

Sermon Notes

(A basic transcription with modifications for style and clarity)

WALKING THE PATH SET BEFORE US

Brian Orchard, June 17, 2017

I think it would be fair to say that we think of our lives in God's Church as a journey, moving from one point to another. I don't think we have any problems in likening this journey to Israel as it came out of Egypt and journeyed towards the Promised Land.

Throughout the year, God's Holy Days give us benchmarks to help us keep oriented on this journey, to give us focus and perhaps from time to time (particularly with the Days of Unleavened Bread), there is some reorientation or spiritual evaluation that takes place to keep us in a sense of this journey that we are on.

We are 13 days from Pentecost; we are 99 days away from the Day of Trumpets. Very significant numbers. (I tried very hard to figure out how I could make them significant, but I failed.) We are 99 days away from the Day of Trumpets. And so, for my purpose today, I'd just like to refer to this section of the journey as the journey of the Church. We have left the covenant-making environs of Mount Sinai and we're headed towards the return of Jesus Christ.

I'll refine it just a little by reminding ourselves that three and a half years ago God gave us a clear reorientation and a spiritual evaluation that left us with a very clear focus at that point in time. And I would just simply like to ask, "Are we as clear in our minds today as we were then? How confident are you in this journey that we are on at this time?"

It's good to stop, I think, from time to time and to take stock of the situation as to where we are. When I look at the example of Israel coming out of Egypt I absolutely marvel at the attitudes that developed within the nation of Israel so quickly into their journey. The first month into the journey, they were complaining and they were looking back to where they had come from; all the food and all of the stuff that they had. And they were complaining to Moses: "You have brought out here into this wilderness to die. Why didn't you leave us alone; leave us where we were?"

And so, it just leaves me with an impression that from time to time we, as God's people, need to do some reorientation and to think about where we are and what we are doing and to put a little purpose to it.

The concepts of “walking” and “a path” are very biblical concepts. They can also be absolutely, totally worldly concepts. But as they are used in the Bible they have some spiritual value. “To walk” indicates movement in general – people moving as in going or walking. Like I say, that can be walking out here in the parking lot. But when scripture uses the terminology, there is a spiritual application. Psalm 86, verse 11, for example:

Psalms 86:11 Teach me Your way, O Lord; I will walk in Your truth; Unite my heart to fear Your name.

The word here “*halak*” (to walk) is to follow God’s lead in all that they do. To follow God’s lead. “Teach me Your way, O Lord and I will walk in that way in Your truth.” And in conjunction with that, if you put in the third sentence there: “Unite my heart to fear Your name.” The heart and the mind are directed to concentrate on this one thing. A concentrated direction on this path that God is showing He wants His people to walk down. There’s a certain singleness of mind to follow God’s lead. Just picking up the first few verses of Psalm 119, as David leads us into some very profound thoughts about the law:

Psalms 119:1 Blessed are the undefiled in the way, who walk in the law of the Lord!

That’s a very simple and a clear concept. The law is a light, a lamp that shows us the way to walk. They walk in the law of the Lord!

2 Blessed are those who keep His testimonies, who seek Him with the whole heart! (Again, the heart and mind being directed to concentrate on this walk that God has laid out for His people.)

3 They also do no iniquity; They walk in His ways.

4 You have commanded us to keep Your precepts diligently.

And so, there is a constant, concentrated action of following God’s lead, which is a lot easier for me to say than it is for us to do. We don’t live in an environment today that really allows us or encourages us to have a single, concentrated mindset on something for very long. That’s just not the way it is today, to be able to sit down and to concentrate over a period of time. But this walk that God has laid before us requires that of us – constant, concentrated action of following God’s lead, walking according to God’s truth and commandments. Of course, closely associated with walking is the concept of following a path.

Psalm 25:4 Show me Your ways, O Lord; Teach me Your paths.

5 Lead me in Your truth and teach me, for You are the God of my salvation; On You I wait all the day. (Drop down to verse 10.)

10 All the paths of the Lord are mercy and truth, to such as keep His covenant and His testimonies.

So, the path becomes very spiritual in its application. The way or path can lead to life or it can lead to death. But obviously, as it's presented to us here, it's in the positive; the way to life. The path that we seek is God's path – the path that He wants to lay out before us to walk. It's a path that is illuminated by the word of God; the light of God's word.

