unto Balaam, Listen, thou shalt not go with them. Thou shalt not curse the people for they are blessed.

So that's God's direct command. Now, this guy Balaam, interesting character. It would definitely appear that he was a prophet of God, though he was not from Israel.

That God did indeed speak to him. In fact, some of the most remarkable prophecies of the Old Testament came out of the mouth of Balaam. What was his background? How is it that he knew God and was able to relate to God in such a special way? I don't know.

It would seem that he was used to creating enchantments or curses, and that's actually what the king wanted him to do is to create some kind of a curse against these people. Now, he had a reputation for power in putting curses on people. And so the king sent the rewards of divination.

In other words, when you go to a prophet to seek advice from God, you'd always take some kind of a gift for the prophet. That was the custom of the day. Even in Israel, that was a custom.

Going to the prophet, you'd take a gift for the prophet and ask him to seek the Lord for you. But it was always customary to take a gift for the prophet. And so the king sent these messengers with a gift, with a command that he would put a curse on these people that had come out of Egypt and were now bordering his land.

For I know whomever you curse is cursed, whoever you bless is blessed. So Balaam sought the Lord and the Lord said to him, don't go to the king and don't curse these people. God's direct command to Balaam.

And so Balaam rose up in the morning and he said to the princes of Balak, you better go home, for the Lord refuses to give me permission to come with you. So the princes of Moab, they went back to Balak and they said he won't come. He said the Lord won't let him come.

And so Balak the king sent back more honorable princes, men of greater stature as far as the government was concerned. And the king said, don't let anything keep you from coming, for I will promote you to great honor and I'll give you whatever you want. So come and curse these people.

So now more important princes, offers of you write the check or you name the price. I'll do wonderful things for you. I'll promote you to great honor and I'll do anything you ask.

But don't let anything keep you from coming. So Balaam answered the servants of Balak and said, if Balak would give me his house full of silver and gold, I cannot go beyond the Word of God to do any less or to do any more. So he said, wait tonight, and I'll find out what the Lord will say unto me.

Now I can imagine that this night, Balaam was really laying it upon the Lord. Lord, please. Because he was thinking about these great rewards that had been offered to him by the king.

All this loot. Man, he was really drooling. Lord, you know, I'll be good.

I promise. But let me go, Lord. Just let me go.

Please, Lord, let me go. I assume that this was the case because the Lord gave him permission to go, but yet when he went, it wasn't God's will for him to go. And I do believe that it is possible for us to enter into a gray area of what is termed the permissive will of God.

Yes, God will permit you to do it, but He doesn't want you to do it. And I believe that a person can zero in right in the heart of God and the direct will of God for his life. You can be right on dead center with God's will for your life.

And I think that there is a gray area that you can get over into which God will permit you to do it. But it isn't really His direct will. He isn't really pleased with it.

But you've insisted, you're pressuring, you're forcing, you're whining, you're crazy. Ah, go on then, you know. Oftentimes your kids, you know, they've laid it on you like that.

And you say, okay, go ahead and go, but you really don't want them to. You're so tired of hearing them gripe and whine and complain. Get out of here, go ahead, go on.

Tired of hearing you complain. And so, I assume that this was the case because God said, all right, go. And God said to Balaam at night, if the men come to call thee, rise up and go with them.

But the word which I shall say unto thee, that shalt thou do. So Balaam rose up early in the morning, saddled his donkey, and went with the princes of Moab. And God's anger was kindled because he went.

God was angry with him for going. Now, God expressed His direct will in the beginning. Don't go with them.

Don't curse these people. That was God's direct will for His life. But he was going off into an area God permitted him to go, but God was angry with him for going.

Leaving the place of the center of God's will. I think that it is possible for a person to do that. But out of the center of God's will, you can run into all kinds of problems.

All kinds of adversities. And before he had gone very long, very far down the road, an angel of the Lord stood in the path with a drawn sword, ready to take off his head. But fortunately, his donkey saw the angel, though he didn't.

And so the donkey turned off the path. And Balaam took his stick and hit the donkey and got it back on the path. And they were going through a vineyard, and in those vineyards they have rock walls along the pathway to keep people from going over and picking grapes.

