

“Theological Interpretation”

How to Study the Bible

Various Scriptures

The Rev. Jeff Stivason, Ph.D.

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Jeff: Let’s pray. Our Father in heaven, we thank You. We pause before You and recognize that we are not our own, that we were purchased with a price, and that price was deep. And it came at the cost of Your Son, the Lord Jesus Christ. Father, we are so thankful that He purchased our lives and that they are now hidden in Him. As Moses hid in the cleft of the rock, so too we hide in the pinions of Your Son and are ever thankful for that. Lord, we know that we are blessed. And we know that we have every blessing in Jesus Christ, and we’re thankful.

And Father, these are the truths that we need to stand upon and remember and constantly meditate upon, because our world constantly militates against those truths. We oftentimes are tempted to see with our eyes and not with our eyes of faith. So we come before You, reminding ourselves both in Your word and in our times of prayer and meditation that You are God; there is no other, and that You sent Your only-Begotten into the world that we might have life and have it abundantly, and that You have united Yourself to us through Your powerful Spirit, and that through that union, through that faith union, we are hidden in Jesus Christ.

Father, as we take our stand in Him and we lift up our concerns to You, we think of Luke and are thankful that there was some good news, and that he is able to proceed with college. And Lord, we know this neurofibromatosis can be one of those diseases that produces tumors that can be debilitating. And we are so thankful that that has not happened to Luke. And we pray not only for today and for this last event, but we also pray for every day of his life. And we ask that, knowing that You are sovereign and providential over all things, that You would never allow this disease to debilitate him to the point where he can’t work, can’t enjoy his family, can’t live life. We pray, Lord, that You would take him up in Your hands and that You would surround him with Your ever-abiding care. Father, we lift up his family to You, and ask that Your hand would be upon them. And we pray, Father. Sometimes for families it’s even more difficult, as they watch rather than experience this. So we pray that You will bless them.

Lord, we’re thankful for Sig and for the recovery process. We pray that would continue. We give him into Your hands, asking that You will care for him—but not only him; Nancy as well. Lord, we pray that You’ll preserve their lives and keep them. We pray that You will encourage their hearts. And Lord, as they are at home and as Sig is recovering it can be a place where one can be a bit down because of the isolation. And we pray, Father, that You would not allow that to happen, but that You would encourage his heart.

Lord, we’re thankful for Gregg and for the recovery process that he’s undergoing. We pray that would continue as well. Lord, we also ask for Kevin, as he has experienced a traumatic diagnosis. We ask that You will bless him with not only physical strength even in the midst of his struggle, but also—and more importantly—that You would give him spiritual and mental stamina, that he might continue to fix his eyes of faith upon the Lord Jesus.

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Father, we pray for Your hand to be upon Bruce and Becky. And we ask that they would be ministered to greatly by Your Spirit. Lord, there are many others that have concerns, and we’ve talked about some of them. Lord, we certainly pray for our brothers and our sisters who are experiencing the trials of life. And Lord, we have to remember that it was not a paradise that you promised us in this life, but it was a valley of tears. And yet the exaltation will come at its proper time, and we trust You for that and look forward to it.

And yet right now, Lord, we know that even in this valley of Baca You have given to us times of delight. And You’ve sprinkled our tears with grace. And Lord, even as we walk through this time of humiliation we experience the goodness of the Lord in the land of the living, and we’re thankful for that and continue to pray it down upon our brothers and sisters.

Lord, as we come before You now we certainly pray that You will lift our eyes to Christ as we see Him in the Word. And we pray that You will strengthen and encourage our hearts, and that You will do this for the glory of the Lord Jesus Christ, for it’s in His name that we pray. Amen.

Brave Men: Amen.

Jeff: All right. So I’ve got some good news and I’ve got some bad news.

Brave Men: Uh-oh!

Jeff: The good news is that this is a new lesson. The bad news is that I forgot that I used the illustration in this lesson that I used last week. There’s going to be a little repetition, so I apologize for that. But it’s good for you; repetition is good for you. So says the apostle Peter.

Well, I want us to look today at the analogy of faith or the analogy of Scripture. And I’m going to make a distinction between those two. I want to talk about putting this all together. And then I want to talk about some questions.

