

Sermon to the Saints which are at Topeka, Kansas -- Sunday, February 14, 2021

Last December we began the work of examining Christ's sermon about eschatology, while he sat speaking with His disciples and Apostles on Mt. Olivet directly across from the temple placed on Mt. Zion. In that sermon I believe we demonstrated that Jesus Christ's words are directed toward all of His elect saints. First, in covering the generations who would wrestle with doctrinal and practical matters while Satan assaulted them with false representations of the Messiah and with terrors to put their eternal souls at risk. Second, in covering the generation that goes into the great crucible in preparation for and then implementation of the Day of the Lord.

Since Christ is answering an extremely specific inquiry – when will be the end and what signs will we look for to know it is approaching – His words focus mostly on that second or *crucible* generation about which He specifically declares: ***“This generation shall not pass, till all these things be fulfilled”*** (Matthew 24:34). I get questions from my friends here about specifics contained in this sermon of Christ's. It is comforting to discuss them generally, but there is such a profound warning in this very passage against those who declare ***“Lo, here is Christ, or there”*** (Matthew 24:26) that I have no desire to be too hasty in this work.

“Surely the Lord GOD will do nothing, but he revealeth his secret unto his servants the prophets.”
(Amos 3:7)

There are great comforts in these words. There needs to be no rush to judgment about any matter that has not been fully revealed to us. I trust that if we move deliberately and patiently through this grand sermon we will be much more at peace with what we learn. I also find my heart wanting to rush to parts that strike my spirit more intensely, but the words preceding those portions are every bit as enlightening and instructive to our work and walk. So, taking up where we ended the examination of Christ's sermon on eschatology, we will consider His words recorded by Matthew, Mark and Luke as follows:

“And ye shall hear of wars and rumours of wars: see that ye be not troubled: for all these things must come to pass, but the end is not yet.” (Matthew 24:6)

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“And when ye shall hear of wars and rumours of wars, be ye not troubled: for such things must needs be; but the end shall not be yet.” (Mark 13:7)

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“But when ye shall hear of wars and commotions, be not terrified: for these things must first come to pass; but the end is not by and by.” (Luke 21:9)

The expositors don't dig too deeply into these words, as particularly distinct from others within this sermon. They speak generally about it – even those who are not trying to shoehorn it into the 40-year (or so) period between these words and the destruction of the temple (we spent last sermon on this subject disposing of the notion that this sermon of Christ's is about that event). For example, in a footnote from *The Apocalypse* by Seiss, a German preacher by the name John Conrad Goebel¹ is quoted about the general condition to be found, as he says, "*immediately preceding the day of judgment*":

"Nothing is there said or predicted of a golden age, but only crosses and tribulations, which touch all the estates of the world. Concerning ecclesiastical affairs, it was predicted that in the last times many false Christs and false prophets shall arise, and shall do great signs and wonders, and deceive, if it were possible, the very elect. Concerning hearers, it was predicted that love should wax cold in the hearts of many, and faith wane to such a degree that Christ himself asks: 'When the Son of Man cometh, shall He find faith on the earth?' Will that be a golden age? Concerning matters of state, it was predicted that unrighteousness shall sway them, and there shall be wars and rumours of wars, nation rising against nation, and kingdom against kingdom."

The "**wars and rumours of wars**" language is from the verse that precedes the "**nation shall rise against nation**" language, but these two expressions are often treated as merged together in time and application. Seiss is one of the better expositors when it comes to breaking matters down. Granted, his work is not specifically focused on Christ's sermon – but rather John's expressions from his vision on Patmos. Nevertheless, I find it disheartening that what appears to be a critical distinction by Christ is glossed over time and again when men have taken up pen to write about His words.

But we cannot pretend in this generation that what we see, hear, and understand is in any way equal to those hundreds of generations that went before us. When we consider God's Word, we have a duty to "**discern the signs of the times**". (Matthew 16:3). The Greek word for "**signs**" includes the notion "*that by which a person or a thing is distinguished from others and is known*" as well as the traditional notion of "*signs portending remarkable events soon to happen*". There are things that indelibly mark our generation as unique to those that went before. Though "**there is no new thing under the sun**" (Ecclesiastes 1:9), there are certainly facts and events that are unique expressions of the human condition in each successive generation. So, if all the expositors in all preceding generations wrestled with portions of God's prophecies that simply did not make clear sense to them, we who stand at the cusp of the end should discern our time. I believe we are better able to examine these words of Christ, because of where God appointed us on His eternal timeline.

