

Msg #137 of *Scripture Beneath The Surface*

“Drastic Measures”

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Hello! Thanks for being with us. Today I'd like to talk about earth, in its logical and orderly form. The world, the cosmos, the universe, the galaxies, the sun, moon, and stars, are things which are physical in nature and not spiritual. The things of this universe work in the physical realm, and we humans who occupy this universe also work in the physical realm. But God doesn't work in the physical realm, and his strength, his power, is not dependent on the physical universe.

When God says that something should happen, it happens. When God speaks, things are moved. And, when he speaks, the things that he speaks come to pass, and what comes to pass cannot be measured or determined how it was accomplished. God's word is a power that humans do not understand very well. Humans understand physical things fairly well, but the spiritual things are difficult for us. Of course, the people of this earth have developed their physical powers extremely well up to this point, and we can cause a lot of things to take place just by our rules of science and our development of technology. But, everything we do is based on the science and technology of a logical orderly world system rather than on the spiritual word of God.

When we Christians became born again, we were not born again as new physical human beings. That happens only once. However, the second birth is a spiritual birth, and brings a whole new realm of understanding which is completely contrary to our first birth life, our human, natural state. When we are born again we begin to see the wisdom of God. When we become born again we begin to understand how things which are not seen with our physical eyes, or not heard

with our physical ears, can actually still exist in a spiritual realm which we previously could not see or hear. When we are born again we come to realize the impact of faith, and how we can operate in the spiritual realm of God without relying on the natural powers of mankind.

Now, as a Christian, you comprehend this simple concept. You understand that faith is not a physical knowledge, but is, instead, knowing something from a spiritual perspective. That's why the Bible often repeats the phrase, "those that have ears to hear, let them hear." We all have physical ears when we are born as human beings. But, the spiritual ears only come when we are born again in spirit. When we are born again in spirit, we begin to listen to God's Holy Spirit as it witnesses to our heart concerning God's written and spoken word, and the demonstrations that we have seen of that word. When we are born again in spirit, we begin to understand things that are spiritual which we never saw before.

But, today I would like you to take this one step further and recognize where the power of God comes from. As Christians, we all want more of the power of God. As Christians, we recognize that God's power truly is awesome. We recognize that God is the Almighty God, and we recognize that through this power of God we can see things happen on earth which could not possibly be accomplished by man's physical powers. We yearn to see people healed instantly. We yearn to see people raised from the dead. We desire greatly to have God use us in powerful situations, in order that we might also speak the word of God and see miraculous things come to pass.

In Luke, chapter 10, we read of how Jesus sent seventy disciples out to the different cities in order to preach the good news of the kingdom. And as they preached the good news, they were to heal the sick. Now, in verse 17, we read that when the 70 returned, they were rejoicing because, as they said, "even the devils are subject to us through the name of Jesus." Now, it's interesting that mankind attempts to duplicate God's power on this earth, and they can cause mountains to be moved, and they can build great towers, and they can exalt themselves up high, even to the extent of setting foot on the surface of the moon. However, here's something interesting. Science and technology cannot touch an evil spirit. Science and technology cannot overcome evil spiritual powers at all. It was wonderful that the disciples of Jesus could heal the sick, but it was even more fantastic that by the power of Jesus' name, even spiritual beings were subject to them.

The power of God is great. 1 Corinthians 3:19, tells us that compared to God's wisdom, the wisdom of this world is foolishness. Jesus overcame the world. All the power of this world could not destroy the almighty power of God. However, notice that in spite of the great power that Jesus had, he still died on the cross. Jesus was crucified. The evil men of his day caused him to be put to death. Nails were driven through his hands and feet, and he died an excruciatingly painful physical death on the cross. But, I want you to also notice that his physical death was not a failure in any way. His physical death was a destruction of his physical body, and it would appear from the natural point of view that Satan had been victorious over him. However, his great power did not lie in the physical realm of earth. Sure, if he wanted to, Jesus

could have rose up in power and saved his flesh and blood body from destruction, but the true power of Jesus was not that he could exalt himself in the physical sense, but it was based in the fact that he could overcome the physical powers of earth by his spirit.

Jesus is God. Jesus had the power to lay his physical life down, and because of his almighty power as a spiritual being, he then also had the power to raise his physical body up from the grave. Jesus overcame Satan and everything else that was evil, not by physical warfare, not by attempting to keep his flesh alive, but by spiritual means. He overcame the world by the power of the Spirit, not by the power of the flesh. In the natural, the world overcame him. But, in the spiritual, he overcame the world. Jesus demonstrated the scripture for us which is found in Matthew 16:25, which says, "For whosoever will save his life shall lose it: and whosoever will lose his life for my sake shall find it."