What I'd like to remind ourselves of is that when we began what has become The Father's Call Fellowship we placed a very heavy emphasis on walking and path. This is not some new thing I'm introducing. We're just simply rehearsing, reminding ourselves. Let me go back to one of the first papers that we published in the first week of January 2014.

"Today, we are presented with a spiritual path that we are open to follow—a new relationship with our Father and elder Brother where we allow Them to teach us how to govern ourselves amongst ourselves. (This is a huge concept: "to govern ourselves amongst ourselves.")

Today we recognize and accept the need to change past practices and to pursue the path to which our Father has led us. With the love and guidance of the true Shepherd, we commit to doing what is necessary to allow Him to give us His mind so that we can serve His flock as He intends—giving our lives in imitation of His sacrifice for all mankind (Philippians 2:7–8)."

Then we stated the primary purpose that we had set for ourselves at that time.

"In the interest of family togetherness, we commit ourselves to the acceptance of all of our Father's beloved children.

And sometimes I feel we need to be reminded of that because as time goes by, say three and a half years, maybe things are just settling down into "Well, this is just another splinter group of the Church. This is just another group." We have never felt that we are the only true Church. We are a part of the spiritual body, the ekklesia, which is why we emphasize that on Pentecost. And we do see God's people scattered.

But God has given us a particular responsibility here as far as a path that is to walk. So, our primary purpose is to begin to understand and define the true nature of governance within the family of our Father and His Son and to practice it correctly. A noble goal, but not an easy goal by any means whatsoever to put into practice.

Our primary purpose was a singleness of mind to follow God's lead. Governance within the family of our Father and His Son is critically important. But the importance to you will depend on what your concept of governance is. And that is a very mixed bag

from the last 20, 30, 40 years in God's Church. God is, God has been and will continue to be, a family. God is a family.

Now, let's come back to John 1, a familiar but very important section of scripture. John chapter 1. Its importance is in the fact that it shows the connection between the God family and the human family. In John 1, verse 1 we're introduced to the God family. And we're introduced to it as a family.

John 1:1 In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God.

2 He was in the beginning with God.

This is "pre" the book of Genesis. This is "pre" Genesis 1:1. There has always been the government of God. Its structure has never changed. It is hierarchical, with God the Father as the Eternal Head. And all that follows on, then, in terms of what God is doing in creating, comes from that source of a family – the God family. Verse 3 brings us to Genesis 1:1 here in John 1.

3 All things were made through Him, and without Him nothing was made that was made.

4 In Him was life, and the life was the light of men.

Genesis 1:1 In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth.

Elohim created. The God family created. The Word created under the direction of the Father. The Word was not independent of the Father. The Word did what the Father instructed Him to do in terms of creation. What did the God family do then? Well, I'm coming back to John, but first let's add in Genesis. Very, very important and very familiar; maybe so familiar the importance gets lost sometimes. But here in Genesis 1, verse 26 God said:

Genesis 1:26 Then God said, "Let Us make man in Our image, (Now, everything else had been created after its kind, the animals and so on. Now we come to man.)

... "Let Us make man in Our image, according to Our likeness..." (They are a family. It's the God family. "Let's create man in Our image.")

27 So God created man in His own image; in the image of God He created him; male and female He created them.

The God family created on the basis of that family, because God's will was to create a family. He still has that will to create a family. The ultimate purpose for creating physical man in God's own image is given to us a little later in chapter 2. We come down to verse 22:

Genesis 2:22 Then the rib which the Lord God had taken from man He made into a woman, and He brought her to the man.

That's the concept I'd like you to try and keep in your mind when we get into the New Testament a little later. This idea of the rib being taken from the man. The woman was not created as a completely independent unit from the man. She was brought to him:

23 And Adam said: "This is now bone of my bones and flesh of my flesh; She shall be called Woman, because she was taken out of Man."

24 Therefore a man shall leave his father and mother and be joined to his wife, and they shall become one flesh.

Now, certainly God intended for the man and the woman to produce children and for the earth to be populated. That is a given because God is creating a family. But what is given to us here is incredibly important. God created a family for the purpose of inserting His family-style governance into the physical realm of man. He was bringing a light into the world. He was bringing the light of His familiness, if you like, into the realm of man.

The back story to this is well known. We rehearse it often enough. It is Heylel's rebellion and the destruction of Godly government throughout God's creation. Especially on the earth, where it seems to have been the center of God's government under Heylel. It was destroyed!

