

“Precious Remedies Against Satan’s Devices”

Holiness

Dr. Bruce Bickel

1 Peter 5:8-9; 2 Corinthians 2:11

September 11, 2015

Bruce: Good morning!

Men: Good morning!

Bruce: Let’s quietly go before the Lord and know that He is God. (*Music.*)

Gracious and merciful heavenly Father, we pray that You would open our eyes, that we might behold You more clearly for Christ’s sake. Amen.

Men: Amen.

Bruce: Good morning, men.

Men: Good morning.

Bruce: Nice to be with you today. I invite you to open your Bibles, please, to the book of 1 Peter. We’re continuing our study on holiness. The passage for our consideration, which will be our launching point this morning, is found in 1 Peter chapter 5 beginning at verse 6-10. This is the word of the Lord.

Men: Thanks be to God.

Bruce: 1 Peter chapter 5, beginning at verse 6. “Humble yourselves therefore under the mighty hand of God, so that at the proper time He may exalt you, casting all your anxieties on Him because He cares for you. Be sober-minded, be watchful. Your adversary the devil prowls around like a roaring lion, seeking someone to devour. Resist him, firm in the faith, knowing that the same kinds of sufferings are being experienced by your brotherhood throughout the world. And after you have suffered a little while, the God of all grace, who has called you to His eternal glory in Christ, will Himself restore, confirm, strengthen and establish you. To Him be the dominion forever and ever. Amen.”

Men: Amen.

Bruce: I trust that you have your handout with you. It’s very important that you have the handout that I sent out earlier in the week.

We’re going to look at this work by Thomas Brooks dealing with *Precious Remedies Against Satan’s Devices*. His passage really comes from 2 Corinthians chapter 2 verse 11, which is on the title of your handout. It’s a correlation to what we just read in 1 Peter chapter five, about the devil being “like a roaring lion, seeking someone to devour.”

Paul writes in 2 Corinthians chapter 2 verse 11, “so that we would not be outwitted by Satan, for we are not ignorant of his designs,” or “his devices.”

Now that’s the text by which Thomas Brooks wrote his wonderful masterpiece, *Precious Remedies Against Satan’s Devices*. And his point is this. In volume 1 of his work, he has a marvelous 150 pages of what I’m going to condense in two. (*Laughter.*)

I read this years ago when I was studying in England working on my doctorate, and I wish you had not asked me to do this today because I’ve gone back and reread it. And I’ve just been amazed for over forty years that I’ve been exposed. It’s just amazing! I thought I was so smart. And I went back and read it this past week in preparation for this.

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And I just realize how I’ve been duped, deceived by the evil one, and how important it is that we understand the strategies of Satan because I have been exposed. I really feel very, very insecure and very, very inappropriate even going over this with you because over the last forty years I realize how I have not resisted him by faith.

Participant: Right.

Bruce: I’ve really been exposed in the subtleties of Satan’s attack. And that’s the whole point of Thomas Brook’s work.

I’m only going to give you one portion of his work. This is just volume 1. There are six volumes to this.

Participant: Oh wow!

Bruce: But in this particular volume he covers precious remedies against Satan’s devices. That’s the first part. That’s what I’m going to go through with you just in a review.

Secondly, he has another section on *Several Devices to Draw Souls to Sin*. In other words, he says, “What are the devices that Satan uses to bring you to the point of choosing to sin?” Then he has another section on *Satan’s Devices to Keep Souls in a Sad, Doubting and Questionable Condition Which Produces Depression*. Now that’s all in volume 1.

So you have your little handout, what I’ve given to you. Now what I’ve tried to do for you is that I’ve printed in bold print his actual words. And then the non-bold print is my sort of review of the section that he’s talking about—the devices. So you’ll see both his presentation in the bold print, and then sort of a summary statement that is right beside it. And I’m going to walk us through some of these today. I doubt that we’ll finish this all today, so it might take us today and next week to get into it. But let’s take a look at this.

First of all, I think we need to talk about a bigger issue, and that is the whole issue of temptation. Thomas Brooks’ work is basically saying that what Satan does is to tempt you. He does say this. Satan cannot cause you to sin. Satan can only tempt you. You and I choose to sin.