And so he's going between these rock walls past these vineyards, and the angel of the Lord stood in the path again. Balaam didn't see him, but the donkey did. And the donkey sort of tried to edge over against the wall and got Balaam's leg pinned up against the rock.

And he beat that poor little donkey again. And so again, he got him going down the road, and the third time the angel of the Lord stood in the path, but this time there was nowhere for the donkey to go. So he just sat down.

And Balaam began to beat him again. And God opened the mouth of the donkey. Now to me, it is an interesting thing.

The great pride that some people have because God has spoken through them. God spoke through me. You know, like you're something super special because God spoke through you.

It is true, God still speaks through donkeys today. And that should deflate anybody who thinks there's something special and something really glorious. People ought to bow to them because God speaks through them.

God opened the mouth of the donkey, and the donkey turned to Balaam and said, Hey man, do you think it's right beating me these three times? Look, have I ever done anything like this to you before? Haven't I always been a good little donkey? Balaam said, you bet your life I'm doing right. If I had a club, I'd kill you, you rotten beast. Boy, talk about being mad.

That's really being mad when a donkey talks to you and you talk back to him. Instead of being just dumbfounded, you know, if a donkey talked to me, I just, you know, huh? He was mad. He wished he could kill that donkey at this point.

It's amazing how out of tune and out of sorts we get when we're out of God's will. You know, we're wanting to do our own thing and God puts a block in the way and boy, we become angry. We become upset because God is blocking this which I've got in my mind to do.

You get out of the will of God and you can really get out of sorts in every area of your life. Your whole life just gets out of sorts completely. And so, at this point, God opened the eyes of this prophet and he saw the angel of God standing there with a sword.

And the angel spoke to Balaam and said, You better be thankful for that dumb little donkey you've got. Because had he not turned aside, I would have taken off your head. Balaam said, Oh, I'll go right home.

I'll turn around and go right back home. And the angel said, No, you've come this far. You know, it's in your heart to go.

You go ahead and go, but you just make sure that you don't say any more than what God tells you to say. And so, Balaam went on to the king. And so, the king brought Balak up into a high mountain where he might overlook all of Israel camped down there in the valley.

They came to Kirjath-Huzoth, the city of the streets, literally. And so, Balaam said to the king, Build me seven altars here and I'll offer sacrifices unto God. So, they built seven altars and he offered seven oxen and seven rams.

And Balaam said to the king, Now you stand here and I'm going to go up and maybe God will speak to me. And whatever God shows me, I will tell you. And so, he went to a high place and God met Balaam.

And Balaam said to him, I've prepared seven altars and I've offered upon every altar a bullock and a ram. And the Lord put a word in Balaam's mouth and said, Return to Balak and tell him this. And so, he returned to him and he was standing by the burnt sacrifice with all of the princes of Moab.

And so, Balaam took up this parable and he said, Balak, the king of Moab, hath brought me from Aram out of the mountains of the east saying, Come, curse me Jacob and come, defy Israel. How shall I curse whom God hath not cursed? Or how shall I defy whom the Lord hath not defied? For from the top of the rocks I see him and from the hills I behold him and, lo, the people shall dwell alone and shall not be reckoned among the nations. And who can count the dust of Jacob and the number of the fourth part of Israel? Let me die the death of the righteous and let my last end be like his.

And the king said, Hey, why have you done this unto me? I've brought you to curse my enemies, not to bless them. And Balaam answered and said, I must take heed to speak that which the Lord has put in my mouth. Now, this one part of this prophecy is interesting.

He said, May I die the death of the righteous and let my last end be like his. It's an interesting thing how many people want to die the death of the righteous, but they don't want to live the life of the righteous. They think of Christianity as something that is good to die by.

Well, I wouldn't want to die any other way, but it's something that's great to live by. And yet there are people that aren't so interested in living a life of righteousness, only dying. Let my last end be as his.

I want to die the death of the righteous. If you want to die the death of the righteous, then you better live the life of the righteous. So, Balak said, He said, come and I'll show you another place.

Because you didn't see all of them here. There's another part of them. Maybe you can curse this part over here.

And so he took them to the top of Mount Pisgah. And there again they built seven altars. And they offered seven rams and seven bullocks, one on each altar.

And so Balaam went to meet the Lord. And the Lord met Balaam and put a word in his mouth and said, Go again to Balak and tell him this. And so he said, Rise up, Balak, and hear.