Incidentally I want to talk to you about next week. So somebody mentioned to me—and I think it’s a good idea—that next week, because of the topic, this being a four-week lesson that I taught to my teenagers in the congregation, it’s kind of funny because all of the questions that this has engendered have been really exciting. I’ve just found it to be a really encouraging time. So what I’d like to do at the suggestion of someone else is to make next week just a time of questions and discussion. If people have questions about interpreting Scripture let’s talk about those next time—things you’d like to enlarge upon, things that I didn’t touch, and so on. So please be thinking about your questions. You don’t necessarily have to give them to me ahead of time. But just come with them, and let’s talk about the interpretation of the Bible because it’s such an important thing. So next week is just going to be that—a time of questions and hopefully answers. (*Laughter*)

So today we’re going to talk about the analogy, and we’re going to talk about putting it all together; you’ll see what I mean by that. And what I want us to start with is *the analogy of faith*.

Now I think the analogy of faith is an important thing for us to think about. And oftentimes it is conflated with another expression. So the analogy of faith and the analogy of Scripture are oftentimes conflated. They are not the same thing, although they are oftentimes treated as if they are the same thing.

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So for instance I put my title up here: “The Analogy of Faith.” And I’m going to use it as the analogy of Scripture. But I want you to know that technically there’s a difference between the two, between the analogy of Scripture and the analogy of faith.

Now what’s the difference? Well, the difference is this. If we take the analogy of faith, what we are doing is, we are saying is that the Bible is a book that becomes the standard. And then, let’s say for instance that we use the Apostles’ Creed. The Apostles’ Creed is another document. And the analogy of faith is a correspondence between those two documents. In other words, is the Apostles’ Creed’s teaching analogous, or is it in accord with, is it normed by this norm, the Bible? And so that’s what the analogy of faith is.

So for instance, we could put anything here. We could put *The Westminster Confession of Faith* here. We could put *the 39 Articles* here. We could put anything over here in this category and ask, is it normed by this norm? And that would be the analogy of faith. What we’re doing is, we’re asking a theological question when we ask about the analogy of faith. Okay? That’s the analogy of faith.

Oftentimes though, the analogy of faith, at least for us in Protestantism, has become the analogy of Scripture. And the analogy of Scripture, I think, is simply articulated in *The Westminster Confession* 1:9. “*The infallible rule of interpretation of Scripture is the Scripture itself.*”

So let’s stop there for a second and say, what is the analogy of Scripture? The analogy of Scripture is when Scripture interprets Scripture. In other words, we have the Bible here and no other document. So what are we asking? Well, we’re asking when we see this verse—Revelation 20, verses 1-3—how does the Bible interpret those verses? That’s what we’re asking.

Transcriber’s Note: Revelation 20:1-3: NKJV. “*Then I saw an angel coming down from heaven, having the key to the bottomless pit and a great chain in his hand. He laid hold of the dragon, that serpent of old, who is the devil and Satan, and bound him for a thousand years; and he cast him into the bottomless pit, and shut him up, and set a seal on him, so that he should deceive the nations no more till the thousand years were finished. But after these things he must be released for a little while.*”

Jeff: How do we understand and interpret these verses in light of what the Scripture says, okay? So there’s more to it. “*When there is a question about the true and full sense of any Scripture, which is not manifold but one,*”—there is only one sense of Scripture—“*it must be searched and known by other places that speak more clearly.*”

Ah, now we get a little bit more nuanced to the analogy of Scripture. The analogy of Scripture is that when we have a less clear passage, that needs to be interpreted by a clearer passage, or clearer passages. So that’s the analogy of Scripture. That’s the proper use of the analogy of Scripture. When we have an unclear passage that needs to be made more clear by other passages.

Now I want to simply say to you that I think this is one of those times in the life of Christians where they would benefit. And I’m going to bring the concordance back up to where a concordance does help. You’re driven back to Scripture.

Let me tell you what I think our impulse is today, which I don’t think is a good one. I’m a reader and I love to read; I love books. But our impulse is to say, “Revelation 20:1-3! I wonder what So-And-So says about this.” So we go to the Christian bookstore and we buy what So-And-So says about Revelation 20:1-3, and we read his book. And

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then we go and buy somebody else’s book and read his book, and so on. And what we do, instead of using the analogy of Scripture, we use the analogy of authors. And we find out what all kinds of authors say about a particular passage that we’re troubled about. Hey, Bishop! Hi, I just saw you! (*Laughter*) How are you doing? Good to see you. He always brings a smile and correction; he’s a good man. I’m so thankful for guys like him. I digress; I’m digressing. (*Laughter*) Good to see you.