That’s why it’s so important that you and I understand how he tempts us to make a choice in order to sin. So here are some of the things that he talks about. It is so important that we understand the whole issue of temptation.

Temptation is a word that Christians rarely talk about anymore. It has gone the way of the Neanderthal. We now talk about temptation as a way of marketing. Temptation, you know, now sells chocolate and perfume. We’ve just put the word *temptation* aside and now it’s a marketing technique. It attracts big audiences. Television producers even had a thing called “Temptation Island.” Why was that? It was designed to draw people’s attention. We have now turned that word around and now we don’t adversely look at it. We look at it positively as something to attract us and to draw audiences. Even Motown had a group called—

Men: The Temptations.

Bruce: The Temptations. They didn’t have a group called “The Blasphemers,” or “The Compromisers.” (*Laughter.*) They had a group called “The Temptations.”

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You see, we’ve lost the whole sense of temptation. That’s what Thomas Brooks talks about. He says that we’ve just subtly pushed it aside. We’ve missed the whole point of Satan’s tempting us through these designs that he has, and these devices. And that’s why he wrote this treatise on the subtleties of Satan’s devices.

And so I just want to go through some reasons why it’s important that you and I talk about the subject of temptation. First of all, I would say this. The number one reason that we need to talk about temptation is because combating temptation has gone the way of the dinosaurs. We don’t talk about combating temptation anymore. Temptation is the door between holiness and sin. It’s the door between holiness and sin. The window that lets sin come in is temptation and we don’t even talk about it in the church anymore.

The Scripture makes a direct link between our desires, temptation and sin. You’ll see that in James chapter 1, verses 14 and 15.

Transcriber’s Note: James 1:14-15. *“Let no one say when he is tempted, ‘I am being tempted by God. For God cannot be tempted with evil and He Himself tempts no one. But each person is tempted when he is lured and enticed by his own desire. Then desire, when it has conceived, gives birth to sin, and sin when it is fully grown brings forth death.’”*

Charles Spurgeon says that you need to learn to say no to temptation. He says this. “Learning to say no will be of more use to you than being able to read the Bible in Latin.” In other words, learning to say no to temptation is more important than learning the language of Latin in his time.

We can only resist temptation effectively when we understand how temptation works. That’s what Thomas Brooks is going to teach us today. How does temptation work? We need to be aware of that.

The second reason that I would offer for your consideration is this. Discussing temptation means discussing Satan’s activity. When you talk about temptation, you’ve got to directly talk about the devices of Satan, which is what Thomas Brooks wrote about.

We casually use the word *Satan* and say, “The devil made me do it.” He didn’t make you do it. You and I chose to do it. He just tempted us to get to the point of wanting to choose to do it.

Thirdly, the joint treatment of temptation is that Satan fails to communicate the seriousness of that issue. When we talk about temptation, it’s a serious issue that we’ve avoided in the church because we think that it’s something that is now a marketing technique.

And fourthly, to expose Satan’s tactics through temptation is only half the battle. We’ve got to realize that we stand firm in the faith. Satan deceives us. He misleads us. He tricks us. He bamboozles us by the father of lies.

Fortunately, light dispels darkness. Brooks will teach us that light dispels darkness. He says this. “An unmasked sin is easier to resist than camouflaged sin.” Unmasked sin—that which has been revealed and exposed—is easier to resist than camouflaged sin. And Brooks is going to go through a lot of things that Satan does to camouflage us. We must recognize the subtleties of his activity.

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So if you grab your little handout, I’ll start walking you through some of these. Now this is not going to be exhaustive. This is just going to be a quick cursory overview to call our attention to the need to resist and stand firm in the faith.

First of all, the very first one is this. Satan’s primary activity, his most common scheme, **is to present the bait and hide the hook**. Satan presents sin as fun, satisfying, profitable and pleasurable, while he conceals the misery and pain that always accompanies sin.

It’s like a fisherman. You put the juicy worm on the hook. When the fish bites it, the initial thing is that I got a worm. Then the hook is uncovered because it has been baited by the worm. That’s exactly what he does. His most common thing is to make it look attractive, but he hides the hook.

