

# Living an orderly Christian life (Quality: Average)

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[ 0 : 00 ] We will speak again this evening from the book of Numbers, at this time chapter 24 and verse 5. Chapter 24 in the book of Numbers and verse 5.

How goodly are thy tents, O Jacob, and thy tabernacles, O Israel. How goodly are thy tents, O Jacob, and thy tabernacles, O Israel.

These are the exclamations of Balaam himself. He brought the array of tents and tabernacles in front of him in the plains of Moab.

And the remarkable orderliness of these people that have come up to invade the land. There was something very impressive about orderliness.

You can go back to the days of our boyhood, and we remember the tentative encampments in the army at Aldershot.

[ 1 : 15 ] And row after row after row of tents. And the orderliness of it is trifle.

You do not see that now, of course. Jacob, of tents, as Balaam saw, with his, going into a trance that his eyes opened, was a presentable scene for him.

And to know and understand what this means, we must see what God's command was with regard to the setting out of their homes and habitations.

They were knocked out to pick their tents where they wanted to. I had to obey a particular command, and that particular command was from the divine mind of divine orderliness.

First of all, they, as the twelve tribes, had their standards. And that was the gathering ground around which they met.

[ 2 : 31 ] The tribe of Judah was distinguished by a man. And the various other tribes were distinguished similarly, so that they each knew their own particular standard.

And thus, God had given very clear commandments that they should thus gather in the generalization of it, in the outset that they should be by tribes.

And not only this, but he also allotted a certain position for certain tribes. That one tribe was to pick next to another prescribed tribe.

It did not rest with Moses, where they picked their tents, but with God. This is not all by any means.

They had the tabernacle in the center. That was reared there, and on that tabernacle was the descending pillar.

[ 3 : 45 ] That is, the cloud that covered Israel, covered in the very center of this tabernacle, the Shekinah glory, the mercy.

And here was the focal point, the half of the whole map. And then a further point was this, that they not only had to pitch where they were hidden, but they had to pitch equally.

There was a remarkable equality in this, and they had to pitch on their four sides, three tribes on each side.

And the tribe of Levi, in their own particular position, near to the tabernacle. And not only this, but their tent and tabernacle doors had to open facing the tabernacle.

So that immediately when they opened their tent or tabernacle door, they would see in front of them the cloud. And underneath the cloud, if they could see it, as they could in the plains of Noah, that glorious indication of God in the midst of that cloud covered and hollow.

[ 5 : 14 ] And this remarkable orderliness, therefore, expresses very fully the divine mind as opposed to chaos. And had there been no such command and no such standard, and had there been no focal point, and no path, and no tabernacle, what an untidier way it would have been.

So that even Balaam could never have said how good we are like tents. It doesn't mean that they were constructed of good material, they weren't.

Their material was really rough. even the tabernacle material itself was badger skins, nothing, whatever, presentable about it from the point of view of human ingenuity.

It was what it was meant to be, and that is tabernacle, tent, that had to be taken down perhaps very quickly, and something of real use and value.

And it was this. You know very well that they had their own tent, Achan had his where he hid his stolen places. Now this is another point in what we were saying this morning with regard to the righteousness which of the men let me die the death of the righteous and let my last end be like this.

[ 6 : 56 ] No one could have made such a splendid array of the vast armies and peoples of Israel but Jehovah himself.

And the very fact that they were so orderly and so in unison and under such direct command proved that they were a people blessed of God.

And therefore this made Balaam work all the harder to curse Israel. This took all the strength out of him when he could see that they were far from an uncoordinated mass of human beings they were under divine control.

So that he exclaimed of his home here as he saw this vision of the almighty man. How good we are thy tents Jacob.

He could not see the whole of the encampment because Balak takes him to different spots high points in the surrounding mountains so that he may see what is said here a fourth path so that the picture is a very beautiful one.

[ 8 : 33 ] When we come to the gospel order what a remarkable thing it is that the church of God is not her own master in her own order.

That she is not allowed to make her own arrangements. That she cannot do what she likes. that she is not free to follow every course with her so ever it may lead.

She is under divine control and she is brought under that control by divine grace. She may as many do and as we read of in Peter's epistle that we've just read have many for number who are false who will not have order who will not be controlled who say our lips are our own who is lord over us who deny any right to serve anyone but themselves.

But is it not the order of the church of God or the gospel of the grace of God. One of Paul's great maxims was to those he left behind to set in order the things that were wanting to put that straight which needed to be put straight.

And this isn't easy work. Look into any family you care to and you will find that it isn't easy work to keep that family under control and it isn't always the oldest that's the most refractory by any means whatever.

[ 10 : 33 ] But when you come to the church of God one of the outstanding features of the true house of Jacob is her goodly tents, her goodly dwelling places, that is her tabernacle.