Anyway, we ought always to use the Scriptures. Now I want to be quick to say this. And I want to be quick to say this because Ted’s here. No, I’m just kidding. (*Laughter*)

Ted: I’ll be waiting; I’m waiting. (*Laughter*) I’m crouching. (*Laughter*)

Jeff: And I want to be really careful to say this. I want to be quick to say this because not only is Ted here, but it’s right. I actually heard a guy at one time teach students how to be preachers, and this is what he said. He said, “You guys need to be in the Word all week long. Don’t look at commentaries; don’t look at anything else. And then when you get to the end of the week, use a commentary or something like that as a way to check your answers.”

And I thought to myself, this is what I think. I’m going to tell you that I think commentaries and other books ought to be brought in a little earlier in the process, because we’re not without tradition. In other words, it’s not me and my Bible. I am a person who stands on the shoulders of great men. And I want to utilize those great men in my study process.

So here’s what I often tell people who are interning in my church. I say that what you want to do is to try to start as early as you can. And you want to start by opening your Bible. And I have a process that I go through with just me and the Bible for about a day or two; it depends on when I start. I go through the passage and I outline the passage; I have questions about the passage. And usually I have one or two 8½ by 11 sheets of paper that are just filled with messy notes. If you saw them you would just throw them away. You’d say, “What in the world is this?”, you know?

But what I do then is that I told them up and I tuck them in my Bible. And I think about them, and then I think about the questions that they are conjuring up. And then what I do is, the next day—depending on when that is, the second or the third day—what I do is, I ring up some friends. I ring up Johnny Calvin. (*Laughter*) We go way back, right? And I ring him up on the phone. I say, “Hey, what do you think about this?”

And so if I’m in Galatians chapter 3, I go and get his commentary. I turn to it and look at what he says about the text. Maybe I need to read more of his context in order to understand what he’s saying about the verse. I say, “You know what? I think I see what you’re saying, but I’m not sure that I’m with you.” And I hang up on him and I call somebody else, right? Or maybe I go to a systematic text because I have a more systematically oriented question; I read something on that.

And what I’m doing is, I am finding myself situated in a conversation where I am definitely the lesser figure. And there are more knowledgeable figures around me who are conversation leaders, because I’m going to them for the answers to questions. But I’m still a conversation partner. I’m saying, “Yeah, but when I hear what you’re saying, I look at the text and the verb has this aspect to it. And so I’m not really seeing what you’re saying.” So I’m actually participating. But I’m participating in a humble way. I understand who I am. And if I’m going to disagree with somebody who is a great figure

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in the church, I really ought to have good reasons for doing so. I ought not just to dismiss them as if I’m the authority and I know all, because I certainly don’t. And so I’m a conversation partner.

And then what I do, coming out of that, is that I put everything aside and I say, “Okay. Let me think about this passage. And let me think about the needs of my congregation.” Where are they? What are they struggling with? How can I put this all together in such a way that’s faithful to the text and yet applicable to them? So it has three parts and it breaks down into smaller sections. But giving an overview, it’s me and the bible, it’s me in a conversation, and it’s me writing for my congregation. And so that’s kind of the way to do it. Any questions on that?

Transcriber’s Note: Don Maurer raises his hand.

Jeff: Questions? *(Laughter)* Yes, Don?

Don: What do you think about study Bibles? Are they helpful? I mean, I use them myself in addition to commentaries, but what’s your take?

Jeff: Yeah. I think you can become overly dependent on study Bibles. When I first became a Christian I had the NIV Study Bible and I loved it. I just used that thing; I went through edition after edition after edition. And then I got to the point where I thought to myself, I need to get rid of this thing, because I need just the text in front of me with some cross-references at most. That’s just me; I just had to kind of depart from the study Bible. I still encourage my family to get a study Bible because I realize that if you’re not a minister you’re probably not in the Word as much as a minister is, and so it’s a good help to have. But I guess it just depends on your role—what you’re doing, where you are in your Christianity. But I think it’s a good help for sure. I think a lot of people eschew them because they think that the notes become raised to sort of the level of infallibility. But I don’t think that’s a problem—not with the guys in this room, out there. *(Laughter)*

Don Bishop: I know that kind of happened with the *Scofield Reference Bible*.

Jeff: Right.

Don: People really quoted that Bible in evangelism.

Jeff: Yeah, that’s right. There’s a lot of truth in that; that’s for sure.

Ted: You know, I have a number of study Bibles. One I used to use a lot was for the New King James Version, which I enjoyed. It was from Nelson, and I think Nelson was a Baptist.

Jeff: The Chain Reference. Oh, that was Thompson. Go ahead.

Ted: I don’t remember. But you can see the theological biases. And I would go over to the *Reformation Study Bible* for the ESV.