Brooks puts it this way. “Wrath, misery, shame and loss always follow the committing of sin. But it is always disguised by Satan as something that is attractive.” Brooks goes on to say, “Sin promises satisfaction but delivers emptiness. It either makes us feel guilty and ashamed, or creates moral numbness in us because we become so accustomed to being deceived.”

Richard Sibbs, a contemporary Puritan of Thomas Brooks, says this. “Satan gives Adam an apple and takes away Paradise. Therefore in all temptations, let us consider not what he offers, but what we shall lose.” He offers the bait but hides the hook.

The bait looks attractive because we believe that sin leads to happiness. Temptation offers shortcuts to fulfillment. It promises quick contentment.

Thomas Adams, another Puritan, says this about Satan’s devices. “Satan, like a fisher, baits his hook according to the appetite of the fish.” So the first thing that Satan does is that he presents the bait but hides the hook. Do you understand what he’s saying, the subtleties of that?

Men, I can just stop right there and say how I’ve been baited over the last forty years. I thought I knew so much, but I’ve just gone back and reviewed my life over the last forty years. And I’ve looked at the times when I’ve bought the hook because I was attracted by the bait. That’s one of the subtleties that he does. We have to understand his techniques. Yes, Jim?

Jim: You know, to me, the TV commercials that we look at today—

Bruce: Oh!

Jim: They are totally built around this concept.

Bruce: Absolutely. And that’s why Brooks would say in his vernacular that entertainment is one of the great hindrances to the gospel of Christ because it baits the hook and hides it.

Participant: Amen.

Bruce: Absolutely correct. Do you realize that I just read something recently about the largest export that we have in America. Do you know what we export to the world?

Men: Pornography.

Bruce: Here’s what we offer: movies, cds, music, videos and fast food. Now that’s what the world thinks of us. That’s what we offer. Now what does Japan export? Steel, machinery, farming equipment—they offer that to the world. What do we do? We export

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entertainment. Entertainment is our greatest export in American society. You see, even our culture has bought into this idea of offering the bait but hiding the hook through entertainment.

Number 2. **By painting sin with virtue’s colors.** Now my way of expressing that would be this—to misrepresent sin so that it appears not only harmless, but even virtuous. So you’ll see that the bold print is what he says. Mine is just sort of the summary of the one statement right beside it.

Let me try to explain what that means. Scripture records that Satan disguises himself “as an angel of light.” 2 Corinthians 11:14. Understand that Satan’s deception extends itself beyond the disguising of his person, but he also disguises his activities.

Isn’t that what Satan did in the garden of Eden? He claimed that the forbidden fruit would open their eyes, make man like God, and impart the ability to know good and evil. Eve’s conclusion was this. It was good to eat the fruit. He disguised it as virtuous, as something that was good, and yet it masked all the things that we lost.

Brooks gives several examples of this kind of temptation that resonated with his seventeenth-century culture. Now here he’s speaking to his culture. You and I can take this and apply it to our own culture.

“Believers are tempted to be proud,” says Brooks, “when Satan deceives us into thinking that pride is really only neatness and cleanliness. Christians are tempted to covet when covetousness is repackaged as thriftiness. Drunkenness is recast as nothing more than enjoying fellowship with friends. Riotous living is excused as merely a stage through which all youth passes.” Those are some of the things that Satan does to present this to be virtuous and never teaches us the things that we lose.

Here are several examples that might resonate for us today, playing off of what Brooks just wrote. Men are tempted to give free reign to their bad tempers when this sin is portrayed as merely exercising firm leadership as head of the family. Women are tempted to nag and manipulate their husbands. But they are deceived into regarding such behavior as only encouraging their spouses to do what is right. Do you see the subtlety of all that?

Now I’m just trying to make some present day applications to what he wrote in the seventeenth century. We allow ourselves to wallow in self-pity when we rationalize it as suffering unfairly for Christ’s sake. Impatience is justified as a determination to get things accomplished. Irreverence in worship is excused as friendliness, warmth, and avoiding stuffiness and tradition. When we are argumentative in religious discussions, we’re tempted to justify our lack of kindness because we’re just defending the truth. Do you see the subtlety of all that?

