

Sermon to the Saints of God assembled at Topeka, KS: Sunday, January 3, 2016

Beware of the Flatterer

Some form of the word “flatter” is used 21 times throughout the scriptures – it’s always used in a negative way, and in a way of warning. John Bunyan captured this scriptural concept in the *Pilgrim’s Progress* under the heading that I’ve used for the title of this sermon: “Beware of the Flatterer”. I have always had a very specific, and somewhat limited, picture in my mind of what that word means, however, when I recently re-read Bunyan’s work, it caused me to consider it more closely. What I found is that the scriptures have a lot to say on this topic – stark, colorful, repetitive warnings that are given for our learning and admonition – we would do well to study, understand, and take heed of those warnings. Since my journey on this topic began with *Pilgrim’s Progress*, I will begin this sermon with the relevant portions; but before we get to that, I’d like to give you some background on the life of John Bunyan, and the context of the time that he was living in.

- 1509 – 1547 Henry VIII
 - 1534 – Pope Clement VII refuses to annul the marriage of King Henry VIII, causing Henry to institute the **Act of Supremacy**, which cast off Papal authority, and created the Church of England (Anglican Church), of which Henry was the “only supreme head in the earth”.
 - After 1000 years of unchallenged Catholic oppression, and manipulation of the Word of God (the “Dark Ages”), the Lord brings this wicked man – this raven – during the rumblings of the Protestant Reformation, in order to shatter Catholic control. Of course Henry’s only purpose was to pursue his lust for power and adultery! What follows is an amazing churn between these various warring factions (Catholics, Protestants, Anglicans, Puritans, etc.) – again, God’s purpose was to spread the Gospel, and to give his servants help and comfort.
- 1547 – 1553 Edward VI
 - Protestants are in favor in England
- 1553 – 1553 (July 10 – July 19) Jane Grey
- 1553 – 1558 Mary I
 - Catholics regain control of England; Protestants, Baptists, etc. are put to death in large numbers.
- 1558 – 1603 Elizabeth I
 - Church of England returns to power.
- 1603 – 1625 James I
 - King James Bible is published in 1611 – the translation is undertaken in large part due to pressure from the Puritans, who were gaining political strength
- 1625 – 1649 Charles I
 - Wars of the 3 kingdoms (England, Ireland, Scotland) – 1639-1651
 - One of the central conflicts during these wars was freedom of religion. There were many dissenters from the Church of England (Baptists, Presbyterians, Catholics, Quakers, Ranters, Fifth Monarchy Men, etc.)
 - The English Civil War was the best known of these wars

- The primary struggle was between the Monarchy (Church of England) and the Parliament (Puritans).
 - The war ended with the Parliament winning, and executing King Charles I in 1649. His son (Charles II) was banished.
- John Bunyan during this period:
 - 1628 - John Bunyan was born in the village of Elstow, near Bedford, England
 - Baptized as a baby in the Church of England
 - 1644 – 1647 John Bunyan fought in the Parliamentary Army from the ages of 16 to 19.
 - “I was the very ringleader of all the Youth that kept me company, in all manner of vice and ungodliness”
 - Returned to Elstow, and took up the trade of his father – a tinker
 - Married in 1649 – his wife was a pious woman whom he credits as the means that God appointed to call him to salvation.
 - They were very poor, “not having so much household-stuff as a Dish or a Spoon betwixt us both” when the marriage began.
- 1649 – 1660 “The Interregnum”
 - During this period, there was no monarchy. Parliament was running the country, and their policies were largely dictated by the Puritan majority. Oliver Cromwell was the “Lord Protector” of the new commonwealth.
 - Austerity was the order of the day
 - The Puritans cracked down on idolatry; specifically, they outlawed idolatrous holidays, such as Christmas, Easter, and May Day.
 - Independent churches were allowed to flourish, as they were given a measure of religious freedom.
 - John Bunyan during this period:
 - 1650 – Birth of their first child, Mary, who was blind. They had 3 more children: Elizabeth, Thomas, and John.
 - He became convinced of his sins, and of his need for the Lord. At first, he turned to the local parish of the Church of England.
 - In doing his work as a tinker, he encountered two women from the nonconformist Baptist church called the “Bedford Meeting”. He was so convinced of their doctrine, that he began attending, and later joined that church. Before long, he was preaching – both in the church, and in the streets.
 - 1656 – He published his first book: “Some Gospel Truths Opened”; spawned by doctrinal disputes he was having with Quakers.
 - 1658 – His wife died.
 - 1659 – He married a young woman named Elizabeth.
- 1660 – 1685 Charles II (Restoration)
 - Charles II returned from exile to reunite the 3 Kingdoms under the monarchy.
 - Dug up Oliver Cromwell’s corpse, strung it up in chains, and cut off the head.
 - Church of England restored as the national religion.
 - Idolatrous holidays reinstated
 - Clarendon Code – a collection of laws that put an end to religious freedom:
 - **Corporation Act** – required all municipal officials to take Anglican communion, and formally reject every church outside of the Church of England.
 - **Act of Uniformity** – made the Book of Common Prayer compulsory in all religious services. Over 2,000 clergy refused to comply and so were forced to resign their livings (the Great Ejection).