Jeff: For no bias at all. *(Laughter)*

Ted: That brings me to my next point. *(Laughter)* I can’t be straight.

Jeff: You know, by the way, before you go to your next point I want to say to you that I’m going to remember what you said to your son; I think that’s awesome. The next time my wife goes shopping I’m going to say, “If you don’t pay this back in a week, things are never going to be the same between us.” *(Laughter)* Go ahead.

Ted: She’s in desperate shape.

Jeff: I was kidding, Bishop. *(Laughter)* He was looking at me like that is not good. *(Laughter)*

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Ted: I understand what the *Westminster Confession* says. But I think perhaps that it’s a little naïve.

Jeff: Okay.

Ted: Because of what it does not bring into this. Protestants have lost a proper understanding of the church and it’s role.

Jeff: Ted, that’s what I was trying to bring in.

Ted: Well that’s what I’m pushing forward. I mean, what is the church? You talk to the average evangelical about fellowship and help and support. But do they absolutely come to grasp that this indeed is the body of Christ? What does that actually mean? To me that’s a supernatural designation.

Jeff: Yeah.

Ted: It goes beyond any benefits we receive.

Jeff: Yeah.

Ted: And Protestants tend to fracture and break away from that center and core. Now we did that 500 years ago, I think for good reasons. We always have to question if there was a good reason, because it did fracture the body. But I’m just thinking about one of the big churches—not Christ Church, but another one in this area—that broke away from their denomination. And who gave them the authority to do that? Well, there probably wasn’t enough charismatic emphasis in gifts of the Spirit. So they broke away and had their own fellowship.

Now that same body just recently sat around and made a video and a 123-page document to justify the ordination of women. So they are now starting to ordain women which they didn’t do before. I happen to believe that’s not a Scriptural or a historical event. I think it’s a novel innovation; as the Anglican bishop said, it’s a novel innovation

Jeff: And you believe that because Scripture teaches it.

Ted: Scripture says it, and it’s supported by the body of Christ.

Jeff: Right.

Ted: I watched that 30-minute video in which they brought their resident theologian aboard and explained why they now approve the ordination of women. I mean, his is just a case in point; I’m not going to get off on the ordination of women for leadership.

Jeff: Yeah.

Ted: But they had lots of Scripture.

Jeff: Sure.

Ted: So in essence it’s just a matter of trying to find out what Scripture says. Everybody piles up their arguments on each side.

Jeff: Sure.

Ted: I mean, I watched a great debate between Arminians and Calvinists. And in the end the Calvinists in the debate were two academics; it was very good. It was an hour-and-a-half long. And in the end the Calvinist said, “Well you Arminians have good points. You just have more problems than we do. Your theology has more problems than ours does.” So it no longer became, “Oh, we can go ahead and try to find the Scriptural truth,” but basically “our way of looking at this has fewer problems than the way you’re looking at it.” And so—

Jeff: Yeah.

Ted: Forgive me.

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Jeff: No, that’s good. Believe it or not I was trying to bring the church in with the last comment. *(Laughter)* Go ahead.

Bishop Rodgers: I was just thinking back about our reference to word studies. I think it was Jake Barr that wrote a book. You can go to the root of a word and assume that that tells you everything.

Jeff: Yeah.

Bishop: Actually the analogy of Scripture says that you have to look at the context of that verse in light of the whole of Scripture, not just the root.

Jeff: Yeah.

Bishop: And sometimes it’s part of the meaning. Sometimes it really changes the meaning altogether.

Jeff: Yes, that’s right..

Bishop: But it’s important that you look at all the places in the Scripture where that subject is brought up. That’s a great test that—

Jeff: Let me give you this illustration. When I was doing this with my kids I said, “Say you get a letter from your friend. And you read this line in that letter. ‘Bernice is saltier than usual.’”

And you have to ask yourself, well, what does my friend mean when she says that Bernice is salty—and saltier than usual, right?

And I said that one of the things that you need to do when you ask the question “what is it to be salty?”, or “what does my friend mean by ‘Bernice is salty?’”, is that you need to look at your letter. And when you look at your letter you might find another line in the same letter that says that Bernice has been bitter before, but she’s saltier than usual. And now all of a sudden you realize that oh, she’s using *salty* as a synonym for bitter. She’s been bitter before, but now she’s even more bitter; she’s saltier than usual. And so you use the letter and the context of the letter.

But sometimes it’s just the context of a particular sentence. Sometimes it’s the context of the paragraph. And sometimes it’s the context of the entire letter that will help you to understand what the author is saying. And so that point is well taken; that’s really good. So context is really important.