A Biblically informed mind against the often emotional appeal of temptation is one of the great defenses we have against the wiles of Satan. A Biblically informed mind is what Thomas Brooks would say is how we stand firm in the faith.

Are you beginning to follow this?

Participant: Yes.

Bruce: Because I’m trying to give you some of my notes that I did years ago and to help you understand the subtleties of all this. Yes, Jim?

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Jim: You know, what I think of is this whole business of gay marriage right now. It’s portrayed as a civil rights issue.

Bruce: Absolutely. The subtleties of all that.

Participant: They love each other. Isn’t love a good thing?

Bruce: That’s right. We’re just being loving. You’ve got to be careful about that. He presents sin as virtuous and harmless.

Participant: Yeah.

Bruce: Number three. **By extenuating and lessening of sin.** In other words, he downplays the seriousness of sin so that we think it possesses no danger to our souls. Brooks would say this. “The real battleground of spiritual warfare is really isolated in the man’s soul.” It’s not in culture; it’s in a man’s soul. That’s where the battleground really is. And so one of the temptations of Satan is going to be to extenuate and lessen the sin, to downplay the seriousness of it, so that we think there is no danger to our souls.

Satan would say this. “It’s just a harmless sin. It’s just a little white lie. It’s so small that no one will ever be hurt. No one is going to be damaged by this little sin that you’re going to be involved in.”

Sin corrupts the thinking so that we don’t see how small sins damage our souls. Small sins are like small amounts of the HIV virus. They weaken our spiritual immune system. That’s what small sins do.

Now I’m just trying to take some of the things he said and put it into our culture. It compromises our overall spiritual health. It increases our vulnerability to other sins. And it ensures that we will only grow more ill in the future.

Brooks is right. He says this. “In the end there is more misery in the smallest sin than in the most severe hardship.” Now look at the wisdom of that. There is more misery in the smallest sin than there is in the hardest hardship we go through.

Small sins often lead to big sins. Here’s how. We frequently entertain small sins when we feel empty, lonely, depressed or angry. We want our spirits to improve. We want a mood enhancer. (*Laughter.*) So what do we do? We engage in a small sin because we’ve been tempted and deceived by Satan. He lessens the sin so that we don’t think there is any damage to our souls.

This is the classic process of addiction. Alcoholics and drug addicts know it all too well. However, the same dynamic is at work with sin and especially the attraction to so-called little sins. The longest running addiction on planet Earth is the addiction to sin. Sin is an addiction. We choose to do it.

When we say that we are sinners, we mean that we are sin addicts. Christians are recovering sin addicts who suffer relapses. As with the alcoholic, so we are sinaholics. A little sin is to the sinner what a little whiskey is to the alcoholic. They are doorways to self-destruction.

How do we look at little sins? Not very much, do we? They’re deceptive.

Participant: They surely are.

Bruce: Notice Proverbs 10:22. “It is the blessing of the LORD that makes rich, and He adds no sorrow to it.” God gives spiritual highs that come with higher “hangovers,” not destructive addictions.

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Number 4. **By presenting to the soul the best men’s sins, and by hiding from the soul their virtues.** In other words, he tempts us to excuse sin and be unconcerned about it by showing us the sins of great people—comparison.

Now you and I don’t have to go to the tabloids to read about the sins of great people. Noah got drunk. Abraham lied. Jacob deceived his father and cheated his brother. David committed adultery and murder. Peter denied the Lord Jesus and behaved hypocritically toward the Gentile Christians.

Now Satan tells us by looking at those great men in the Scripture that we read about, that sin has little consequences because, think about the sins of the great men. They were used by God. Can’t He use you in your great sin? How deceptive that is! They sinned. They found forgiveness, and the whole mess was over. They recovered and all is well. Isn’t that going to happen to us? So Satan would have us think about them and how they were used because you’re not as bad as they are, are you? Are we?

When Satan tempts us in this manner, he neglects to tell us the rest of the story. Nor does Satan tell us that great men do not make it a habit to sin. He leaves that part out. Yes, they had relapses, but they did not make it a habit to sin. They fall into sin but they do not stay there. Satan does not tell us that. They may be overtaken by temptation, but they do not remain in it.