The places where she rests in this wilderness journey, where she feels she can pitch her tent and find rest.

And what is that? What is the overshadowing power and cloud under which she seeks to rest? Where do these righteous ones that Balaam so envy, where do they find rest?

Is it not under the overspreading shadow and cloud of the holy gospel of the grace of God? Do they want any other resting place in there?

And what is this if it isn't a sacred covering from the heat, a sacred guidance, a very evident intimation of God's presence?

[ 12 : 00 ] God's love and all this is bound up with the divine standard which God has set in his holy word, so that God's people are not their own, and are brought to the prize.

not their lives. They are not those that can live as they like and say, well, we will sin that grace may abound.

They are under the control of a mighty power, namely the Holy Spirit. Not that what they are in need of discipline, and constant reminders of their deep obligation to divine grace, and not that they are without a need of correction, for the scripture through Paul to Timothy declares that all scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable or necessary for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction, and even if we take that one verse and look at it, and regard these four standards that God has given his church, how necessary they are.

Look at the divine orderliness that God has given in doctrine, that one finished work of Christ, this noble standard, which is erected at Calvary, it is finished.

Look at it in all its emblazoned glory, glory, glory of the Lord Jesus Christ.

[ 14 : 16 ] Is not this doctrine, precious doctrine, and who are the people that shall I say open their tent doors to warn this, and have to look at it day after day, who are they that look for the finished work of Christ, save those that are of the true seed of Jacob.

we may then come back to our question this morning, who are these righteous, why did Bayom envy them, why did he want their death, while he loved the wages of unrighteousness, sin?

The same obtained with regard to this glorious doctrine of the blood of Christ, inseparable from the overshadowing cloud, all the divine standard, there is no salvation in any other, you wouldn't want another standard, would you, that's it, in your poor heart, sin?

Other than the blood of Christ, God's Son, cleanses us from all sin? What a precious standard this is.

And has it not been erected in some of your lives? Have you not gathered underneath it? Have you not said, this is the place for me?

[ 15 : 59 ] This is where I would dwell. I seek no other hiding place, no other name under heaven given among men.

Flowing out of this doctrine is also the justified righteousness of Christ. This settlement under this blessed standard standard that Christ died for the ungodly.

Scared for a good man would one die. At a venture, a good man would even dare to die. God commended his love toward us in that while we were yet sinners, Christ died for the ungodly.

This is a glorious fixture. This is a permanent fixture. This is a standard disclosed from the all-prevailing covering of the mighty cloud that protects and guides.

In this therefore the church of God sees what Balaam saw only in a vastly different way, the God of order.

[ 17 : 29 ] All these people are taught the same thing. There's no doubt about this. It isn't the question of denominational attitude.

It's a question of truth. It's a question of persuasion. I am persuaded, said the apostle.

That is the real religion that we want, isn't it? I'm not speaking against denominationalism for one moment. I'm a great believer in it, the necessity for it.

But I prefer this blessed, sweet, heavenly and scriptural word, I am persuaded. I am persuaded that heavenly God sent persuasion.

God and in this, the standard of divine doctrine then is reared in Zion as the gathering point of untold numbers.

[ 18 : 44 ] God and they are there fully persuaded that nothing to separate them from the love of God which is in Christ Jesus.

Now, this is the first point then in the scripture that we've just mentioned from Timothy. it. All scripture is given for this end for doctrine, sacred doctrine, God's doctrine, God's hands, those revealed truths, not man made, nothing to do with man in them at all.

And even Moses spoke of this doctrine that should drop us the rain and the speech of God that should distill us the dew. And it ever has been so.

And it ever will be so. Blessed be his name. But how goodly, how goodly, how pleasant it is for brethren to dwell together in love, says the psalmist.

It is like the holy oil flown down from the head of air and down to his beard and to the skirts of his garment. Behold how good it is for brethren to dwell together in unity.

[ 20 : 27 ] Do you know anything better? How rare, how precious, and yet how vital. Is this the righteousness that poor Balaam saw?

Indeed it was. Let me die the death of the righteous, this is living their life. This is the outstanding doctrine of their life.

And much more to it of course, much more. But these are the main pillars, the main standards we can call them, of divine doctrine.

that doctrine which stood the test of years and will stand whilst this earth stands. And then it will not be finished with.

There is then the purpose. How came they to be thus but orderly? Why, not only the wisdom of God but the love of God.

[ 21 : 45 ] Look how sweet it is for the constraining love of God to coordinate hearts together. Look at the orderliness of a doctrine as it is set out in the ordinances of God's house.

The remarkable connection between doctrine and practice. And that the two great ordinances which God has given his church so bound up with and absolutely inseparable from doctrine.