With that lens, we may reasonably say that what needs examined about these synoptic passages include:

1. What is to be understood by **“wars and rumours of wars”**, or as Luke puts it **“wars and commotions”**?
2. This condition has a specific risk of causing His people to be **“troubled”** or **“terrified”**.
3. This condition is a necessity in human affairs – i.e., **“must come to pass”** and **“must needs be”** – as an integral part of answering the specific question the Apostles asked.
4. There is a crisp distinction between the conditions Christ describes here – where He says **“the end is not yet”**, or otherwise expressed **“not by and by”** – and that which he soon afterward declares are conditions that constitute **“the beginning of sorrows”** (Matthew 24:7; Mark 13:8).

First: What is to be understood by **“wars and rumours of wars”**; **“wars and commotions”**?

When I research out and analyze the opening words – **“wars and rumours of wars”** – I find an exceedingly rich irony at play among humanity. We in this body – standing in the crowd of those faithful in every generation – get mocked as having our hearts and minds locked into history. **“A book that is thousands of years old occupies our modern existence”**, they say. **“Get with the zeitgeist”** they say. But when we tell them how that grand Word describes modern history in impressive detail, they mock and say that the conditions we look at what have been in existence for time immemorial. Wars have been in existence since humans began occupying this earth. Rumors of war have been uttered in every generation of mankind, in every kindred, tongue and tribe and on every continent. Wars ... threats of wars ... preparations for wars ... pre-war cogitations and upheavals. We know the Bible reports them within just that tiny people and kingdom of Israel, as well as those which have impacted them for the relevant period of history. Indeed, scripture suggests each year had its **“time that kings go out to battle”** (2 Samuel 11:1).

Each part of the world – both civilized and uncivilized – has had records made of kingdoms great and small fighting and preparing to fight. Rising and falling. Greater and lesser recordings made and maintained for posterity to learn of the pride that generated endless contention between men. Whole degrees are obtained, and livelihoods have been spent, pouring over the globe to find information about these cultures that cropped up throughout the earth. From the day God sent the tribes of men from Babel, ensuring **“they may not understand one another’s speech”** (Genesis 11:7), the human creature has been at war. So, how might we ever hope to gain a distinguishing understanding of these blessed words from Christ? If mankind has always been at war, why would the presence of war be utilized by Jesus Christ as a primary marker for His saints to discern when **“the time of the end”** (Daniel 12:9) might be upon us?

Let’s begin with the Greek word **“akoe”** (**“ak-o-ay”**), and it’s etymological partner **“akouo”** (**“ak-oo’-o”**). An innocuous pair of wordsⁱⁱ in these passages that help us to distinguish the events of older and even ancient times from the events of our generation. Christ identified this period of His eternal timeline as when His saints – i.e., **“ye shall hear”** – are endowed with a capacity to have a comprehensive lens through which they observe the inhabitants of the earth in a perpetual state of

“commotions” – **“wars and rumours of wars”**. It isn’t merely the historical fact that wars and commotions are going on. It is the capacity for those of His tender souls to **“hear”** of them and the **“rumours”** of them. That is the distinguishing characteristic. In the conditions that are described following this one, the focus is on actions. This condition is uniquely qualified with the capacity of God’s servants to **“hear”** of a thing.

In the mid-20th century, a new age came upon the human race. It is called colloquially *“The Information Age”*. It is a thing that is defined, uniquely, by the explosion of the capacity for the human race to learn what is happening not just where they live, but over the whole globe! *“The Information Age (also known as the Computer Age, Digital Age, or New Media Age) is a historical period that began in the mid-20th century, characterized by a rapid epochal [i.e., extremely important, significant, or influential] shift from the traditional industry established by the Industrial Revolution to an economy primarily based upon information technology.”* Is that an accident? And from that time to now, the speed with which we can learn of what is unfolding – **“wars and rumours of wars”** – has gone from perhaps years, months, weeks, or days ... to minutes or even seconds.