Brooks puts it this way. “They fall accidentally, occasionally, and with much reluctance. They do not sin ostentatiously, readily, delightfully or customarily. Great saints grieve over and fight their way out of sin.”

So be careful that you don’t say, “Well, he got away with it. Look how he’s used.” You’ve got to be careful of that.

We often think that we have the ability to resist sin. 1 Corinthians 10:13 says this. “No temptation has overtaken you that is not common to man. God is faithful, and He will not let you be tempted beyond your ability, but with the temptation He will also provide a way of escape, that you may be able to endure it.”

I always have the ability to resist Satan’s temptations. I can never face a temptation that is stronger than the possession of God’s grace. God will give us the grace to resist the temptation. We have to do as Charles Spurgeon says. Learn to say,

Men: No.

Bruce: No. Learn to say no. Because a sovereign God controls all events and gives grace, I am always able to endure the temptation because of God’s grace. I just need to walk in His grace by faith and say no. Thomas?

Tom: I like the way that God talks to Cain and says, “Sin is crouching at the door.”

Bruce: mm-hmm.

Tom: Cain has to open the door.

Bruce: Correct.

Tom: But it is crouching.

Bruce: That’s the temptation, exactly.

Thomas Brooks says this. “The question is never do I have the ability to resist the temptation to sin, because the answer to that question is—“

Participant: Yes.

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Bruce: Yes. I always have the ability to resist. Where is that ability found?

Participant: In Christ.

Bruce: In Christ, in God’s grace. He says this. “Rather the question should be am I willing to resist the temptation?” I *can* resist it, but am I *willing* to resist it? God gives us the grace to resist it. Am I willing to resist it? This is the question Brooks would say is the better question than saying, “Can I resist it?” Am I willing to resist it, because Satan can only tempt us. The choice to sin is who’s?

Participant: Ours.

Bruce: It’s ours.

How about number 5? **By presenting God to the soul as One made up of all mercy.** In other words, Satan tempts us to think that God is so indulgent that we need not fear punishment for our sins.

Few of Satan’s lies are more widespread and more dangerous today than this. God is a God of love. Now that’s true, but it’s also a deception of Satan. “He does not punish,” we always say. God is a God of love. He does not punish. He never judges. God expects people to sin and simply overlooks their sin, we’re told—much as a lenient and permissive grandfather does. So don’t get too alarmed about your sin because God is a God of love and doesn’t punish.

Here we see Satan resorting to a common ploy. He obscures a portion of the truth to create a falsehood. God indeed is a God of love. But He is also holy. God forgives sins, but He is also “a consuming fire.” Although rich in mercy, God cast the angels out of heaven and expelled Adam from Paradise. God’s patience is great, but He also destroyed the entire earth in a catastrophic flood.

Brooks would go on to say this. “Nowhere has God’s righteous anger against sin more clearly demonstrated than at Calvary,” at the cross. “When the Lamb of God hung on the cross, bearing the sins of all God’s people, the thrice holy God poured out His divine punishment upon the Messiah.” The Bible makes this very clear. The God who gives grace is also the God who judges sin. All you have to do is look at the cross.

Brooks would go on to say that it’s an error—and a fatal one—to misinterpret God’s patience as God’s indulgence. Don’t interpret God’s patience as God’s indulgence. God mercifully withholds chastisement as He calls us to repentance. Sometimes He holds back the consequences of that sin. Somebody is going to have to pay for it. Either you will pay for it, an innocent victim will pay for it, or your Substitute will pay for it—Christ Himself. God mercifully withholds chastisement as He calls people to repentance. But Satan tempts us to regard withheld punishment as God’s lack of concern over our sin.

The Holy Spirit displays God’s goodness to us and inclines us to repent. Satan tells us that God’s goodness is evidence that He won’t punish sin and therefore we don’t need to repent.

Now I’m just giving you a quick overview of all this. Does anybody see how serious this is and how subtle it is? That’s why I went back and read all this again this past week. How I’ve been exposed by the subtleties of Satan! How I need to be much more attuned to what is going on in my own life around me culturally.