This is the key to our own spiritual victory in Jesus Christ. We can overcome the world if we will realize that in order to overcome the world, we must allow our flesh to become weak, to the point that it is no longer strong, and even to the point that we lose our lives. We must allow our flesh to perish, either by dying daily to the things of this world, or even by dying as martyrs for the word of God. Which death in the natural you actually die will be determined between you and God. However, in order to overcome the world, you will have to die one way or the other. Paul tells us in 1 Corinthians 15:31, that he died daily. This means he died out to the flesh every day of his life. The world always warred against him, just as it warred against Jesus, and the world will always mount a war against you to destroy you. But, your strength is not in your flesh, but in your spirit. It is in your born-again spiritual being that you have your ultimate strength to overcome the world. It is when your life is weak from the world's viewpoint, but it is strong in the Lord. You may mourn in this world while the world around you exalts themselves, but one day you will rejoice and the world will mourn.

Here, take a look at something interesting. Let's look in Matthew, chapter 5, beginning with verse 3. These are the scriptures which we refer to as the beatitudes. By the way, the word beatitude, means blessing. These were a series of blessings, or beatitudes, that Jesus was giving to the people. But, notice what the first three beatitudes were. The first is, "Blessed are the poor in spirit." The second one is, "Blessed are they that mourn." And, the third one is, "Blessed are the meek."

We Christians are poor in spirit compared with the wicked people of earth who are living day to day in a loud and boisterous lifestyle, who seem to have everything going for them, and who seem to exist in a party type spirit. Poor in spirit means that you don't go around continuously being delighted by every thing you can buy or everything you can experience. The wicked people of this world have a high spirit. Their spirit is continuously exalted by experiencing the dainty things of this world and by their pension for power. They revel in enjoyment while the poor Christian concentrates on faith and the word of God. The wicked enjoy themselves, being delighted continuously, while the Christians concentrate on righteousness. The wicked are high, and of a haughty spirit, but the Christians remain low, they remain humble, they remain weak.

While we mourn for our loved ones who are being swallowed up by the temptations of this world, the wicked are rejoicing at all the things they can acquire.

Christians practice humility. And while they are practicing humility, the world is practicing how to be lords over us. Yet, the Bible clearly indicates that we are to be a humble people, and we are to mourn for our loved ones who are being destroyed by Satan's temptations, and we are to set our eyes on our eternal future with Christ, and not on the day to day things of this world. The world rejoices now, but one day, when Jesus Christ returns in the clouds of heaven, we will rejoice. As the world has spoiled us, we will spoil them. We, the children of God, are inheritors with Jesus Christ, and we will inherit the world. The wicked will be cast out, just as the evil nations were cast out before Israel when they went into the promised land under Joshua.

You know, if there is one single thing that Christians need to realize, it is that we are no longer flesh and blood beings on the inside anymore. Sure, we still have flesh and blood bodies, but we ourselves are not flesh and blood. Paul states in Romans 7:25 that although his flesh still serves the law of sin, he himself serves the law of God. It is in our spirit being that we have power. Our power does not lie in our scientific ability to invent machinery or to exalt ourselves with computers or spaceships, but our power lies in our ability to allow the Holy Spirit of God to have full reign within us.

As a confessing Christian, you have the ability to live two different kinds of lifestyles. One lifestyle is according to the moving of God's Holy Spirit within you, and the other lifestyle is a false lifestyle where you claim to be a Christian but you set your eyes on things of this world instead of setting them on heavenly things. In the words of a friend of mine, "Christianity requires drastic measures." If you are truly a Christian, then you need to take drastic measures toward living that Christian life in a way that will please God. God is not pleased when we delight ourselves in earthly things. He has put the world in the hearts of human beings in order to test us, that he might see whether our hearts will desire him or will desire the world. But, when all is said and done, the only people who will be left standing on the solid rock of Jesus Christ are those who have crucified their flesh on a daily basis and set themselves aside for God's purposes. It is God's will that we should be living for, not our own will. The world will exalt themselves in their own worldly powers, but Christians are to be meek and lowly, and they are to live in the realm of God's Holy Spirit, not reveling in the physical realm of fleshly man.

In the book of Proverbs, King Solomon has many wise sayings. But there is one that I like especially. It is found in Proverbs 23, verses 1-3. It says, "When you sit to eat with a ruler, consider diligently what is before you: 2 And put a knife to your throat, if you are a man given to appetite. 3 Be not desirous of his dainties: for they are deceitful food."