So with the creation account in Genesis we see God cleaning up "the *tohu* and *bohu*" left by Satan, by the rebellion. And we see the beginning of the development of an eternal family, the family of God. God inserted light into the darkness created by sin. His whole plan and purpose from the making of man in His image forward is the creation of a family. So God is inserting His "family-ness", His family-style of governance, into the physical realm of man demonstrated by a man and a woman becoming one, just as God and the Word were and are one. The oneness of the God family becomes the oneness of the human family. Later of course, the Word would insert light into the world in a profoundly spiritual way. Back in John 1, verse 4, like I said, "in Him was life and the life was the light of men." He became flesh (the Word). He was with God, He was God.

John 1:14 And the Word became flesh and dwelt among us, and we beheld His glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth.

Christ fully, completely and totally represented His Father. And this develops, as you probably are ahead of me here, into a relationship that we are a part of at this time. We'll get to that. Christ brought the light of the Father and the glory of the Father, into the realm of man and He provided a way for sinful man to come into a relationship with the Father. And, in so doing, founded a spiritual Body to reflect the grace and truth, the glory of the Father.

That's why, recently on Pentecost, we spent some time emphasizing the spiritual nature of the *ekklesia*, which I hope we all understand now. *Ekklesia* doesn't have to have a spiritual connotation. It can have a completely secular connotation. When it becomes Christ's or God's *ekklesia*, though, it becomes a very different animal, so to speak; very spiritual. Speaking directly to the Church in Colossians 1, the Apostle Paul says:

Colossians 1:13 He has delivered us from the power of darkness (remember we said Christ was inserting light into the darkness)...

...He has delivered us from (drawn us out from) **the power of darkness and conveyed** (or transferred) **us into the kingdom of the Son of His love,**

Now, the Kingdom is not here yet and the Church is not the Kingdom, even though there is a major religious denomination here on this earth at the moment that think they are representing the Kingdom of God. The Church is not the Kingdom of God. But this is speaking of the Church. We have been drawn out from the darkness of this world and transferred into the spiritual nature of the Church in anticipation of a fullness, we understand that.

14 in whom we have redemption through His blood, the forgiveness of sins.

We were in darkness. We were in sin and through Christ we've been drawn out and conveyed into the Church.

15 He is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn over all creation. (There it is again. And we are, sort of, narrowing it down here to a function of the Church.)

15 He is the image of the invisible God...

Christ still has that oneness with the Father. You see Christ, you see the Father. That is their very nature, so that these two Beings are One God. But now this is brought into a realm that engages us. We're talking about the Church.

16 For by Him all things were created that are in heaven and that are on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or dominions or principalities or powers. All things were created through Him and for Him.

And He continues to create. He is creating a family. He hasn't stopped; He hasn't diverted from doing that.

17 And He is before all things, and in Him all things consist.

18 And He is the head of the body, the church,

He is the image of the invisible God. We've been drawn through forgiveness and through His blood into this relationship with Him (Jesus Christ), which now draws us into a relationship with the Father. That's a very logical and clear extension. The Church is

a living, dynamic, spiritual organism. It is a Body! Now, how can we understand the relationship of the members of the Body to God? Verse 27, still here in Colossians 1:

27 To them God willed to make known what are the riches of the glory of this mystery among the Gentiles: which is Christ in you, the hope of glory.

Look what we've just read about Christ. He is the image of the invisible God. Christ lives His life in us. It's akin to the rib being taken away from Adam, the woman created out of that rib and then the woman being brought back to the man and they become one flesh. If Christ is in us, it's as though that rib from Christ has been transferred into something spiritual, then we are brought to Jesus Christ and we become one with Jesus Christ. And if you're one with Jesus Christ you are one with the Father. We are one with the Father.

We are to understand our relationship with God through the structure and the nature of family. It's family from before Genesis 1:1. It continues to be family right through to the end of the plan of salvation. The Apostle Paul understood this. In 1 Corinthians 11 verse 3, we see a lengthy section here on authority and governance, if you will. It uses the hair length of a man and the hair length of a woman as symbols of authority. Paul says here in verse 10:

1 Corinthians 11:10 For this reason the woman ought to have a symbol of authority on her head,

This section is about governance, about authority. As we look at verse 3, we see something incredibly important.