Hearken unto me, thou son of Zippor. God is not a man that he should lie, neither the son of man that he should repent. Hath he said, and shall he not do it? Or hath he spoken, and shall he not make it good? Now this is a very interesting Scripture, but it is even more interesting in its context.

What is the context? The context is that God has spoken His blessing upon the nation Israel. Now He's trying to get God to turn and to curse the people that God has blessed. And God is not a man that He should lie nor the son of man that He should repent or should change.

Hath He not spoken, and shall He not do it? The immutability of God's Word. He doesn't change. He's not a man.

If God has declared His blessing, His blessing shall come. That's the context. But it is a very important Scripture that declares to us the nature and the character of God.

Because there are some passages of Scripture in the Old Testament that from the passage you might infer that God changed His mind in a situation. But God is not a man that He should lie nor the son of man that He should change. God's purposes remain steadfast and sure.

Now, there are times when it appeared that God changed. God said to Jonah, go down and warn Nineveh. I'm going to destroy the place in 40 days.

And Jonah went down and preached to the Ninevites and they repented in dust and ashes. And God forestalled the judgment. Had they not repented, they would have been destroyed in 40 days.

Because they repented, God gave them an extension of time. But God knew all along He was going to give them the extension of time. We have extreme difficulty in thinking as God thinks.

For a little while this afternoon, I watched SC playing Washington. I wasn't really excited about it. In fact, I was so unexcited I finally turned the thing off because I knew what the score was.

The final score that is. I knew who was going to win. I looked at that game today entirely different from what I would have looked at it yesterday.

Rather exciting game yesterday. But today it didn't have nearly the excitement because it was all a replay. So, I know the score.

I know what's going to happen. I know what's going to be the result. Oh, they just got penalized five yards.

Oh, no. Oh, that's alright. White's going to, you know, bust through in the next play.

So, you don't get all shook and upset because of the penalty. You know that Garcia is going to catch the pass in the end zone. And it's a thing where you're watching it, but it's a funny thing because you're not really getting too much into it because you know exactly what the result is going to be.

Now, this is the way that God looks at our lives. In Psalms it says we spend our lives like a tale that has been told or a story that's already told. We spend our lives like a rerun.

God, knowing the end from the beginning, looks at us knowing what the effect and the result of every step I take is going to be. Every move, every decision. God already knows the end result of it.

And there are times when it looks from my angle, Oh, the Lord's changed on this. Alright. No, He already had that in mind.

And He knew that from the beginning. My attitude towards it has changed. My perspective has changed.

But God remains the same. God is not a man that He should lie, nor the Son of Man that He should repent. So, those scriptures said, and it repented God that He created man.

It is only looking at God from a human standpoint and trying to define the actions of God with human language, which is impossible to do. Because God dwells in a dimension that is so totally outside of our time zone and our space dimension that we don't even have words to describe the activities of God. Thus, we have to use words that we have, but they are very limited and do not truly describe the full actions of God.

If He is God, He cannot change. Hath I not spoken, and shall I not make it good? The old I have received a commandment to bless, and He has blessed, and I cannot reverse it. For He has not beheld iniquity in Jacob.

Oh, help us! What do you mean? He just sent the fiery serpents among them two weeks ago, or two months ago, whatever the case was, because they're complaining, Hey, isn't that a neat God? He hath not beheld iniquity in Jacob. It isn't because there wasn't iniquity in Jacob, but it's because God chose not to see it. That is what David was talking about when he said, Oh, how happy is the man to whom the Lord imputeth not iniquity.

Now, we hear told of Santa Claus that he's making out a list and checking it twice and going to find out who's naughty and nice. And a lot of people picture God that way, making out His list. But God has no list for me of evil.

Oh, how happy is the man to whom the Lord doesn't impute iniquity. That account was destroyed. God said that He did not see any iniquity in Jacob.

That to me is glorious. That's grace. That is God's grace because it was there.

But God chose not to see it even as He has chosen not to see the iniquity of those who are believing and trusting in His Son, Jesus Christ. But we'll leave that to Romans 2 to deal with as we move along and get there later. But I think that's a fabulous Scripture.