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Brooks cautions that we should be most alarmed over our spiritual health when we break God’s law and do not sense God’s holy displeasure with us. Now do you understand what that means? In other words, he says, “Don’t be satisfied when you break God’s law and there are no immediate consequences.” That’s a violation of God’s patience.

Brooks says this. “When God lets the way to hell be a smooth and pleasant way, it is a dreadful sign of God’s indignation against a man, a token of His rejection and that God does not intend good for that person.” In other words, don’t abuse God’s patience. And don’t view it as God’s indulgence with your sin.

How about number 6? **By persuading the soul that the work of repentance is an easy work.** In other words, Satan tries to teach us that repentance is easy and forgiveness is available, so yielding to temptation is not very serious. Yes, sir?

Participant: If you’re ignorant of sin, or you come from a culture that looks upon an action that is sinful but does not hold it as sin, can that be held against you?

Bruce: Ask the question again, please.

Participant: If you are ignorant of a sin, or come from a culture that sins,--for example, at one time Native Eskimos shared their wives. It was customary. Can that sin be held against you if you’re ignorant of it?

Bruce: Well, sin is breaking God’s law. So whether you know it or don’t know it, it’s still the breaking of God’s law. So that’s where you have to start. Now the answer to that question is a secret. I don’t know the answer to that. But I do know this. Sin, whether I do or don’t know about it, whether I’m aware or unaware of it, is still breaking God’s law. It’s cosmic treason against the holiness of God. How God deals with that, only He knows. Will He hold that against them? I don’t know. If they are part of the elect, He will bring them to saving faith. That’s what part of the answer is. If they are part of the elect, He will bring them to saving faith. Yes, Don?

Don: In the Old Testament Israel had to be forgiven not only for deliberate sins but for sins committed in ignorance.

Bruce: Correct.

Don: In the book of Leviticus. In Romans, too, it says that “those who are without the Law will perish without the Law.” And so I think God does hold sin against people, even though they are ignorant of them.

Bruce: You know, we can’t excuse sin away just because we’re not culturally aware. Where is sin defined? It’s defined in Scripture, not defined by culture. So God is merciful. I don’t know how He is going to deal with people. If they are part of the elect, I know the answer to that. He’ll bring them to saving faith.

But part of that is a secret. We have to let that be a secret. I just have to know this. The breaking of God’s law is sin, whether I know about it or don’t know about it. And God in His mercy will deal with me according to His sovereign grace, as He will other people. Yes, sir?

Participant: Romans 1 says that too.

Bruce: Sure.

Participant: In the creation it is clearly seen.

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Bruce: Yes, Bob?

Bob: Bruce, doesn’t the Scripture also tell us that regardless of whether I do it, if I think it, it’s still sin?

Bruce: Yes, exactly. If you think it, it’s sinful. You’ve committed it. Yes, sir?

Participant: Now in the Jewish culture,--

Bruce: mm-hmm.

Participant: Before a boy becomes a man and gets *barmitzvahed*, his sin, I was taught, passes on to his father. And he is sinless until he becomes a man.

Bruce: Interesting! I would say that’s sort of a manmade rule, it seems to me.

Participant: Well, it’s a substitute.

Bruce: It’s a substitute. You see, how does Satan come around? Remember how he attacks us corporately? Through heresies, through apostasy and through divisions in the church. There are all kinds of heresies that are out there that Satan has been the orchestrator of because he is the father of lies. You have to go back and have a Biblically based mind to understand what is a heresy or what is apostasy, because only Scripture defines that. So there are all sorts of heresies out there which Satan is the father of, the father of lies. So we have to be very, very careful of that. Bishop Rodgers, can you add anything to that?

Bishop Rodgers: I was just thinking of my son Mark, who when he was a tiny baby, we told him not to pull the ash can over. One day he was kind of crawling toward the ash can and he had his hand up there, getting ready to pull it over. And then he saw me looking at him. He put it down and went on by. (*Laughter.*) In a way, he was kind of lying to me before he could speak! (*Laughter.*) So he was sinning. When he comes of age before the Lord, that’s kind of the Lord’s doing. The general principle is that when you come of age, when you’re aware of right and wrong, that puts you in a particular position before the Lord. But when that happens it varies, I think, and only the Lord knows.