3 But I want you to know that the head of every man is Christ, the head of woman is man, and the head of Christ is God.

This is about governance. The hair length is simply symbolic of authority. Marriage shows us the structure of government. It's not separate from or divorced from God's family-style of governance that we're introduced to in John 1, verse 1. The marriage relationship is based on the God family relationship and is the model for governance in the Church.

I would hope that you are familiar with what I'm going to read to you now. It's something that was written by Mr. Armstrong in 1970. Very insightful, and we are not one step out of step with what he was teaching us at that time. This is 1970:

"Thus you see how the one and only true Church is not an organization of men, but a spiritual organism! This spiritual organism is the "Body of Christ" existing for the purpose of carrying on the work of God. (We might want to, and this is not the place to do it, think about what the real work of God is. He is creating a family.)

The resurrected, eternally living Jesus Christ is the Head of the Church! Now I have shown that the true Church of God is not a human organization or corporation,

but a spiritual organism. Composed of all who have and are being led by the Holy Spirit of God abiding in them. Yet the Church is organized.” (As we’ve read in 1 Corinthians 11:3. There is indeed organization.)

We said in January 2014: *“In the interest of family togetherness, we commit ourselves to the acceptance of all of our Father’s beloved children.”*

It was a statement acknowledging the spiritual nature of the Church, a spiritual organism. We are only one part of the Body! We acknowledged that at the beginning. We continue to acknowledge that today, although there are many detractors who want to say we believe and teach otherwise. That is not so.

The understanding of Godly governance is one thing. Its practice is another. It is not an easy concept to work with because it is an intensely spiritual exercise! To approach it from a physical point of view would be wrong. We simply become any other organization of man. It is spiritual and that’s what makes it so difficult. Let’s go to Ephesians 5, where we see Paul (who wrote what we just read in 1 Corinthians 11:3) spinning off from that. Continuing to build on that, he then addresses marriage in the context of the Church in its relationship with Jesus Christ. In verse 22 he says:

Ephesians 5:22 Wives, submit to your own husbands, as to the Lord.

23 For the husband is head of the wife, as also Christ is head of the church; and He is the Savior of the body. (This section is very familiar to us, but it’s very instructive in terms of God’s governance.)

24 Therefore, just as the church is subject to Christ, so let the wives be to their own husbands in everything.

25 Husbands, love your wives, just as Christ also loved the church and gave Himself for her,

What is he building on here? Well, he’s made it clear. I purposely didn’t read it, so let’s go back now to verse 21. He is building on the concept of:

21 submitting to one another in the fear of God.

What a difficult thing to achieve at the human level! Submitting to one another in the fear of God. Then he goes straight into wives and husbands – marriage! He goes straight into marriage! We want to say, because of our human experience, that it’s impossible for a man to submit to his wife. As soon as he’s done that, he’s lost his place. He’s no longer the head of the wife if he submits to her. Spiritually that’s false! Spiritually Jesus Christ submitted Himself to the Church!

25 ...just as Christ also loved the church and gave Himself for her,

Christ submitted Himself. He gave up His Godhead. Remember that scripture that said He emptied Himself, came down to take this position? He submitted Himself so

that you could have a relationship with Christ and then with the Father. It is possible. In fact, it's required for a husband to submit himself to his wife. He's not submitting his position of authority. It is the way he nurtures, cares for, leads, guides, encourages his wife not to submit herself just to him. But to be submissive to Christ! It's a connection to Jesus Christ! And if you're connected to Christ, you're connected to the Father. It goes that way. It's very important to consider this concept of submitting to one another in the fear of God.

If you read further down in this chapter and you stay with this analogy of marriage and the Church and Jesus Christ, what do you come to? We go all the way back to the book of Genesis. In verse 30:

30 For we are members of His body, of His flesh and of His bones.

We are the rib of Jesus Christ. Would that be so out of the ballpark to make that parallel, that understanding? We are members of His body.

31 "For this reason a man shall leave his father and mother and be joined to his wife, and the two shall become one flesh."

That is not about the sexual relationship. That's not about having kids, having families. That is about the connection of governance from the human realm to the spiritual realm, the governance of God.

32 This is a great mystery, but I speak concerning Christ and the church.

Man's view of governance does not sit on this principle. I say man's view. He doesn't eat from the tree of life. These scriptures don't make sense to him. Man's view of government was addressed by Christ. Mark 10, verse 42:

Mark 10:42 But Jesus called them to Himself (knowing full well He had a little situation here He needed to address amongst them) **and said to them, "You know that those who are considered rulers over the Gentiles lord it over them, and their great ones exercise authority over them** (or lordship over them).