Neither is there any divination against Israel. According to this time, it shall be said of Jacob and Israel, what God hath wrought." When you see what God has wrought, people are going to say, what God hath wrought. As God brings the people in the land, establishes the nation, they're going to say, oh, look what God has wrought.

I love that. I love that whole concept. Look what God has wrought.

That's the neat thing about Calvary Chapel is that men can't put a finger on the success of this place. God's chosen to use a nobody and a bunch of nobodies to do a beautiful work. And people come around, the scholars and the geniuses all come around and try to analyze it and figure out what's happening and why it's happening and classify it and codify it and everything else.

And they walk away scratching their heads. They can't figure it out. Preachers go away and say, man, I can preach a better sermon than that.

I'm much better looking than he is. Why don't I have success? Isn't that neat? They just can't figure it out. You can only say what God hath wrought.

Choosing again the foolish things of the world to confound the wise. Just to put them in total consternation and confusing them. Doing a work that only He can receive praise and credit and glory for.

And I absolutely love it. What God hath wrought. Interesting verse there.

The prophet said there's no divination, no enchantment that can be used against them. And I want you to know this, that as a child of God, there is no charm, enchantment, divination, or hex or anything else that people can put on you that will have any effect. Now, there are a lot of times people get worried because there are people with psychic powers, great psychic powers.

They can bend nails and kind of stuff like this with their psychic powers. And they can put curses and hexes on people. And sometimes they go, oh my, you know, I've been praying and maybe they're going to put a hex on me.

No. The Scriptures declares Isaiah 51 No weapon that is formed against thee... 54. Thank you.

I was close. No weapon that is formed against thee shall prosper. And every mouth that is raised up against thee thou shalt condemn.

For this is the heritage of the age of the children of the Lord. What is the heritage? No weapon formed against you can prosper. There is no divination, no enchantment, no hex that can be put on you that will have any effect at all.

Because you're God's child. And because God has chosen to bless you as His child, it can't be reversed. There's no curse or hex that anyone can put on you.

And the prophet recognized it. There's nothing I knew. There's no divination against Israel.

Behold, the people shall rise up as a great lion and lift himself up as a young lion and shall not lie down till he eats of the prey and drinks the blood of the slain. And Balak said to Balaam, Look, if you can't curse them, then don't bless them. In other words, if you can't say something bad, don't say anything.

And so Balaam answered Balak and said, Didn't I tell you that all that the Lord speaks to me I must do? And so Balak said to Balaam, Now, come on, I'll bring you to another place. Maybe God at that point will curse them. So Balak brought him to the top of another mountain, Peor, that looks towards Jizmom.

And Balaam said to Balak, Build me seven alders. And they went through the same routine. So when Balaam saw that it pleased the Lord to bless Israel, he didn't even go up as the other times before the Lord to seek the face or to seek for enchantments.

But he just set his face towards the wilderness. And Balaam lifted up his eyes and he saw Israel abiding in their tents according to their tribes. And the Spirit of God came along.

He saw the camp, the people abiding there, the tabernacle in the middle, and the people around about it. And Balaam the son of Peor hath said, And the man whose eyes are open hath said, He hath said which heard the words of God, which saw the vision of the Almighty falling into a trance, but my eyes being open, how goodly are thy tents, O Jacob, and thy tabernacles, O Israel! As the valleys are they spread forth, as gardens by the riverside, as the trees of Linalos, which the Lord hath planted, and as the cedar trees beside the waters. He shall pour the water out of his buckets, and his seed shall be in many waters, and his king shall be higher than Agag, and his kingdom shall be exalted." Of course, the king and kingdom looking ahead in prophecy to Jesus Christ.

God brought him forth out of Egypt and he hath, as it were, the strength of a unicorn. And he shall eat up the nations, his enemies, and shall break their bones and pierce them through with the arrows. He couched and he lay down as a lion and as a great lion.

And who shall stir him up? Blessed is he that blesses thee and cursed is he that curses thee. And the king's anger was kindled and he clapped his hands together and he said unto Balaam, Look, I called you to curse my enemies and you've altogether blessed them these three times. Now you better flee to your own place, for I thought to promote thee to great honor, but lo, the Lord hath kept thee back from honor." I was going to make you a great man, but the Lord has kept you from that.