The understanding of this is that eating with a ruler indicates that you are in fellowship with those who are rich, or those that are the elite of this world. You are eating with those who have enough resources to afford the delicate and dainty things of this world instead of the plain Jane style of food, clothing, or shelter. Solomon says that if you're a person who is easily tempted by

the dainty things of this world, you should put a knife to your throat. In other words, you should go to any extent to avoid partaking of the things which tempt you greatly. Now, some people are not bothered by certain temptations, while at the same time other people would be overcome by them. However, if you find that you are vulnerable to a certain fleshly appetite, then you should mount a warfare against your own flesh and blood in that area in order to keep your fleshly desires under control. The worst thing that can happen to a Christian is to let his flesh become dominant over his spirit. Of course, Satan works very hard to get you to exalt your flesh, because he doesn't want you to exalt yourself in spirit.

Solomon said that the dainty things on the ruler's table were deceitful food. This means that they may look harmless, but once they take hold of you, they will bite you like a snake. They will destroy you. We all have areas of our flesh which are especially subject to temptation. For me, food is my greatest temptation. For some people, alcohol is a great temptation, or spending money is a great temptation. For me, alcohol has very little appeal. Before I was saved, I used to drink on occasion. But I never really cared whether I drank or not. However, when it came to food, ice-cream and desserts and lasagna and pizza were my downfall. Pie, cake, and ice-cream are delicacies of food, the dainties I could not resist. One day God gave me insight into Proverbs 23:1-3, and I began to see that I was a man who was quote, 'given', unquote, to appetite. Appetite for food was my main problem. No, food is not bad, but the Bible does tell us that we should have all things in moderation, and not do anything that would hinder the Holy Spirit from having free access to us. Food is acceptable, and we have to have food to live, but we don't have to live to eat. We must only eat in order to live. We should not eat with unbridled desire, but eat for the purpose of sustaining our flesh in order that we might use our flesh and blood bodies to carry out God's will. If Christians can just come to realize the importance of living in order to do God's will, instead of living to enjoy the fruits of this earthly life, we would be much more powerful in God. It is the flesh, through our earthly appetites, which destroys us.

You know, there are many ministries which suggest that we must live gloriously in mansions, and that we must wear the best clothes, and drive expensive cars in order to give testimony that God is a great provider and that he blesses his people. But this is not a testimony to God. If it is, then the rich of this world are giving a better testimony of God than the poor Christians are giving. You see, the best testimony of God's provision is in giving witness of the Holy Spirit within you. The Bible doesn't say that the righteous are known by their riches, but that they are known by the fruit which they bear. Sure, money is necessary in this life, but we must also remember that the Bible says, "The love of money is the root of all evil." It is the spirit within us that will give us ultimate power for eternity, not the delights of this world.

I mentioned earlier that appetite for food was my main temptation in this life. Food has always been my greatest problem. And, when you're fat, it affects you in every way imaginable. When you're young, you may have energy in spite of being fat, but when you begin to grow older, the extra pounds destroy your strength and agility, and you find yourself unable to serve God with the zeal that you had in your youth.

I used to think that I, just like all other Christians, could eat pizza and lasagna, cake, pie, and ice-cream. But, as God began to show me that the dainty things of this world were very deceitful, and that I was being deceived into being weak in my flesh, and that this was preventing me from being the servant that I really wanted to be, then I began to see that I was not created to be able to eat all things as others could. There are those who can eat a piece of pie and be content. For myself, one piece of pie was not enough. I had to have two or three pieces. I had to eat pie, cake and ice-cream all the time.

But one day I finally began to hear God's leading, and realized that I could not eat the dainty things of this world. I, as Solomon said, would have to put a knife to my throat. So, I started with ice-cream, which I normally ate every day of my life. I quit eating ice-cream, just as a person quits smoking or quits drinking. I quit. Cold turkey. No milk-shakes, no sundaes, no frozen yogurt, no pop-suckles, nothing. It was hard. A couple of years later I extended my rejection of certain foods, and I gave up desserts. I gave up pie, cake, cookies, and snacks of all kinds. It was hard. But then, a year and a half ago, I took another giant step. I gave up casseroles and mashed potatoes with gravy and all the other tasty combination foods. In fact, my diet now consists of plain oatmeal, whole wheat bread without butter or other topping, fresh fruits, vegetables, and a little lean meat. This was drastic measures. And these drastic measures were what I needed. It made a world of difference in my body, and it helps a lot with my strength to serve the Lord.

Now, I don't know what dainties you are tempted with, but I would encourage you to take drastic measures in order to become the kind of Christian you really want to be. If you really want to be something more for Christ than what you are now, then take the big step, take drastic measures, and begin to really step out for God. You won't be sorry!