This is the nature of human governance. On the human level, without God's Spirit, it's not possible to submit one to another in the fear of God. Yes, it's hierarchy, but it's all about who's sitting on top of the heap of this hierarchy. I have been through a bit of a learning curve. You're all going to sit there and say well yes, so you should have. But one thing I have learned through experience. This is probably going to be beneficial if you've got a notebook and paper just to make a little diagram here (once again showing the deficiency of all of those with electronic equipment on their lap).

I've been involved in three separate occasions in the formation of another group. It is an important element of a non-profit organization to incorporate. There are reasons for doing that and there are good reasons for doing it. We got advice from within the Church amongst professionals within the non-profit industry, so to speak. And we got

advice from outside, from lawyers. And the advice was the same. Yes, you should incorporate because there are simple benefits from doing so.

If you incorporate, the state in which you incorporate (I'll stay with California, because that's where my experience has been) requires you to do certain things to be in compliance with the state. First of all the state requires a president. So put your little circle up at the top (or cross, or X; you know if you get three X's across the top, you win). Put whatever symbol at the top. That's the president. They require, at minimum, a secretary and a treasurer. You can have other offices, but underneath one put those two X's or circles or whatever symbol you're using. The state also requires a board. So your third line down you can put whatever number of X's and crosses along there you like, whatever number that the corporation feels it needs to have.

If you were to enclose what you've just drawn there with some straight lines what have you got? You've got a triangle and it is hierarchical. Nothing wrong, necessarily, with it being hierarchical. But if you take that manmade organizational structure and you call it the government of God, which we have done (I've been a part of this), what have you got? An *ekklesia*. Now it could work, if the attitudes involved are right. But it has all the proclivity to promote lordship up to the top, to the one at the top. The one at the top of that diagram is a man. Where is Jesus Christ in that diagram? Now, Christ went on to say:

43 Yet it shall not be so among you; but whoever desires to become great among you shall be your servant.

44 And whoever of you desires to be first shall be slave of all (servant/slave of all).

45 For even the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give His life a ransom for many."

That attitude is all important. If you go back and read our foundational papers, the word 'shepherd' comes up a lot. In 1 Peter 5, verse 2, it says:

1 Peter 5:2 Shepherd the flock of God which is among you, serving as overseers, not by compulsion but willingly, not for dishonest gain but eagerly;

The exact opposite of the type of Gentile government that Jesus Christ was referring to in Mark chapter 10. Not for dishonest gain, not for position, not for power, not for the elevation of self in any way.

3 nor as being lords over those entrusted to you,

We said from the beginning that we would not go out and try and get people to come to be a part of this organization for that very reason – entrusted to you. What we envisaged was that we would need to create a pasture with clean water, so that if Christ the Shepherd wanted to bring any of His fold to this pasture and to this water we would

make it readily available. But we wouldn't go out trying to get people to come. That's not what our role is.

...over those entrusted to you, but being examples to the flock; (You've heard me over the years here talk about a witness many, many times.)

...being examples to the flock;

4 and when the Chief Shepherd appears, you will receive the crown of glory that does not fade away.

5 Likewise you younger people, submit yourselves to your elders. (That's a fairly natural statement, but he takes it one step further.) **Yes, all of you be submissive to one another, and be clothed with humility,**

I said earlier, the understanding of Godly governance is one thing. The practice is another. Human relationships or relationships between humans within the spiritual body of Christ are difficult, are hard. We've just had a situation where we had to reorganize one particular congregation and it gave us the opportunity to follow this model of family-style governance. And all of those involved will tell you, it's not easy. It's easy to say. The concept might sound good. It's not that easy to do.

And again, as we talk about some of these things, just to make a point: how many of our marriages have substantially changed in the last three years on the basis of what I've been reading to you just today? How many men have accepted the challenge of submitting one to another in the fear of God? How many women have accepted the challenge of submitting to your husband in an environment that discourages any submission of any kind?

...be submissive to one another, and be clothed with humility, for "God resists the proud, but gives grace to the humble."