You know, there is an honor that it is well that you be kept from. The rewards of unrighteousness. I was going to promote you to great honor, but the Lord, ah, that's the honor you don't want, I'll tell you.

The honor that the Lord holds back. And Balaam said to Balak, I told your messengers that if you would give me your whole house full of silver and gold, I cannot go beyond the commandment of the Lord either to do good or bad of my own mind, but what the Lord has said I will speak. And now I'm going to my people and I will advertise thee what the people shall do.

And the people in their latter days. So I'm going to tell you one more thing. And so he prophesied once more concerning Jesus Christ.

And it's a beautiful prophecy concerning the Lord. Verse 16, He has said, which heard the words of God and knew the knowledge of the Most High. He saw the vision of the Almighty falling into a trance, but having his eyes opened.

I shall see Him, but not now. I shall behold Him, but not nigh. There shall come a star out of Jacob, and a scepter shall rise out of Israel, or a kingdom, and shall smite the corners of Moab and destroy all the children of Sheth.

And Edom shall be a possession. Seir also shall be a possession for his enemies. And Israel shall do valiantly, and out of Jacob shall come he that shall have dominion and shall destroy him that remaineth of the city.

And when he looked on Amalek, he took up his parable and said, Amalek was the first of the nations, but his latter end shall be that he shall perish forever. Amalek is always in the Scripture a type of the flesh. I don't have time to go into this tonight, but when we get to the book of Esther, we'll deal with Amalek, the type of the flesh.

But this is God's word against the flesh. It's going to perish forever. The flesh life is going to perish forever.

God's instructions to Saul concerning Amalek was what? Wipe it out utterly. That is God's continual commandment concerning Amalek, concerning your flesh. Wipe it out utterly.

If you don't destroy it, it can destroy you. Paul said, If we by the Spirit do mortify the deeds of the flesh, we shall live. The flesh life.

We're not to give place to the flesh or to the flesh life. Walk after the Spirit and you'll not fulfill the desires of your flesh. So, the parable against Amalek is a very important parable.

As God declares the end of the flesh life, it shall utterly perish forever. Then he looked on the Kenites and took out the parable and said, Strong is your dwelling place, and you have put thy nest in a rock. Nevertheless, the Kenites shall be wasted until Asher shall carry thee away captive.

And he took the parable and said, Alas, who shall live when God is doing this? And the ship shall come from the coast of Shittim and shall afflict Asher and shall afflict Eber and shall perish forever. And Balaam rose up and went and returned to his place and Balak also went his way. Now you think, Oh, goody, goody for you, Balaam.

Good man. No, unfortunately. Balaam said, I shall see, but not now.

I shall behold, but I do not believe that Balaam will share in the kingdom of God. Though he was a prophet of God indeed, but he allowed greed to master his heart. The king had offered all of these rewards.

Balaam sought God that he might go. And when God wouldn't curse him and the king said, Alright, that's too bad. You go home.

I called you to curse them and you blessed them. I was going to give you great honor. I can't.

Now, Balaam, greedy for the rewards that had been offered by the king, began to give to the king evil counsel. And in the 31st chapter of Numbers, we are told in verse 16, Behold, these caused the children of Israel through the counsel of Balaam to commit trespass against the Lord in the matter of Peor. We'll get to that in the next chapter here.

The thing that happened there at Peor. But what happened, happened as the result of the advice that Balaam had given to King Balak, because he was greedy for the rewards that the king was offering. So, in the book of Jude, in the New Testament, the book of Jude we are commanded, and the central message of the book of Jude is keep yourself in the love of God.

And we are given examples of three persons who failed to keep themselves in the love of God. Korah, Cain, and Balaam. And of Balaam it's said, because of his greed, his desire for the riches that the king was offering, that they have gone the way of Balaam, and it's referred to as the way of Balaam, who for reward for the greed that was there, the desire for the riches, prostituted himself to the king.

He was bought off. In Revelation 2, as the Lord deals with the church of Ephesus, no, I beg your pardon, it must be the church of Pergamos. God said to Pergamos that they had there those who held to the doctrine of Balaam.