For instance, another example is that we know that John uses the word *light*. And so how do we best define light. Well, oftentimes you’ll hear guys. And they’ll teach Bible studies and they’ll say, “All right; John is using the word *light*. What does the word *light* mean?” And they’ll say “Webster means this by the word *light*.” Right?

But that’s not the place to go. The place to go is that John uses *light* in x amount of places. And every time he uses the word *light* this is what he means, or these things are what he means. And so you use John to actually define the word *light* in that scenario.

So for instance, I gave these to the kids. And why don’t we just do this for a second? Go to these references in John. It’s just a small smattering because John uses this in quite a few places.

John 1:4: “*In Him was life, and the life was the light of men.*” So now let’s just think about that for a minute. He equates life and light.

How about John 8:12? “*Again Jesus spoke to them, saying, ‘I am the light of the world. Whoever follows Me will not walk in darkness, but will have the light of life.’*” And so here again light and life are brought together in correspondence.

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And then John 11:9-10; how about that? It says, “*Jesus answered, ‘Are there not twelve hours in the day? If anyone walks in the day, he does not stumble because he sees the light of this world. But if anyone walks in the night he stumbles, because the light is not in him.’*” And so now, all of a sudden, we have *light* meaning something a little different. What does light mean here? What would you say light means here in 11:9-10?

Brave Man: Intellectual illumination?

Jeff: Yeah. There’s something about the way light illuminates that gives me the ability to walk. And you’d have to look in other places for John to flesh that out a little bit more. And a good place to go is to go back to the Prologue. For instance, verse 5 of chapter 1. “*The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness has not overcome it.*” So he uses light and darkness and the contrast there as he does here in chapter 11. What does that mean? You continue to build that out and build it out and build it out.

So for instance, if I were to come to you and say that in John 1 and in John 8 *light* means *life*, that would be true. But if I were to say to you, “John always and only means that light is life,” I’d be wrong. I’d have to look at other references and build out all of the uses and references that he has for light in order to understand how he fully means it.

So I might say, if I was just looking at John 1 and John 8 and those particular verses, I’d say here’s one of the ways that John is using light. He’s using it as a synonym for life. And I might build out from that. But if I’m going to do a whole word study I’d certainly want to go broader than that.

Well I’m going to give you the example that I gave you the last time, and I want to show you this. “*The eye is the lamp of the body. So if your eye is good, your whole body will be full of light. But if your eye is bad, your whole body will be full of darkness. If the light in you is darkness, how great is that darkness!*”

Now this is the question that I asked the last time. What is a bad eye? Well, in order to answer that question you remember that I told you to use a concordance. Now here’s the key that I’d sounded years and years ago. *Bad* only gets you the meaning, and *eye* doesn’t help either. *Bad* is bad, and if you look up *eye* that’s not very helpful, because you’re going to look up hundreds and hundreds of references for *eye*.

And so here’s a little hint. For instance, when you have a passage like the one we just looked at, look up the word *eye*, and look for passages that follow the *eye* with either good or bad. That’s a little hint that gives you a little shortcut, because if you look up *eye* indiscriminately that’s going to take you everywhere.

And yet remember that the best place to start is in Matthew. This takes you back to Bernice’s letter, right? Your friend says that Bernice is saltier than usual. Well, who are we going to consult for the meaning of the word *salty*? Are we going to consult Webster or somebody else? No, we’re going to see if we can find something that our friend says in the letter that will help us to understand how she’s using the word *salty*.

So the best place to start is Matthew. So what we do is—and you know, the funny thing about it is that I can’t see the slide that’s up there.

Ted: Is that because you’re not in the light? (*Laughter*)

Jeff: It’s because I’m not in the light. So anyway, you have the references to *eye*. But this was the one I was telling you the last time—the one that’s Matthew 20 verse 15. I’m shortening this up a little bit, trusting that you’ll remember some of those other places that I took you to. But in 20:15 this is the laborers who are laboring in the field. And the

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laborers who are laboring in the field, one comes out early and gets hired for a denarius. The other one comes out a few hours later and gets hired for a denarius, and so on and so forth until the eleventh hour, and he gets hired for a denarius.

And they all come back. And the earlier laborers are yelling and disagreeing that they should get more. And then the master says this in verse 15. *“Am I not allowed to do what I choose with what belongs to me? Or do you begrudge my generosity?”*

Now remember what we said earlier about formal equivalence versus dynamic equivalence in terms of translation. So if it's a formal equivalent, they're trying to get as word-for-word as they can. And a dynamic equivalent is trying to get thought for thought. And then there are translations that come in the middle that try to give you the words, but the thoughts if the words aren't clear enough.