Along with that explosion of capacity to hear of such wars and commotions, the capacity to wage war has exponentially grown over the decades that uniquely mark the generation of the oldest souls who are members of this church. The Military Industrial Complex, sprouting in the wake of WWII, essentially rules this nation, and from what is readily available for us to consume, the same is true for every significant world power in existence. The effect of this destructive power existing at the fingertips of lunatic leaders the world over, is that the population has increasingly dwelt in *“instability, a state of disorder, disturbance, confusion”*, which is the very definition of the word in Luke’s passage **“commotions”**. The world for 70 or so years has been truly in a perpetual state of **“wars and commotions”** ... and our capacity to hear of it exceeds any generation before in existence on any part of the occupied planet.

There have been questions raised regarding the extent to which Christ’s words in His eschatological sermon apply to the Jews. That is, these words were spoken to Jewish apostles, and were in answer to a question that came from Jews about the fulfillment of prophecy from Jewish prophets. So, is it at least logical to consider that the words themselves should be seen as addressing eschatology about the Jewish nation? My view – chiefly from comparing Bible with Bible, but also considering expositors words and what we are able to discern from the history captured by corruptible man – is that it does in fact address the Jewish race. But not exclusively. Therefore, as I go through this passage I will try to keep that issue in the analysis so that we can be satisfied with the degree to which it properly applies.

The verse we’re presently considering could legitimately have a general application to Jews, since the condition is worldwide. Furthermore, there is a passage that I’ve discussed in one previous sermon with regard to the calling out of the Jewish race into Israel – and it might give us some

additional understanding of the way this work prophesied by Christ is so gloriously interwoven into the providence of humankind.

“¶ And in that day there shall be a root of Jesse, which shall stand for an ensign of the people; to it shall the Gentiles seek: and his rest shall be glorious. And it shall come to pass in that day, that the Lord shall set his hand again the second time to recover the remnant of his people, which shall be left, from Assyria, and from Egypt, and from Pathros, and from Cush, and from Elam, and from Shinar, and from Hamath, and from the islands of the sea. And he shall set up an ensign for the nations, and shall assemble the outcasts of Israel, and gather together the dispersed of Judah from the four corners of the earth.” (Isaiah 11:10-12)

This prophecy from Isaiah follows a beautiful description of the returning Christ that takes His throne and covers the earth with ***“the knowledge of the LORD”*** (Isaiah 11:9) as part of His millennial reign. This language articulating the recovery of Jews from the nations of the earth has the curious description of it happening ***“again the second time”***. That language clearly indicates that a pattern of things repeats ... that it happened once, and now it is happening a second time. This is distinct from the language in the prophecy about what will become of the Jews – i.e., ***“the remnant of his people”*** (Isaiah 11:16) -- It focuses on His action in pulling them out of the nations. If there is to be a second such event occurring when the ***“a rod out of the stem of Jesse”*** (Isaiah 11:1) comes forth ... then when was the first such event? When would have been the *first time*?

The only other historical event involving the Jews’ return to that crucible land is the mass exodus from many European nations into modern day Israel. That occurred in association with the establishment of that fledgling nation in 1949 ... squarely in the very generation we’re discussing with the Information Age and the Military Industrial Complex above. And the nation of modern Israel can certainly be said to have been perpetually in a state of war or near war – with military threats and upheavals since it began. So, as it pertains to the ***“wars and rumours of wars”***, or otherwise called ***“wars and commotions”***, we can see that being the reality of the world generally and that of the Jewish people specifically. It all has occurred during the generationⁱⁱⁱ in which the members of this little body have been alive.

Second: This condition has a specific risk of causing His people to be “troubled” or “terrified”.

So, what are we to make of this targeted warning against the saints being ***“troubled”*** and/or ***“terrified”***? Examining the Greek words used will only verify what we naturally know is meant by the words ... being *“frightened, alarmed”* and being *“terrified”*. We get a little help from the word translated ***“terrified”*** in that it flows from a collection of words that allude to the notion that you may be caused to fall away or flee away due to the fear you feel. Those are helpful concepts, as we know that ***“the fear of man bringeth a snare”*** (Proverbs 29:25). The world is full of faux-Christians who are far too attached to the notion that God is only loving – as *they* presumptuously define the

concept. The notion that God “allows” such horrors that flow from wars across the globe, renders them unable to align themselves to His cause. They call Him a dirty bully, because He displays that He is as much the author of devastating destruction for rebellious mankind, as He is the gentle Protector and Father to His children.