6 Therefore humble yourselves under the mighty hand of God, that He may exalt you in due time,

You do the hard yards now. The reward is down the other side here. Our walk is to follow God's lead, asking God continually to "show us Your ways", "teach me Your paths", "lead me in Your truth and teach me" out of Psalm 25. Constantly asking God for that. If we are following God's lead and we're endeavoring to walk a path of righteousness, why is it so difficult? Is anybody going to disagree with me that it is not difficult? "No, no, no. This is easy. This is simple." It's hard! It's really, really hard!

The answer lies in the nature of the path that we are walking. So, there's something I want to leave with you today that builds on our concept of *ekklesia* and it has to do with that path that we are walking. Come back to Psalm chapter 23. We're just going to deal with the first three verses and it's the third verse in particular that we'll get to. But the lead-in follows along with what I've been saying:

Psalms 23:1 The Lord is my shepherd;

We always want to acknowledge Christ as the Head of the Church. He is our Shepherd. There are other people that have parts to play, but anything we do has got to reflect Christ; lead to Christ. That's what a husband must do with his wife, with his children, with his family. Lead them to Christ. We, as a group of people, have got to point people to Christ and get out of the way. Do what has to be done to be a shepherd, but get out of the way so that the people can see the Shepherd.

1 The Lord is my shepherd; I shall not want.

2 He makes me to lie down in green pastures; He leads me beside the still waters.

One of the problems with shepherds, as identified by Ezekiel, is that they don't or have not been, largely, leading people to good pastures and clean water. In Ezekiel chapter 34 (and we acknowledge that this exists today, unfortunately), verse 2:

Ezekiel 34:2 "Son of man, prophesy against the shepherds of Israel, prophesy and say to them, 'Thus says the Lord God to the shepherds: "Woe to the shepherds of Israel who feed themselves! Should not the shepherds feed the flocks (care for the flocks, sacrifice for the flocks, do whatever is necessary for the benefit of the flock)?"

4 The weak you have not strengthened, nor have you healed those who were sick, nor bound up the broken, nor brought back what was driven away, nor sought what was lost; but with force and cruelty you have ruled them.

That's the type of rulership Christ condemned, but it's the type of rulership coming out of the shepherds of Israel. Maybe this is more alive in my mind from just having spent a couple of weeks with a group of people that have just extracted themselves from this style of shepherding. This is the way they were treated! They've come to us spiritually abused. They would admit that. They will tell you that. They're going through an enormous re-orientation from that experience to seeing what we're trying to teach them and get across to them; this whole concept.

When I'm working one on one with an elder who has come out of that environment, been trained in that environment and he's starting to see what we're trying to say here and tears roll down his face. This is a man's man. When it's dawning on him just how wrong it has been and how good this is, tears ran down his face. He was getting the picture. If you read on down, we'll just come down to verse 11:

11 ..."Indeed I Myself will search for My sheep and seek them out.

12 As a shepherd seeks out his flock on the day he is among his scattered sheep, so will I seek out My sheep and deliver them from all the places where they were scattered on a cloudy and dark day.

If Christ wants somebody to eat of the pasture and drink of the water that we are providing, He will do so. We have just got to do our work in providing that. Down to verse 18:

18 Is it too little for you to have eaten up the good pasture, that you must tread down with your feet the residue of your pasture — and to have drunk of the clear waters, that you must foul the residue with your feet?

Christ is the Shepherd. He is the Head of the Church. Our job is to provide good pasture and clear waters. Back to Psalm 23. I want to focus on verse 3.

Psalm 23:3 He restores my soul; He leads me in the paths of righteousness for His name's sake.

Now, there's a little back story here. I don't want to get too technically bogged down, but I think I can make the point. It's something you can research for yourself if you want to. The Bible is written in two different languages essentially – Hebrew and Greek. They represent two different ways of thinking. Not just two different thoughts, two different ways of thinking.

For the most part, the Western World has been schooled in the way of Greek thought. You go back and study philosophy and so on and you understand the truth of that statement. And it is true when it comes to approaching the Bible. The Old Testament, the Hebrew, is discarded and the New Testament, the Greek, is in favor because the God of that Old Testament is nasty, cruel and everything else. We got rid of Him and so we focus on the New Testament.