So for instance here, if you look down at the bottom of your page, it will say, *“Or is your eye bad because I am good?”* And so the ESV translators looked at this and they said, “Well, let's think about this. If we put in there ‘Or is your eye bad because I am good,’ is that going to be easily understood by people? Well, probably not. So what we'll do is, we'll give a thought-for-thought translation and we'll say, ‘Or do you begrudge my generosity?’” Is your evil against my goodness?

What do we mean by that? How do we understand that? Here we have a man who is saying, “Are you evil? Is your eye bad? Are you miserly because I'm generous, because my eye is good?” That's the idea, right?

I want to mention something about that. So the examples that I want to give you are these. These are the examples that I gave you the last time. I think everybody was here last time, or maybe close to everybody. But if you look at these examples, we'll just look at them quickly.

Deuteronomy 15, verse 9. It says, *“take care, lest there be an unworthy thought in your heart, and you say, ‘The seventh year, the year of release is near,’ and your eye look grudgingly on your poor brother.”* Or if you have a note at the bottom of the page it says, *“An evil eye toward your brother.”* That is, you are miserly; you lack generosity.

Proverbs 23 is the next one. In Proverbs 23 verse 6 we find: *“Do not eat the bread of a man who is stingy.”* Okay, I have another note at the bottom of my page.

*“Do not eat the bread of a man whose eye is evil;
Do not desire his delicacies.”*

Okay. Proverbs 28:22 is another place. It says, *“A stingy man,”* (or a man with an evil eye), *“hastens after wealth,
And does not know that poverty will overcome him.”*

So here we find these places with “an evil eye.” And what are we to make of it? Well, go back to Matthew chapter 6. In Matthew chapter 6 let's read it like that. *“Do not lay up for yourselves treasures on earth.”* Let me go to 22. *“The eye is the lamp of the body.”*

Okay, so the eye is the lamp of the body. It's going to tell us something; it's going to shed some light on this for us. *“If your eye is healthy,”* or if your eye is good,—in other words, what does it mean for your eye to be good? It's generous; if your eye is generous,—a generous person,—*“your whole body will be full of light. But if your eye is bad,”*—if your eye is evil, if you have an evil eye,—that is, if you lack generosity,—*“your whole body will be full of darkness. If then the light in you is darkness, how great is that darkness!”*

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Now what He’s doing is, He is giving us a commentary. He’s saying, look. There are all sorts of ways one can check one’s spiritual temperature. Economics is one of those ways. Personal economics is one of those ways. How are you with your money? Are you generous with your money, or are you not generous with your money? Are you miserly with it? This is a good way of checking your spiritual temperature. Okay?

So that’s good. Before we put this together I want to say one other thing. And I’ve said this before in different contexts, but I want to say it again because it’s a theological point worth saying.

If I have the Scripture from Genesis to Revelation, and I am preaching in the book of Isaiah, the question then becomes, how do I use the analogy of Scripture? The question is, may I use it both antecedently and subsequently? May I use it across the board, or may I just use it antecedently?

There are some who say that you may only use Scripture antecedently in order to interpret a text like Isaiah. Why? Because no other text has been written after Isaiah. So how can you use subsequent revelation to interpret Isaiah if you’re going to give Isaiah the integrity that he deserves?

Now some people will say to you, “Well, you can always use subsequent Scripture in application, but not in interpretation.” Now I have a major problem with that, and here’s why. If the Scripture is 66 books and multiple authors, and that’s all it is, then I think they’re right; we ought to stop with Isaiah. But if the Bible has one Author who is the Spirit of God, then we may use the whole thing antecedently or subsequently if we’re going to interpret a passage like Isaiah.

That’s my view, and I think it’s a crucial view. Why? Because it puts the primacy of authorship on the part of God and not on the part of man. Yes?

Don Maurer: Isn’t that what Philip did? I think we went over this before. Philip did that when he was talking to the Ethiopian eunuch. He said, “Is he talking about himself or someone else?”

Jeff: Yeah.

Don: So Philip talked to him about Jesus.

Jeff: Yeah. Well, the difference is that somebody might say to you, “Yes, but that’s in the book of Acts, and so you can use the Gospels.” Right? No, you’re right.

Ted: Oh, my gosh!

Jeff: Yes, you’re right; I’m thinking wrongly. I’m thinking like an Orthodox person; sorry. *(Laughter)* Don is right. So Philip should have said, “Well let’s just think about what Isaiah said. Let’s just stay with Isaiah and go back before Isaiah for any interpretive things we need, instead of going further.”