There are similar expressions throughout this sermon by Christ – being raised at different junctions along this eschatological path, including: **“then shall many be offended, and shall betray one another, and shall hate one another” (Matthew 24:10); “because iniquity shall abound, the love of many shall wax cold.” (Matthew 24:12); “except those days should be shortened, there should no flesh be saved” (Matthew 24:22); and “if it were possible, they shall deceive the very elect” (Matthew 24:24).** It demonstrates, I believe, that the falling away process is incremental. As the intensity of the preparations for Christ to return increases, so does the risk of those who are **“fearful, and unbelieving”** who are appointed to **“have their part in the lake which burneth with fire and brimstone” (Revelation 21:8)** to fall away. In this current passage, the saints are being warned against such folly in the context of watching the world rush toward her own conflict-driven undoing. We have experienced this. The battles of the saints are unsavory to the flesh. The declaration of God’s revealed will in the perpetual upheavals between nations – resulting in the death and torment of millions – makes those who are fearful to shrink back and detach. This is a thing we are warned of and that we cannot be surprised by. We must not be so troubled or terrified, as **“we are not of them who draw back unto perdition; but of them that believe to the saving of the soul.” (Hebrews 10:39).**

Third: This condition is a necessity in human affairs – i.e., “must come to pass” and “must needs be” – as an integral part of answering the specific question the Apostles asked.

“Woe unto the world because of offences! for it must needs be that offences come; but woe to that man by whom the offence cometh!” (Matthew 18:7). Here is the lesson taught that God Almighty has appointed things to mankind, and uniquely with regard to how they should interact with His saints in the earth. This is a deeply troubling double-edged sword. God’s servants are sliced with offences, slaying their flesh such that **“we are killed all the day long; we are accounted as sheep for the slaughter” (Romans 8:36).** God’s enemies, though, will be given **“blood to drink”** because **“they have shed the blood of the saints and prophets” (Revelation 16:6).** The certainty of the offences is a part of being of this faith. We are said to be **“heirs of God, and joint-heirs with Christ; if so be that we suffer with him, that we may be also glorified together.” (Romans 8:17)** We are at peril if we do not embrace this truth but rather flee fearfully from those offences. We’ve just had two wonderful sermons on the importance of appointed afflictions from Ben and Charles.

Similarly, we should understand the necessity for these **“wars and commotions”**. These are just as crucial to the preparations of the earth’s inhabitants for their undoing. These are just as crucial to the preparations of the saints who will enter that Day of the Lord. Just recently I was looking at

some news about the decision by the International Criminal Court (ICC) to investigate Israel for war crimes, over the way they treat their brethren the Palestinians. One pundit was harshly critical of the ICC, because for there to be “war crimes” there has to be a state of war. In his discussion he articulates the sober reality that the whole world is in a perpetual state of war, so why are the relatively mild actions of the Jewish nation being singled out? It’s true ... and a grim testimony.

Many times over the past years, I have emphasized the point that the whole of the creation was made for this coming day when the Lord Jesus Christ gets His glory and God **“will be exalted among the heathen, [He] will be exalted in the earth.” (Psalms 46:10)**. Events don’t just happen in the evolution of mankind, and then humans fret to find meaning. You here know there could be passages galore brought to bear to establish that Christ **“hast created all things, and for [His] pleasure they are and were created.” (Revelation 4:11)**. Wars and commotions ... rumors of wars and commotions ... are part of that creation. They are and were created for the fulfillment of the will of the triune God. So what is that will, as we can ascertain it, that makes world conflicts **“things [that] must first come to pass”?**

We live in a generation that speaks the language of war. Between 1900 and the last record I could find for wars and rumors of wars (coups, etc.) across the globe, there have been approximately 1,500 of them identified. Fathom that! Through endless and horrific military engagements that have fired off across the globe for decades, this generation has learned to speak that language. Everything of any significance in this generation is cast in the light of conflict. That is what is in the hearts of the deceived ... energized there by their **“father the devil [who] was a murderer from the beginning” (John 8:44)**. Truly, humanity has been sifted through the rising and falling of nations, through wars and commotions, from the beginning of time. This passage, however, displays how it is that they become wholly war minded. This passage displays how they are prepared for the final showdown – through a concentrated period where war is so common a language, conflict is so commonly exercised that they have no more desire for peace.