Bruce: Only the Lord knows. That is one of the secret things. Remember Deuteronomy 29:29. The secret things belong to God. There are a lot of things like this that I just don’t know the answer to. And I need to let that remain a secret because that’s in the heart of God alone. And so I just need to let that be. My position is that I’m not called to understand that peer se. I’m called to believe it.

Participant: Amen.

Bruce: And so it’s in our believing that we have faith.

Participant: And what I look forward to is that these mysteries one day will be known by us.

Bruce: Absolutely they will.

Participant: Finally in His rest, those questions will be answered.

Bruce: Amen to that. Let them be mysteries, guys. Don’t throw the baby out with the bath water because you don’t have the intelligence to figure it out. I don’t have that. I’m not called to understand all the mysteries or even to seek the mysteries. I’m to believe the mysteries.

Participant: Amen.

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Bruce: Just an example. Can you really explain the Trinity—God the Father, God the Son and God the Holy Spirit? I can’t explain that to the depths so that people are going to say, “Oh, that really makes sense.” There is a point where we’re not necessarily called to *understand* that. We’re called to what?

Men: Believe it.

Bruce: *Believe* it. You actively believe it. You rely upon it. You depend upon it.

With some of these things that Brooks is teaching us, we just have to realize that we need to let God deal with these things. The question is how am I responding to these things that we’re learning? Yes, sir.

Participant: It says in Isaiah, “For as the heavens are higher than the earth, so My ways are higher than your ways, and My thoughts than your thoughts.”

Bruce: Absolutely. We need to remember that. Let mysteries be mysteries. There is a lot of mystery in this stuff that Thomas Brooks is teaching us about the wiles of Satan. Yes, sir?

Participant: Romans 1:20.

Bruce: Right.

Participant: “For the invisible things of Him from the creation of the world are clearly seen, being understood by the things that are made, even His eternal power and Godhead, so that they are without excuse.”

Bruce: Now how is that going to work? I have no idea. But God will hold them without excuse.

Participant: Creation and the Word.

Bruce: That’s right. Yes, sir?

Participant: And the problem is that what we know is that God exists, and that we don’t want anybody telling us what to do. That’s the bottom line. I think Romans also goes on to say that God’s law is written on the hearts of everybody.

Bruce: Yes.

Participant: So there’s no excuse.

Bruce: Don’t look to what’s going to happen to other people. Look to what’s going to happen to who?

Men: You.

Bruce: Yourself! This is self examination, not cultural examination. That’s why I felt so uncomfortable teaching this, because I just realized that I went through all of these twelve issues again—these subtleties of Satan’s devices—and how I’ve been exposed again! I’ve been exposed! It’s like what Paul said when he wrote, “I am the least of the apostles.” Seven years later he said, (*paraphrase*), “I am the worst of sinners.”

Participant: Yeah.

Bruce: For seven years he saw himself more in reality because what did he see? He saw God more clearly. Therefore he saw himself more clearly.

Participant: Amen.

Bruce: The degree to which you and I see the Personhood of God will be the degree to which you see the reality of yourself. And that’s where humility comes in.

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So don’t throw this on to somebody else and say, “Well, what about them?” You need to ask yourself, “What about . . .”

Men: Me?

Bruce: Me? How am I applying these to myself? Tom?

Tom: I think that it’s also a trick of Satan that we will get focused on these little points, rather than getting out and being ministers of reconciliation. Let’s get on with the work that God has for us, rather than debate things that we don’t know about.

Bruce: Absolutely. How are we doing with this, guys? Well, it’s about time to quit. We’ve done the first six. We can do the next six next week. Is that all right? I don’t want to rush this through. Bishop Rodgers?

Bishop Rodgers: I was just thinking that a primary issue we have to decide, what the Bible really teaches, is there a moral order to creation? As God created, did e create our universe with a moral order as objective and real as the law of gravity?

Bruce: Yes.

Bishop Rodgers: Because if he has, then there is always going to be a consequence for breaking it.

Bruce: Absolutely.

Bishop Rodgers: Whether you know you’re breaking it or not is secondary to the fact that you’re actually breaking what’s real.