Verse 14, chapter 2, I have a few things against thee, because thou hast there them that hold the doctrine of Balaam, who taught Balaam to cast a stumbling block before the children of Israel, to eat things sacrificed unto idols and to commit fornication. So, the doctrine of Balaam, idolatry and spiritual fornication that Balaam set the king Balaam up to do. Now, it doesn't tell us right in, immediately in our text that this is what happened, but by looking at other Scriptures, now we understand the next chapter and what is brought out in this next chapter.

In 2 Peter 2 and in verse 15, Peter also makes mention of Balaam and he's talking about the false prophets. There will be many of them. False teachers who privately will bring in damnable heresies, even denying the Lord.

And many will follow their pernicious ways by reason of whom the way of truth is evil spoken of. And through covetousness shall with feigned words or deceitful words make merchandise of you. Every religious system or every so-called prophet of God who seeks to make merchandise of you through deceitful words is a false prophet and you can tell them easily they are using these deceitful words to get you to support them.

And I believe that every computerized letter sent out by these men is guilty of feigned words. Dear Charles, I have a friend that was here this week, an editor of Christianity Today, and he said they get the same computerized letters. It says, Dear Mr. Today, I've been thinking about you this past week.

Is everything alright today? Now, please go out and borrow \$25 and send it to me because I'm desperate. Those are feigned words and the purpose is to make merchandise of you. The Bible classifies them as false prophets.

What is feigned words? It's saying something you don't really mean. Oh, all of you beautiful children, I love you. You don't even know me.

How can you love me? Feigned words. Fair speeches. Seeking to make merchandise out of people.

Now, among these false prophets, Peter warns us that actually they are much like Balaam. Verse 15, which have forsaken the right way and are gone astray following the way of Balaam, the son of Bosar, who loved the wages of unrighteousness. The guy loved the wealth.

False prophet. Taking the monies and using it for his own enrichment. Prostituting his ministry.

And so he advised the king this way. He said, look, Balaam, I can't go into a little spiritual trip and bring a curse. God won't allow me to do that.

But these people, their strength lies in the fact that they worship one God. And God honors them. And God has taken them as His people.

But the God that they worship is a very jealous God. And if they start worshiping other gods, then His wrath will come upon them. And He'll destroy them.

So here's what you've got to do. Take a lot of the beautiful young girls that are here. And send them down and let them flirt with the young guys.

And let them entice the young fellows into acts of fornication. And when they get them all involved in these kind of acts, then let the girls bring out their little gods and say, look, these are the gods that we worship. Do you want to see how we worship these gods? And their gods were worshiped in sex acts.

Many of the pagan religious systems, the actual sex act was a part of the worship of the goddess Venus and Aphrodite and some of these other pagan gods. And in the sex act itself were spiritual rites of these religions. So, let us show you how we worship our gods.

And so the king followed the advice of the prophet. And that brings us into chapter 25. And as Israel was abiding there at Shittim, and the people began to commit whoredom with the daughters of Moab.

And they called the people into the sacrifices of their gods. You see, they got the young guys and said, come on, go with me to the sacrifice of my god. And the people did eat and they bowed down to their

gods.

And Israel joined himself unto Baal Peor, or the Lord of Peor. Peor was the name of the mountain there. And the anger of the Lord was kindled against Israel.

And the Lord said unto Moses, take all of the heads of the people and hang them up before the Lord against the sun, that the fierce anger of the Lord may be turned away from Israel. In other words, cut off the heads of these guys that are doing it. Hang them up in the sun that my anger might be turned away.

And Moses said to the judges of Israel, slay every one of his men that were joined to Baal Peor. Every man that joined in those rites. And behold, one of the children of Israel came and brought unto his brethren a Midianite woman in the sight of Moses and in the sight of all the congregation of the children of Israel who were weeping before the door of the tabernacle of the congregation.

Here these guys were weeping and repenting before God for what was done. And here comes this guy in with a prostitute. Right there where they could all see him.

Into his tent. All excited and all. And so Phinehas, the son of Eleazar, he actually was the grandson of Aaron.

When he saw it, he jumped up and grabbed his javelin and went over to the tent and thrust the guy through and the woman through. Both of them in their tent. And so the plague was stayed from the children of Israel.

But those that died of the plague were 24,000. So, Balaam was successful in bringing a curse in a secondary way. And by his advice to the king, he laid a stumbling block before God's people so that when Moab was conquered and the Midianites were conquered and they were slain, Balaam was slain with them.