The ordinance of the Lord's table and the simple wine and bread which he has committed to his church to do in remembrance of him.

Is there not the utmost authority for this? Can there be any trace of the hand of man in it?

Even Paul, can he be said to have originated in it? For I have received, says he, of the Lord that which also I deliver unto you.

[ 23 : 02 ] I'm not speaking originally, he says. No, it was instituted by the Lord Jesus himself. Look at believers baptism in exactly the same way.

Orderliness, a doctrine bound up in it. What is it if it isn't but? The confession, the voluntary confession of one who is pulled out of nature's darkness into light, one who is dwelling round the shadow and the coverage of the cross, the finished work of Christ, the death of Christ, the ascension or rather the resurrection of Christ.

That cloud, you know, tapered down onto the tabernacle. Marvellous spectacle that it was, thinned down until it touched the tabernacle itself.

And so, with these gracious doctrines, there is a living them, putting them into practice, walking in their ways, and a score of other sacred priests downed up with them.

But this is the goodly tents of Jacob. There's nothing to be compared with the church of God, though she has been buffeted from pillar to post, and her enemies have sought to deride her, and the devil has made much havoc in her midst.

[ 24 : 54 ] Yet, with all this, she abides fast by these fundamental doctrines. Then, not only is scripture given for doctrine, but for reproof.

Well, look at this. Where are the people who are so disciplined and taught as to receive reproof?

We are told that we are somewhat harsh. I am. Reports bring to my ears that I am somewhat harsh.

was Jesus harsh? Did he commend the Pharisees? Did he say, well done?

Did he cover up their broad prolektories as if they were everything that they need, or did he say, ye hypocrites?

[ 26 : 03 ] Was that harsh? Was that true? Are you a father? Do you not think your children sometimes think you're harsh?

Are you a mother? Do you not sometimes think your children think you're harsh? would you be otherwise?

What is this reproof? What is this great standard which the God of all grace has reared in Jacob and made such a matter of divine orderliness if it isn't reproof?

But this is to hold reproof between words. It's outward. The scripture gives abundant evidence of both of these.

God's reproofs are seen outwardly in his dealings with us. Oh, what solemn reproof.

[ 27 : 23 ] And what does the gospel bring with it if it doesn't bring reproof? But it's got to be God that does it. These reproofs can go on and on year after year.

They may come upon the outward ear, but let the time come when they fall upon the inner ear, then do they their work.

Oh, this blessed standard whom the Lord loveth he chastened, he reproofed. We have had fathers of our own, says Paul, who have corrected us.

What, is there any ground for reproof? Have you got any ground in your life for reproof? If God reproofed you tonight, could you justify yourself?

Could you say, Lord, I'm not guilty? Could you think that if God reproofed you, you could deny it? he sends a sharp arrow reproof into your heart, would it not be truth?

[ 28 : 45 ] Would it not be justified? Would it not be necessary? this is essential to all doliness therefore, and discipline in the church of God is given for correction, to put right, closely allowed, of course, to reprove, that you can have a reprove and not be put right?

That reprove may have a long way to go and sink in, and look as regards doctrine, look at the years that many of God's dear people have been under correction, have been under some misanime, apprehension, some ignorance, some darkness, and at last, that correction has entered in.

It's seen, tout, and known divine correction. Now, the natural man will not receive this.

The natural religious man will not receive it. they will not abide it. We need not wonder that the carnal mind will not listen to the reproofs of the gospel.

We need not wonder that reproofs bring down upon our heads their reproaches, their disdain.

- [ 30 : 47 ] What a bitter and painful thing it is, but woe, unto you, when all men speak well of you. clattering title said, deny you I know not to give.
- But this is the spirit of the gospel, nothing else. For correction, for instruction, look at this standard.
- the spirit of oh, what a strange things these are, and yet how beautifully set out in Jacob, after the spirit.
- How goodly, how goodly, how blessed, how acceptable is instruction in righteousness.
- Dinner, do you not agree? God's righteous instruction in righteousness. Where to take the burden of your sins?
- [ 31 : 54 ] Instruction in confession? Instruction in repentance? Not something that you can master yourself, as so many will love to sin, and give themselves credit for it, and have all these blessings, as alas, they fondly mention, exactly like they know.
- Their ultimate aim is to die the death of the righteous, but they know not the life of the righteous, they know not what true repentance and godly sorrow is, because they do it not in the scripture light as the gift of God.
- And if it is as it is said to be, and undoubtedly is, a gift, then it must stand full square upon that word.
- And a gift is a gift. for instruction in righteousness, not in sinfulness.
- This all opens, therefore, the sacred scene in a gospel light. And then we have a confirmation first of our Lord's teaching.
- [ 33 : 25 ] love love and look at his remarkable, gracious teaching with regard to his order, his will.
- Those tender scriptures of his. If he loves me, keep my command. Look at that. there it covers the whole range of subjects.
- Look at his gracious exhortation when he was upon earth. In those things which he said that were his father's will.
- How he favoured so sweetly those poor unworthy creatures who came to him with their burden. Cast thy burden upon the Lord.
- Or, to use his own words, come unto me who need labour and a heavy life. Look what great use this scripture has been made.
- [ 34 : 40 ] It's like the steps of a cathedral. Worn down with the feet of centuries. No need to ask if they are old.
- They are ancient. So with such gracious invitations and gospel scriptures as these that you're put out to wear down this sacred path.
- Come unto me all need of labour and heavy laden and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you. What does it mean?
- Take my yoke upon you of what is associated with it and learn of me. and what follows this?
- For I am meek and lowly in heart and you shall find rest unto your soul. You can't divorce one clause from the other in those precious words or any other for that matter.
- [ 36 : 00 ] but there they stand as the standard of divine truth but then the living in these tabernacles.
- This beautiful scene before us of all the doors opening toward the temple or the tabernacle as it was there. This was never necessary or possible when they got to Kenya but in the wilderness and they were now at this stage in the book of Numbers coming for the second time to the borders of Canaan.