Participant: One way I found of dealing with my sin is that I used to cheat on my income tax, and now I just don’t even send it in. *(Laughter.)*

Second Participant: Should I put that in the transcript? *(Laughter.)*

Third Participant: They give you the same address. It’s wicked to say.

Bruce: When the government gives you one phone call, please call us. *(Laughter.)*

Participant: We’ll be praying for him, right? We’ll be praying for him. *(Laughter.)*

Let me just give you one suggestion here. Jay Batch and I were talking this week through the email. Go to John chapter 18. We’ll pick up the next six of these next week. Is that okay?

Men: Yes.

Bruce: We’ll do it again. Now I hope I haven’t confused you. I’m just trying to make you aware of the subtleties of all of this.

I’m looking for the prayer of the publican and the sinner. Isn’t that John 18?

Participant: Luke 18.

Bruce: All right. Let’s go to the passage where the publican and the Pharisee are standing before god, and the publican says this. “Lord, be merciful to me, the sinner.” Now last week tom asked the question, how do we pray that? Here’s what I would suggest. I think that one of the things we can do is to pray the Scripture back. Take a verse like that. Dwell on it, meditate on it. Here’s what the Scripture says. “Be merciful to me, the sinner.” Now just meditate on that for a moment and pray that back to God.

Something like this. This is what I did this morning. “Have mercy on me, the sinner. Lord, You are a God of mercy.” Let the Holy Spirit give you insights into the character of God. “God, You are a God of mercy. You do not treat me as my sins deserve.” And

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let the Holy Spirit just run with you and give you insights, and pray that back to god. Thank Him for the fact that He is a God of mercy.

Participant: amen.

Bruce: However you do that, let the Holy spirit give you the words. Just recite and give that back to God as a prayer. “Lord, thank You that You are a God of mercy. Thank You that You have been merciful to me. I don’t know why You’ve been merciful to me, but I thank You that You’re motivated by mercy. Ministry is not what I do. It’s that You’ve motivated me to be grateful.” That all comes from the thought of having mercy upon me. “Lord, You’ve chosen me from before the foundation of the world. I don’t know why You’ve done that. But thank You that my name was written in the Lamb’s book of life. You did something that I had no control over. You chose me before my parents even had a thought or the twinkle of their eyes at my birth. I don’t understand that, Lord, but I believe that. Have mercy upon me, the sinner. Lord, you’ve exposed my sin. Thank You that Christ came to take away my sin. Thank You that You exposed my sin. Keep my sin ever before me.”

Let the Holy Spirit just give you those words and pray them back to God. I think one of the most powerful things that we can do is to take a passage of Scripture and pray it back. Do you understand what I mean?

Participant: amen.

Bruce: That’s a wonderful way of praying the Scripture back to God. Let the Holy Spirit give you insights into what you need to know. And pray that prayer back to God. So we can take a verse like that—“Lord, be merciful to me, the sinner”—and pray that prayer back to god and make that internalized in our lives. Thank Him for it. Is that helpful?

Men: Yes.

Bruce: How we can pray the Scripture back to god. Sometimes I just get tired of saying the same old thing in the same old way.

Participant: You’re right.

Bruce: I need a freshness in my prayer life. And what I’m learning to do is to pray the Scripture back.

Participant: Amen.

Bruce: Take a passage of Scripture, meditate on it. And then let the Holy spirit give you insight on how you need to apply it in your life and pray those Scripture words back to God. It’s a wonderful way to keep you from saying the same old things in the same old way.

Participant: Mm-hmm.

Bruce: May god enhance us in our prayer life so that we might be more glorifying to Him. Let’s pray. Father, we are attempting to reach the heart of Your soul and Your mind as we study these schemes of Satan. Father, we’re not wise enough to understand them all. But we pray that Your Holy spirit would descend upon us, walk with us, guide us, give us insight, wisdom and discernment, so we will know how to resist the temptations of the evil one. And thank You for the work of Thomas brooks—how he gave us some insights on how we can resist the evil one. Help us recognize this—that Satan can only

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tempt us, but we are the ones who choose to sin. Teach us, Lord, to say no to sin and that temptation for Jesus’ sake. And all the Brave Men said, “Amen!” (*Applause.*)