Fourth: There is a crisp distinction between the conditions Christ describes here – where He says **“the end is not yet”**, or otherwise expressed **“not by and by”** – and that which he soon afterward declares are conditions that constitute **“the beginning of sorrows”** (Matthew 24:7; Mark 13:8)

When our fellow servant Peter spoke of the mocking that should come in the last days of the dispensation preceding Christ’s return, he addressed this tendency of humanity to frame every thing in terms of their own generation without shifting the lens to a worldwide condition that meets the objective language of prophecy.

“The Lord is not slack concerning his promise, as some men count slackness; but is longsuffering to us-ward, not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance.” (2 Peter 3:9)

There is a time appointed when Christ will be given His Revelation. It is so eternally fixed that all of the history of creation is wrapped around that very event. All of the human generations have incrementally trod forward to complete each amazingly precise step in progressing the race forward to that fixed time. Each of God's little servants have come to the date in their specific life when the longsuffering of God toward them brings forth the call to grace. Each is assigned the walk in this wilderness to perfect their afflictions and make them justified by the works that Christ's grace brings forth from them on the providential timeline. There is no changing that timeline. Our work is not to compel it, but to watch patiently for it and proclaim what we see when the "**signs of the times**" (**Matthew 16:3**) that inform us of His impending return.

This language in Christ's sermon opens up on this point. The wars and commotions that define the generation that leads into Christ's return is appointed precisely to do the work of preceding the day of the Lord. Preceding! It is not the Day of the Lord ... it is the last condition Christ identifies *before* the Day of the Lord. There is an "end". There is a "last day". There is a conclusionary period that is repeatedly articulated in the prophecies. But Christ's words for it, when we hear of these wars and commotions "**the end is not by and by.**" The word there used for "**by and by**" is "eutheos" ("yoo-theh'-oce") and it means "*straightway, immediately, forthwith*". It is a defining characteristic ... it can and will terrify the unbeliever ... and it absolutely must come to pass. But it is not the immediate indicator of Christ's Revelation.

Friends, I believe we have here the separation point between those events of human history that lead up to the Day of the Lord, and those events that actually begin the Day of the Lord. I've said many times that the words of Christ recorded in the 2nd and 3rd chapters of the Revelation are His preparing His church for His day. The church of the Lord Jesus Christ has been tempered through millennia of trials, afflictions, false doctrines, assaults, temptations, poverty, pride ... all of which causes their tender hearts to be pulled toward false Christs. Through all of that, Christ was purifying the body of His Bride so that when the hour of real conflict comes ... she is prepared. What the Revelation does not expressly include is the concomitant activities among the remainder of the world during that generation that runs up to the final days. We have that discussion in this passage just examined.

If it is God's will and He grants mercies for the work, we may see the other side of that coin when I next speak on these glorious words of the Savior. In the words we've examined today, He instructed us "**the end is not yet**" and "**the end is not by and by**". But in His next eschatological words He bluntly declares that the conditions described are "**the beginning of sorrows.**" (**Matthew 24:8**). Clear language that transitions the creation from one that has been prepared, to one that is utterly seized with the stark reality that the Day of the Lord is upon them. The tenor of His words change as He is speaking very directly to those who will be in the very vortex of a dismantling world system being prepared for Christ to return and take His throne.

Thank you for your love of the King. I love you all dearly. Amen.

ⁱ The quote from John Conrad Goebel is found in *The Apocalypse* footnote #32, and is attributed as follows: Die XXI Art. Aug. Conf. in Predigen Erklart, pp. 1256-59.

ⁱⁱ These two words are near each other in the Greek dictionary because they are a root Greek word (“*akouo*”) and a variation of the root word that describes the act, the sense or the thing heard (“*akoe*”). Together they are utilized 424 times in the New Testament.