The Greek approach has been enhanced within Christianity by replacement theology. You might want to do a little research on that – replacement theology, where anything Hebrew-related, in particular Israel, is eliminated and the whole emphasis is put on the Church, the spiritual Church. The key is this: the Greek system of thought is linear and logic. Linear is a straight line and logical. If you are at point A and you want to get to point B, then the approach is a straight line. You want to go from A to B by the most direct way and get there as soon as possible, if you at all can. Somewhere in here I have another piece of paper, lots of pieces of paper. Just a little back up to that, something that I came across yesterday. *“Culture and Systems of Thought; Holistic Versus Analytical Cognition”*. Interesting, holistic versus analytical. I quote:

“Westerners are more analytic, paying attention primarily to the object and the categories to which it belongs and using rules, including formal logic, to understand its behavior.”

In other words, linear and logic; straight line. If you're at A and want to get to B, you draw a straight line and you go. You're using logic. Anything that gets in the way of

that journey is a negative. It's impeding you on that journey from A to B in a straight line. It becomes negative.

How many people try to walk a straight path by making God's word fit their logical conclusion? They form a logical conclusion and then go looking for scriptures to substantiate that Greek line of thought. And then, if it doesn't work out, who gets the blame? God. God has received a lot of blame in the last few years. And life's difficult and life is hard. Here I am. I'm on this journey from point A to point B. This is going on in my life. That's happening in somebody else's life. This is happening within the Church. All these negative things, how come? If I'm walking the path, I'm trying to please God, why are these things happening? And in its extreme form you become bitter against God. You probably all know people who have done that. Turned against God because it hasn't worked out the way they thought it to and wanted it to.

In verse 3 here of Psalm 23 we are given an example of Hebrew thought; Hebrew thought which is different from Greek, linear logic. "He restores my soul". It means to turn back. If you want to get a little sense of how difficult it is to put one English word for one Hebrew word, pull out your *Strong's Concordance*. Look up the word *shuwb*, which is the word here for "restores" (and we often refer to that in terms of repentance, but it means to return) and look how many English words *Strong's* uses to try to get across the concept of the Hebrew word. Over and over, if you go into the concordance, you'll find the Hebrew word. And to try and understand it, here's this great list of English words. Very difficult to find one English word that equates with that one Hebrew word. Psalm 19:7, to add to this:

Psalm 19:7 The law of the Lord is perfect, converting the soul (There is *shuwb* again, "to turn back, to restore"); The testimony of the Lord is sure, making wise the simple;

"He restores my soul." Through Christ we are restored in a reconciled relationship with the Father. But what is interesting is this word "path". "He leads me in the path of righteousness." The word for path is very instructive. It can mean a track, a path. But the root that it comes from means circular or around. The path is a circular path. It is not a straight path. It is circular. It is still point A to point B, but it's a very different approach. To use the analogy of going up a mountain: point A is down here at the bottom. You want to get to the top of the mountain. Greek logic takes you straight up the mountain. Gary MacPherson at his best. Straight up to the top.

Here the concept of Hebrew thinking is to go around the mountain getting a little higher each time you go around. It defies human logic to do it this way. It's natural to go up the mountain the shortest way possible.

The walk on this path requires those spiritual elements that we need to build into our lives to be like Jesus Christ. It requires faith. You take off from point A because you

want to go to point B, but God's path goes this way. Do we trust it? The normal thinking is, "I'm going the wrong direction. This is not right. I'm going away from where I need to be." As God takes us around the mountain a little higher each time, leading us through experiences, that will build faith. That will increase our faithfulness and that will develop patience. I'm going around this stupid mountain ten times. I want to get to the top. Do we have the patience to trust God's lead on this path? It requires perseverance, it requires steadfastness and courage while God builds within His people the characteristics that will be required in the God family.

In other words, it is a difficult path, but it's a path that builds, that strengthens. Look at 2 Peter 1, verse 5 and see if this is not a circular path that is described here.

2 Peter 1:5 But also for this very reason, giving all diligence, add to your faith virtue,

The whole concept that Peter brings across here is a walking of the path that is building and increasing spiritual qualities. It's not the fastest way from A to B, but it is the most spiritual way.

...add to your faith virtue, to virtue knowledge,

As you wander on this path in a circular fashion, God is taking you through all of these various stations, all of these situations of life and they're not all positive. A lot of them are very negative. In one sense they're negative, they're trials. And through that trial you develop some Godly concept.

6 to knowledge self-control, to self-control (or patience) perseverance, to perseverance godliness, (You're building and strengthening. This is not just "how fast can I get through this to get to where I want to be?")

7 to godliness brotherly kindness, and to brotherly kindness love.