Don: That’s what the Jews do. They want to stick to the Old Testament and bring nothing of Christ in.

Jeff: That’s right. Yes, Bishop?

Bishop Rodgers: Doesn’t Christ make this point when He says, “I am the Lord of the Sabbath? I’m going to tell you how to interpret the Sabbath.”

Jeff: Yeah.

Bishop: He’s not just saying, “This is the way you guys have done it, or the way somebody prior did it.” So He’s applying His word which is not yet active.

Jeff: Yeah.

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Bishop: It’s not quite the same, but it’s pointing in that direction.

Jeff: Yes, it’s pointing in that direction. I think Luke 24 is helpful. Jesus says, *“These are My words that I spoke to you while I was still with you: that everything written about Me in the law of Moses and the Prophets and the Psalms must be fulfilled.”* So what He’s saying is, Jesus is the interpretive key to all of those books; you’re looking for Christ there.

So let’s put it together. I want us to go back to the Sermon on the Mount. Remember that I said this to you the last time. How do we put this all together? In other words, how do we go back to contextually looking at something?

So we’ve got Matthew 6:22-23 here. But the question is that we know what it means. We know what the eye means. We know good and we know bad eyes. But the question is: what about the context? In other words, let’s enlarge this a little bit. 19-24, what about that?

And I read this to you last time. It says, *“Do not lay up for yourselves treasures on earth, where moth and rust destroy, and where thieves break in and steal. But lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust destroys, and where thieves do not break in and steal. For where your treasure is, there your heart will also be.”* And then the eye passage. And then verse 24: *“No one can serve two masters, for either he will hate the one and love the other; or he will be devoted to the one and despise the other. You cannot serve God and Money.”*

So how do we understand 6:19-21 first of all? How do we understand that? Well, what does Matthew say about the treasure principle? We have to ask that question. Remember what we’re doing: we’re staying with the context. What does Matthew say about the treasure principle?

Well, he tells us this in Matthew 19:16-22. He says, *“And behold, a man came up to Him saying, ‘Teacher, what good deed must I do to inherit eternal life?’*

“And He said to him, ‘Why do you ask Me what is good? There is only One who is good. If you would enter life, keep the commandments.’

“And he said, ‘Which ones?’

“And Jesus said, ‘You shall not murder, you shall not commit adultery, you shall not steal, you shall not bear false witness, honor your father and mother; you shall love your neighbor as yourself.’

“The young man said, ‘All these I have kept; what do I still lack?’

“Jesus said, ‘If you would be perfect, go, sell what you possess and give to the poor, and you will have treasure in heaven. And come, follow Me.’”

The young man goes away sorrowful. But the point is that Jesus defines treasure in heaven as generosity here on earth. Go and sell what you have; give to the poor. Be generous.

Now there’s a whole context to this passage. I’m just taking what he’s saying. There’s a generosity here that describes how one stores treasure up in heaven.

Or Luke is another place we could go to. Now we can go outside of Matthew; Luke is another place. And this is when they come to Jesus. A brother comes and says, “Tell my brother to share the inheritance with me.” And Jesus gives this example.

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He says in verse 19 of chapter 12: *“I will say to my soul, ‘Soul, I have ample goods laid up for many years. Relax; eat, drink and be merry.’”* Why? Because I built bigger barns.

Verse 20: *“But God said to him, ‘Fool! This night your soul is required of you, and all the things you have prepared, whose will they be?’ So is the one who lays up treasure for himself, and is not rich toward God.”*

Here’s a stingy man—miserly; he built bigger barns and says to himself, “I can relax, eat, drink and be merry.”

So now we have two examples. One guy sells what he has and gives to the poor and stores up treasure in heaven. One guy builds bigger barns, is miserly and stores up treasure on earth. What do we have? What we have is, we have what we studied in the parable of the eye. We have one guy with a good eye and one guy with a bad eye.

And so now look at verse 24. *“No one can serve two masters, for either he will hate the one and love the other, or be devoted to the one and despise the other. You cannot serve God and Money.”*

And all of a sudden, once you realize this, you begin to realize that these verses are tightly woven together. So for instance, don’t store up treasure on earth by being stingy. But store up treasure in heaven by being generous. *“Your eye is the lamp of the body.”* If your eye is good—if you’re generous,—your whole body is good. If your eye is bad or stingy, or lacking in generosity, your whole body will be full of darkness.

And then the warning: You can’t serve both God and money. So decide who you’re going to serve. And so I think that Matthew 6:19-24 all move together very tightly.