Now God said because of Phinehas' heroic deeds and righteous deeds in the killing of these people, this man and this woman, He said, I am going to give to Phinehas the son of peace and the priesthood will come through his family. The covenant of an everlasting priesthood because he was zealous for his God. And he made the atonement for the children of Israel.

And so it gives us the name of the man and the woman. He was of the tribe of Simeon. Now in chapter 26, we again have the tribes numbered off.

Now remember, this is at the end of the 40 years of wandering. At the beginning of the 40 years of wandering, they numbered the tribes. And now at the end of the 40 years of wandering, they numbered the tribes again.

And it is interesting to compare the number of people at the beginning and at the end. And actually, there's a total loss of people of about 2,000, approximately 2,000 less at the end of the 40 years of wandering. But some of the tribes, they were really wiped out, really decimated.

Other of them actually grew in number through the wilderness wanderings. Towards the end of the chapter, in verse 59, we get a little history of Moses' family. His father's name was Amram.

His mother's name was Jochebe. She had three children, Moses, Miriam, and Aaron. And it gives you a little history of Aaron's family, the two sons again that died, Nadab and Abihu, who offered the strange fire

before the Lord.

And now that generation has passed away. There's no one left except for Moses, of course, is still alive, and Joshua and Caleb. But all of those that came out of Egypt who were 20 years old or older have now all died with the exception of these three men.

Moses is soon to die before they go into the land. Chapter 27, we have the beginning of a woman's lib organization. Then there came the daughters of Zelophehad, the son of Hefer.

Now what had happened is that the dad had seven daughters but no sons. And as they were dividing off the land, they were giving the sons the portions. The oldest son would get the portions over.

And so these gals said, hey, now wait a minute. It's not fair. We have equal rights, you know.

And our dad didn't have any son. If you don't give us any land, then my father's name will die in Israel. So Moses said, well, we'll take it before the Lord.

So the Lord says, these gals are right. Give them the inheritance of the family. And so they won their case.

And the daughters of Zelophehad received the inheritance. So God's with you gals. And He's looking after you.

And you've got a just cause. But unfortunately, these radical women are taking it far beyond God's. You know, I mean, there is that which is right, but then there is that taking it beyond and far beyond what God ever intended.

So balance is such an important thing. So He gave the law then of the inheritance. If there is no son, then it goes to the daughters.

If there are no daughters or sons, then it goes to a man's brothers. If he has no brothers, then it will go to his father's brothers. And if his father has no brothers, then it comes to the next of kin, whoever is closest in the family to him.

Now the Lord said to Moses, get up to the Mount of Barim and see the land which I have given to the children of Israel. And when you have seen it, there also you'll be gathered to your people as Aaron your brother was gathered. For you rebelled against My commandment in the desert of Zin in the strife of the congregation to properly represent Me at the water before their eyes.

That is the waters of Meribah in Kadesh in the wilderness of Zin. So Moses, get up the mountain. You'll get the look at the land, but then you're going to die.

You're not going to be able to go in because of your misrepresenting of Me there at the water of Meribah, the waters of strife. Moses said unto the Lord, Let the Lord, the God of the spirits of all flesh, set a man over the congregation. Now this is an interesting little verse.

Let the Lord, the God of the spirits of all flesh, set a man over the congregation. From this little verse, the Mormons have developed their whole doctrine of the eternal spirit of man. That you actually existed in heaven.

Your spirit existed there in heaven. And then God made a body for you and put your spirit in it to see whether or not you could become a god by becoming a Mormon. And you have no memory of your preexistence in heaven, but all of you preexisted in heaven as spirits.

But there was no way of telling up there whether or not you'd be good or bad, so He put you in a body and let you prove yourself down here. And if you become a good Mormon, wear your underwear and all, then you will be God. And you and your wives that are sealed to you can go to some planet and you can have your own little kingdom that you can watch over and you'll be God over that planet and you can develop it however you wish and so forth.

So, that whole doctrine, it comes out of this one little verse. I really don't see it in this verse. Let the Lord, the God of the spirits of all flesh.

But it doesn't say anything about the spirits preexisting with God, being in heaven before or anything. He's just the God of the spirits of all flesh. Set a man over the congregation, which may go before them, which may lead them out, which may bring them in, that the congregation of the Lord will not be like sheep without a shepherd.