Aaron had died, Miriam had died, Moses was left without them. The end of his forty years through desert streams was coming to an end.

He begged the Lord, you see in a later chapter, that he might go into that goodly land, the very touching plea.

It has stopped my heart all once to read the dear man's plea with the Lord that he might go into that goodly land.

[ 37 : 26 ] but no. No. He should go to view it and he did stand on Pisgah top to view it.

but it was coming to the time when the carcasses of those who were disobedient to God forty years ago had all fallen in the wilderness.

You read these ensuing chapters and you'll see that there wasn't one man left, not one except Joshua and Caleb who were at Canaan forty years ago who was alive then.

Not one. No. They didn't die the death of the righteous. It is very solemnly said their carcasses fell into wilderness.

But my servant Joshua and Caleb who followed me fully said the Lord I shall inherit the land.

[ 38 : 45 ] What a thing this is therefore of the individual heart the opening of the tent door towards Christ and towards the habitation of his house towards the place of mercy to the throne of the Father.

Is it not living it that matters? Is it not this that is the great point of dying in the faith?

Think you that one whose heart is thus drawn permanently not as those solemn characters that we read of in Peter who turned back and walked no more with him?

Not as though are to be held on your way daily looking to Christ daily seeking his grace and faith.

Is not this the significance of God's orderly arrangement of the tents of Jacob? Can you say how goodly they are?

[ 40 : 06 ] Do they appeal to you? Is your conscience clear? is the standard under which you gather the standard of doctrine correction reproof instruction in righteousness that the man of God may be truly furnished unto all good works works all good works not good works meriting salvation but good works of fruit of salvation a vast difference between the two the very same thing and point that James makes in his epistle know thou not that faith without works is dead being alone is there such a thing as a dead faith of course there is and that dead faith is not something that you've got to suggest what it might be it is something that is emphatically set out before you it's without works action are the opening of the tent that beautiful hymn didn't we sing it last

Sunday found it somewhere recently of Daniel Herbert when thy spirit shines within makes me feel the plague of sin then how I long to see thy face tis then I want hiding place tis then you will open your tent door towards the tabernacle tis then the sacrifice of Christ will be precious to you tis then you will be brought back from your back sliding from all your darkness from your wandering from your disobedience how goodly how goodly are thy tents so Jacob Balaam Balaam

I shall see him he says later which if this subject abides with me we shall have to speak from I shall see him but not nigh but not nigh vastly different from the language of dear Job I know that my redeemer liveth vastly different oh let these most vital things exercise their hearts unto godliness to a godly walk conduct and a consistent conversation that we may open our tent doors to this blessed tree and be gathered under the standard of divine truth in all its past in all its vast issues which cover every point of life every concern of life and no point of life they do not well that's left a part uncovered so that we may say well what shall we do here which part shall we take surely he has made it abundantly clear in his doctrine in his correction reproof and instruction but oh what opposition to it and the scene before us and the man speaking a voice from heaven is true as other men as I said this morning were used of God to declare truth so they knew it not themselves how searching is this great point therefore to be gathered among the

Lord's people around that central holy figure set out by the tabernacle that light that shekinah glory that mercy thing oh let this be your thought do I open my tent door in the morning to the merciless and when I close my tent door at night and lay down to rest do I close it at the merciless door that's alive that's alive and it is this that counts Paul Bainan goes back to his eastern country with all his enchantments and witchcraft and the light but oh God has brought him to the forefront to give a most searching lesson in the vital realities of what was then his purpose and now still is in a vastly different way namely his order in the church of God

Amen