I actually think that the Sermon on the Mount really holds together in a fantastic way. But there’s another aspect to this. Look at verse 25: “Don’t be anxious for anything.” And if you look at that text, one of the things that people often say is that this is a great text for not worrying. But this is a great text for not worrying about money.

Bishop: Right.

Jeff: But the question is: what if I’m generous? Who is going to supply my needs? And here what does Jesus say? He says, “Don’t worry about generosity, because if God clothes the field and gives food to the birds, then He will certainly care for you if you are generous and find yourself in a pinch.”

And you know, think about it, right? You could find yourself in a pinch a lot easier back in those days than you could today, right? Think about the guy in Luke 11 who says to his neighbor in the middle of the night, “I don’t have any bread. We ate all the bread up and I have three visitors. I need three loaves. Can you give me loaves?” He’s finding himself in a pinch.

And Jesus says that guy is going to get up and give three loaves. And then he’ll be in a pinch, right? But what did He just teach them to pray in the previous four verses? *“Give us this day our daily bread.”* And so the idea is this. The same thing that Luke taught in Luke 11 is what Jesus is teaching here—this idea about generosity, and so on.

Well, that takes us to the end. Yes, Don?

Don Maurer: With Jesus’ encounter with the rich young ruler, that’s where the analogy of Scripture comes in, because people have misinterpreted that passage. Oh, if I go and sell all I have it means that I should be poor. I will go and sell all I have and then I’ll be sure of a place in heaven.”

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Jeff: Yeah.

Don: And if you don't go to other parts of Scripture that talk about justification and everything, you'll think that you're earning your salvation.

Jeff: Well, let me do you one better. This is the parable of the good Samaritan. The lawyer comes up to Jesus and says, *“Teacher, what shall I do to inherit eternal life?”* Jesus says, *“You're a lawyer; what does the law say?”*

And he says, *“Well, the law says, ‘You shall love the LORD your God, and your neighbor as yourself.’”*

And Jesus says to the man, *“You have answered correctly; do this and you will live.”* And so you say, well, Jesus is saying works salvation, because Jesus said, *“Yes, that's a good answer. Do that and live.”*

And we have to say to ourselves, wait a second! What is Jesus saying? What is Jesus doing? It's the same way that He was driving the rich young ruler to see his own lack.

Don: Yes.

Jeff: So the rich young ruler comes to Him and says, *“I've kept all these laws from my youth.”* And Jesus says, *“Okay; this guy doesn't get it. I've said to him, ‘Keep the law,’ and he doesn't recognize that he hasn't. So now I'm going to tell him, ‘Go love your neighbor and go love your God’ in a way that he won't be able to fulfill.”*

So what does He say to him? *“Go sell everything you have and give it to your neighbor. Love your neighbor, and then come follow Me. Come, follow God, and you will have treasure in heaven.”* And the guy goes away sad because he can't do those things. Jesus has now put him in a position to realize that he can't keep *“love your neighbor and love your God,”* and he still doesn't get it.

And so here Jesus is doing the same thing. He's saying, *“Oh, wonderful! Do that and live.”* And the man justifies himself. *“Who is my neighbor?”*

Jesus says, *“Well, I'm glad you asked.”* (*Laughter*) Right? And so context is really king, and it's like you said. We've got to work it out.

I once heard a seminary student preach this very text. And he preached it in this way. He said, *“Jesus says, do this and live. And so He must mean that.”*

So what he did was that he tried to work it out so that it wouldn't be a salvation by works, but it would be a salvation by grace. But he tried to fit this works principle into his salvation by grace, because he says, *“Well, this is what Jesus was saying.”*

And I'm saying, *“You need to go back to the drawing board. That's not what Jesus is saying. It's what Jesus is saying, but it's not what Jesus is saying., right?”* (*Laughter*)

You know, I'll tell you this. If you have five more minutes I'll confuse you right at the very end, but maybe not. Maybe I'll save it for next time because I'd hate to leave you in that situation; I don't want to jeopardize it.

Okay, good; let's pray. Father, thank You for this day and for the blessing of life in Christ. And Lord, we pray that You'll bless us now. And Lord, help us to find Your word to be a refreshment to us. And Lord, we ask that You'll always make it a solid rock to our feet because it's Your word. And Father, we pray that it will be a light to our path. Lord, we ask that You'll take what we study and cause it to overflow to the others who are around us who we encounter day to day, that it might be a blessing to them as well. We pray in Jesus' name. Amen.

Brave Men: Amen. (*Applause*)