And so the Lord said to Moses, Take Joshua, the son of Nun, a man in whom is the Spirit, and lay your hand upon him. And set him before Eliezer the priest and before the congregation, and give him charge in their sight. And thou shalt put some of thine honor upon him, that all of the children of Israel may be obedient.

And he shall stand before Eliezer the priest, who shall ask counsel for him after the judgment of the Urim from the Lord. Now the Urim was a little thing that the priests wore, a little pouch of some kind, that they sought counsel from God through the use of the Urim and the Thummim. Lights and Perfections is what the words Urim and Thummim mean.

And some believe that there was just a little pouch and it had a white stone and a black stone. And that when they would ask the Lord a question, the priest would say, now God, show us which one. And he would pull out a stone.

If it was a white stone, God would say yes. Then they'd ask the next question. And they'd mix up the stones.

He'd pull out a stone again. And they would get yes-no answers. So it was sort of a 21-question kind of a thing where you get yes-no answers to then ascertain the will of the Lord.

Now, God had a more direct relationship with Moses. God said, hey, there's no one like this before or after. Where I really speak to the fellow as sort of a face-to-face.

I mean, direct speaking in a very powerful way. Now Joshua, who is to lead the people. He is to come before Eleazar the priest who will inquire of the Lord in questions.

David, so often, would go to the priest and inquire, shall we go into battle against them? And then what time of the day shall we start the battle? And they would ask all of these questions of God in order to determine the will of the Lord. And it was oftentimes determined by the priest inquiring and by the use of the Urim. These lights and perfections.

So, just what the Urim and the Thummim actually is is not told us. That's what people surmise that it was. But exactly, we don't know.

Surely it wasn't a pair of glasses by which you can read hieroglyphics when you put them on. Hocus Pocus. So, Moses did as the Lord commanded him.

He took Joshua and set him before Eleazar. And before all the congregation, he laid his hands upon him and gave him the charge of the Lord as he was commanded. So, Joshua laid his hands upon him signifying that Joshua was now to begin to take Moses' place as the leader of the people.

Now in the 20th chapter, God sort of reiterates some of the commandments concerning the sacrifices. Every day of the year, they were to offer two lambs as a sacrifice unto the Lord. One lamb in the morning.

One lamb in the evening. One during the morning oblations or prayers. Another during the evening oblations or prayers.

And so, twice a day at least, there were these two lambs that were offered. And the smoke would go up with the prayers of the people as the sweet-smelling incense before the Lord. And they would offer daily in the morning and evening, a lamb.

That was just a daily year. You know, every day of the year, this would occur. However, on the first day of the month, then they were to offer more animals on the first day of every month.

They were to offer two bullocks, one ram and seven lambs of the first year without spot. And then they were in the Passover time to offer the animals, the goats and all in the Passover time. And then also for the firstfruits or Pentecost, He gives them the orders of the animals that were to be offered during that period.

So, chapter 28 deals with the sacrifices, the type of animals, the type of drink offering and meal offerings that were to be offered to God daily and then annually on special occasions. And so, just sort of a repetition of some of the earlier commands that we had in Leviticus. Just sort of reinforcing that which He had commanded earlier.

So, next week we'll finish the book of Numbers as we get into chapter 29 and we'll begin there and finish the book of Numbers next week. Shall we stand? Now, I realize that some of you may have come to church tonight in order that you might get saved. And that's a good idea.

And so, you can go back to the prayer room at this time and some of the pastors will go back there and meet with you and pray with you and lead you into a real relationship with Jesus Christ. So, if you came tonight in order that you might get saved, don't get disappointed. And don't go home without being saved.

So, just go on back to the prayer room at this time as soon as we're dismissed and the pastors will meet with you there. May God bless you and just give you a beautiful week. May you experience, really, the living presence of the living God within your life.

Not needing any relics, but just be conscious of the nearness of God and of God's great love. Wherein He loves you. He loves you so much that He doesn't see anything wrong with you.

Isn't that neat? Man, that's more than my wife loves me. And she loves me an awful, awful lot. Oh, so glorious to be walking with the Lord and serving Him.

May God just fill your life with joy, praises and thanksgiving all week long.

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