8 For if these things are yours and abound, you will be neither barren nor unfruitful in the knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ.

This is the nature of a circular path. Difficult, yes. Strengthening, yes. Getting your mind focused on trust and faith and confidence in God, absolutely! It is a path that the humble will walk because they take "self" out of the equation. And if you were to analyze the Greek, linear logic way of thought, it is heavily influenced by "self". Self: that's where the logic part kicks in here. We're in a day and age now, when the whole emphasis of our society is on self. Get it, get it now! You deserve it now! Don't wait for it. You deserve it right now! Humility takes the self out of the equation and does it for that last statement in verse 3 of Psalm 23, "for His name's sake". Self prefers the straight line version. It's quicker, it's more result oriented; it's very visual.

I received this comment a week or two ago, which encouraged me greatly. I won't reveal who it's from. That's not important. But it's somebody who had been doing a lot

of thinking about where he is and what is going on in his life. He makes a point here about this way of life. He's coming to a conclusion and this is without anything I have said here today. He said:

“God’s way is not linear. I’m starting to see the organic, iterative (which means involving repetition), holistic creative imperative that I think God uses (the Hebrew way of thinking, the circular path). Messy to a limited human eye. (It’s difficult. It is hard. What we’re trying to do doesn’t always fit human logic.) It’s messy to a limited human eye. Infinitely complex and not controllable. (At least that’s my experience for the last three years, probably yours as well.) And the success emerges out of the mist, as it were, when you aren’t expecting it. (You’re not presented with all of these wonderful blessings on silver platters. You do some good thing and along comes an angel with a silver platter and says “here’s a blessing for what you just did”. You don’t get that kind of encouragement.) The process, I suspect, is at work here. The sum of the parts being assembled is emerging into a very nice, coherent, simple and peaceful whole.”

I would suggest it probably took this individual a good three years to come to this point, maybe more. He arrived at this point and I find that very, very encouraging. I hope we can all arrive at that point to see what God is doing. Isaiah 42, verse 16.

Isaiah 42:16 I will bring the blind by a way they did not know; I will lead them in paths they have not known. I will make darkness light before them, and crooked places straight. These things I will do for them...

God’s path is not a path that you and I would figure out for ourselves. It doesn’t fit linear logic. But God will bring us down through that path, if we will allow Him. Habakkuk chapter 3, the last three verses of this short book.

Habakkuk 3:17 Though the fig tree may not blossom, nor fruit be on the vines; Though the labor of the olive may fail, and the fields yield no food; Though the flock may be cut off from the fold, and there be no herd in the stalls —

Now that’s a whole bunch of negative things going on there. And I could create quite a list of Church people right now at this moment who are going through things in their lives that totally fit that. You have to say why? Why is a young mother with four children dying of a disease that she cannot control? And on and on the list goes. “The fig tree may not blossom.” All of these negative things, this is life!

18 Yet I will rejoice in the Lord, I will joy in the God of my salvation. (Because the eyes are seeing the spiritual, the deeply intense spiritual things.)

19 The Lord God is my strength; He will make my feet like deer's feet, and He will make me walk on my high hills.

One final quote from the original paper from 2014 that I quoted from at the beginning of the sermon:

“We must rededicate ourselves to reconciliation so that the flock can be fed and the gospel can be preached. This dedication must be based on the marriage/family model of the nurturing, caring use of authority as our Father has revealed.”

That’s the goal we set for ourselves. That continues to be our goal. We’re working our way forward slowly. God’s lead is slow. God’s lead is not based on the Greek model. It’s not nearly as fast as we humanly would like. But if we continue faithfully to walk that circular path, we will end up where we need to be. That path does ascend. Each time you go around you get a bit higher and a bit higher. God will lead us in understanding what His will is if we continue to seek it and we do so with true, genuine humility.

“We believe this is an effort worthy of all who consider themselves children of God. (And the paper concluded with a question.) Has the Father called you to achieve this goal?”

Now, I would suggest that to answer that question, “Has the Father called you to achieve this goal?”, that you need to embrace the Hebrew thought process. Look at the path that you’re following, look at the path that God has set before us. And you may want to go back and reread some of the initial papers that we put forward, where we set it out. What we were going to try to accomplish and achieve. Go back and see how closely we’re trying to follow that.

We walk a circular path of spiritual growth and development for His name’s sake. ♦