ⁱⁱⁱ ***“The days of our years are threescore years and ten; and if by reason of strength they be fourscore years, yet is their strength labour and sorrow; for it is soon cut off, and we fly away.” (Psalms 90:10).*** With this indication of the full expression of a man’s generation, captured in ***“a prayer of Moses the man of God”***, we might be justified in anticipating Christ’s reference to be compatible with the words of our friend.

Lord’s Supper – Sunday, February 14, 2021

We will now take the Lord’s Supper in accordance with the prescribed ordinance of scripture.

“For I have received of the Lord that which also I delivered unto you, That the Lord Jesus the same night in which he was betrayed took bread: And when he had given thanks, he brake it, and said, **Take, eat: this is my body, which is broken for you: this do in remembrance of me.**” (1 Corinthians 11:23-24)

“After the same manner also he took the cup, when he had supped, saying, This cup is the new testament in my blood: this do ye, as oft as ye drink it, in remembrance of me. For as often as ye eat this bread, and drink this cup, ye do shew the Lord’s death till he come.” (1 Corinthians 11:25-26)

While the members partake of the Lord’s table, I want to do some little look at language from Paul’s treatise in Romans chapter eight, to wit:

“For to be carnally minded is death; but to be spiritually minded is life and peace.” (Romans 8:6)

In Romans, Paul does a good bit of work on the subject of how through the death of Jesus our Christ we go through a transition from spiritual death to spiritual life ... how we go from being servants of sin to being servants of God in Christ ... how we go from being enemies of God to full reconciliation. When we’re baptized, we’re buried with Christ and as Christ was raised up we should walk in newness of life. These truths have greater weight when we consider them while directly considering the sacrifice of His suffering and death on the cross.

Then we leave this house and return to the wilderness living that is our existence. Trudging through a life full of bodily pain, distress over our sinfulness, surrounded by a world that despises and rejects our Lord, vexed by the audacious abomination that bombards us from every quarter of the society. Nothing is untouched by the nasty poison of this generation. Our children, less experienced and filled with the raging of pride and lust and fear, having to navigate the perpetual onslaught of the

self-absorbed generation. Our own bodies, and the bodies of our sweet kindred here are wracked with pains and ailments that cause despair and grief. We pine for the oasis of little gatherings when we can talk about and think on the joys of His Word and wonders of His graces. We look for opportunities to bear up the standard of His doctrines and defend pure gospel truth against the tide of evil and darkness.

So while there are seemingly endless passages that can and do cheer our hearts and instruct our minds, I was struck with the simplicity of this little sixteen-word dichotomy and thought it would be a loving gift to the saints that can help them to keep these matters in right and helpful perspective as they go near and far from this little house ... this little body.

Gill: ***For to be carnally minded is death***: *The phrase the apostle here uses, includes the best part of corrupt man; the mind, the understanding, the judgment, the will, the affections, the thoughts, the reason, and reasonings of man; and may be rendered, "the wisdom," or "prudence of the flesh"; so called, to distinguish it from that wisdom which is from above; from that natural and civil wisdom, which is laudable; and it shows that the wisest part of man is but carnal: all sorts of persons destitute of the grace of God are concerned herein; or this is applicable to them all, as the sensualist, the worldling, the proud Pharisee, and the wise disputer of this world. This wisdom of the flesh, or carnal mindedness, "is death"; not that it is conversant about death; or that such persons are thoughtful of it, endeavour to make it familiar to them; or are desirous of it, and esteem it as a privilege; this only spiritually minded men do: but the sense is, that this issues in death; death is not the object, but the end of carnal mindedness; carnal mindedness, so far as it prevails in the saints, brings a death upon them. It is true, indeed, they cannot die a spiritual, or an eternal death; yet sometimes they are very dead and lifeless in their frames, in the exercise of grace and discharge of duty; which is frequently owing to their carnality: and the effect of this must needs be death in carnal men; since it alienates from God; it renders them transgressors of the law, and obnoxious to its curse; it sets the soul against, and diverts it from Christ the way of life; and if grace prevent not, must be the cause of, and issue in eternal death; because it is sin and sinful, it is enmity to God, it disqualifies for life, and makes persons fit companions for the heirs of wrath:"*

How utterly horrifying it is to consider that while we are graciously provided the glories of Christ in quickened spirits, in happy servitude, in full reconciliation with the will of God, in newness of life, yet we would be vexed with this carnality that presses down on our hearts and spirits like a mighty stone upon our backs. It is a thing to be despised. It is a thing to be counted our vilest enemy. It should be shunned and fled from as we would from a viper that slithers up into our very beds to disquiet our rest. We should loathe it from the deepest and most passionate corner of our minds and spirits.

Friends, we so quickly wander off the path of the spirit. We do so without thought – frequently because we are not thinking. We take a moment without care for where we’re walking and are simply unaware that we’ve stepped in carnal mindedness. A casual look at our television or our phones – a brief chat with a work colleague or another person in our society – and without intent your mind drifts to slavish thoughts of the carnal existence. And while we may have comfort that the ***"gifts and calling of God are without repentance"*** (Romans 11:29), we cannot – we DARE not –

be so presumptuous as to not realize that we are going to burden our souls and our flesh with the poison we have consumed.

Gill: ***“but to be spiritually minded, is life and peace:*** *spiritually minded men are the only living persons in a spiritual sense, for all that are in and after the flesh are dead; and so far as carnal mindedness prevails in professors, there is a deadness in them as to all spiritual exercises; and oftentimes as to outward appearance, there is no difference between them and dead men: but spiritually minded men are evidently living persons; they have a spiritual discerning of spiritual things; they breathe after them, savour and relish them; they talk of spiritual things, and walk in a spiritual manner; they are not only alive, but lively in the exercise of grace and discharge of duty; and are the means of enlivening others; and their end will be everlasting life; which is certain from the declared will and promise of God, and from the grace of life and Spirit of life which are in them. “Peace” also is another effect of spiritual mindedness; such enjoy peace of conscience: this is a fruit of the Spirit; a part of the kingdom of grace they are possessed of; and the things their minds are conversant with are productive of it; which is the gift of God, passes all understanding, and is of more worth than all the world: such men are also of peaceable dispositions in commonwealths, in neighbourhoods, in families, and churches; induced thereunto by the noblest arguments; and their end will be peace, which will be perfect and eternal.”*

Oh what bliss! What joining of hearts and minds together in genuine, sensible joys and comforts! As the words of one of the songs we sing here:

Content with beholding His face,
My all to His pleasure resigned,
No changes of season or place
Would make any change in my mind.
While blest with a sense of His love,
A palace a toy would appear;
And prisons would palaces prove,
If Jesus would dwell with me there.

Haldane: ***“For to be carnally minded is death:*** *This is the awful state of the carnal mind – the mind of the flesh without faith in Christ, and renovation of the Spirit of God. It is death spiritual and eternal. All the works of those who are in this state are ‘dead works’ (Hebrews 9:14). ‘The sacrifice of the wicked is an abomination to the Lord,’ [] **But to be spiritually minded is life and peace:** These are the effects of being enlightened and guided by the Spirit of God, and so having the mind turned from earthly things to the things of the Spirit. To be spiritually minded is life, even eternal life. [] It is also peace, both here and hereafter. [] While there is nothing so miserable for man as war with his Creator, there is nothing so blessed as peace and communion with God. It is peace in the conscience, in opposition to doubt []. The peace here spoken of is opposed to the terrors of conscience which the unregenerate experience, and to the opposition in their hearts to God, as well as to every species of false peace by which they may be deluded.”*

When we are keeping our minds and attentions on the things of God – the glories of Christ – then we have the elixir to counter every disease of mind and body. We have vaccines to the virus of man’s natural darkness and sin. We have sweet breezes to cool the heat of our vain passions of pride, lust, and wrath. Our spirits are warmed from the cold, dead, rote religiosity that passes for spirituality in this dark world. As we conduct this sober business of ***“eat[ing Christ’s] flesh and drink[ing Christ’s] blood” (John 6:54)*** in remembrance of His gracious sacrifice and in anticipation of His return, we do well to think upon the bounties of life and peace that flow from the gift of spiritual mindedness. We do well to think upon the horrors of allowing our minds to dwell on carnal things that cannot lead to anything but death.