- **Conventicle Act** – Forbade conventicles (a meeting for unauthorized worship) of more than five people who were not members of the same household.
 - **Five Mile Act** – Forbade nonconformist ministers from coming within five miles of incorporated towns or the place of their former livings. They were also forbidden to teach in schools.
 - Thousands of preachers were jailed under the laws of the Clarendon Code
- John Bunyan during this period:
 - 1660 – 1672 Bunyan is imprisoned in Bedfordshire County Prison
 - He was indicted under the Conventicle Act as having “devilishly and perniciously abstained from coming to church to hear divine service” and having held “several unlawful meetings and conventicles, to the great disturbance and distraction of the good subjects of this kingdom”.
 - Over the course of his imprisonment, he was given the opportunity to be released, if he would just quit preaching the truth: His accusers repeatedly came to him in the prison, saying: “Promise not to preach and you can leave the prison today,” he replied, “if you let me go today, I shall preach again tomorrow”.
 - Elizabeth had been pregnant when he was arrested – that child was still-born. Elizabeth raised the children with help provided by those in their little church, and the little bit of money that Bunyan earned in Prison by making shoelaces. There were a few times during those 12 years that he was allowed briefly out of jail. He saw his family, and preached to their church. He had two more children with Elizabeth during this time (Sarah and Joseph).
 - He was allowed to have his Bible and a copy of “Foxye’s Book of Martyrs” in his jail cell.
 - During his imprisonment, he wrote “Grace Abounding to the Chief of Sinners”, and began writing “The Pilgrim’s Progress”.
 - 1672 – King Charles II issued a Declaration of Indulgence, which suspended penal laws against nonconformists.
 - Thousands of nonconformists were released from prison, including Bunyan.
 - He immediately obtained a license to preach, under the Declaration of Indulgence, and continued to preach at the Bedford Meeting, and also travelled England by horse, preaching wherever he could.
 - Pilgrim’s Progress was published in February of 1678
 - It has been translated into 200 languages, and has never been out of print.
 - 1688 – John Bunyan fell ill, and died while on a journey to preach in London.

Why did I just tell you all of that? Was it to worship this man, John Bunyan? Absolutely not! That is precisely what many in the pseudo-religious world have done, especially in England. There’s a statue on top of his grave, of Bunyan, with carvings of scenes from Pilgrim’s Progress. He is worshipped as a part of the liturgical calendar of the Anglican Church. The Bedford Meeting (the church that he pastored) was eventually changed to be called the “Bunyan Meeting”. What folly! He was a man! It is the insatiable desire of proud humans to worship the creature more than the Creator. Preaching is only valuable, when it is led of the Holy Spirit. Godly men are not infallible! Whether it is the writings of a man like John Bunyan, or the words you receive from this very pulpit, we should hold dear **only** those words and lessons that line up with the plumb line of scripture. No preaching or exposition is in itself a source of light – Jesus Christ, the Word of God, recorded and preserved by the Holy Spirit is our **only** source of light. Preaching, by the working of the Holy Spirit is a beautiful tool used to carry, reflect, clarify, magnify,

and focus the brilliant light of the Gospel of Christ, such that our walk is specifically, directly informed and enlightened, and our hearts are instructed and comforted. It is with that understanding that I ever consider, or bring forth any words of scriptural exposition – from myself, or any other man.

So, again, why look at this man’s life? Here’s the value for me:

- 1) It is instructive, and comforting to consider the amazing work of God, in preserving his word in the earth, and in preserving his people. There is indeed nothing new under the sun. To see how we are all tempted and tried in our service to the King – not just in the abstract - but in specific detail, can be a great comfort to us in our own walk, and in the midst of our own afflictions.
- 2) Recognize the kindness that the Lord has shown us. I imagine that many of you were thinking about the incredible mercy that the Lord has shown each of us in our walk, when compared to some of the experiences that I just described. DON’T TAKE IT FOR GRANTED! We must walk in continual thanksgiving, and not think that the Lord owes us ANYTHING. It’s shocking how kind he has been to this little flock – we must never allow those kindnesses and temporal blessings and comforts to cause us to be unthankful, or to be conformed to this world, and its pleasures. We must not let the comfort that the Lord has given us allow us to become complacent, and lethargic – a little bit at a time being settled on our lees; or perhaps more dangerously, cause us to teach our children to be entitled, lazy, and thankless.

Back now to Pilgrim’s Progress, and our topic: Beware of the Flatterer:

The part of Pilgrim’s Progress that we’re considering today finds Christian and Hopeful arriving at the Delectable Mountains. They have already endured many afflictions, and have learned much in their travels – it makes me think of a person who has reached some degree of spiritual maturity, having their senses exercised by reason of use. From that perspective, they can more clearly recognize and articulate the attributes of God, and they can more clearly see the end of their faith. At those Delectable Mountains, they encounter four Shepherds who are dwelling there with their flocks; their names are Knowledge, Experience, Watchful, and Sincere. The Shepherds show them many mysteries, and give them much good instruction, encouragement, and warning for their journey.

*“Thus, by the Shepherds, secrets are reveal’d,
Which from all other men are kept conceal’d
Come to the Shepherds, then, if you would see
Things deep, things hid, and that mysterious be.*

*When they were about to depart, one of the Shepherds gave them a note of the way. Another of them bid them **beware of the Flatterer**. The third bid them take heed that they sleep not upon the Enchanted Ground. And the fourth bid them God speed. So I awoke from my dream.*

They went then till they came at a place where they saw a way put itself into their way, and seemed withal to lie as straight as the way which they should go; and here they knew not which of the two to take, for both seemed straight before them; therefore, here they stood still to consider. And as they were thinking about the way, behold a man, black of flesh, but covered with a very light robe, came to them, and asked them why they stood there. They answered, they were going to the Celestial City, but knew not which of these ways to take. Follow me, said the man, it is thither that I am going. So they followed him in the way that but now came into the road, which by degrees turned, and turned them so from the city that they desired to go to, that, in little time, their faces were turned away from it; yet they followed him. But by and by, before they were aware, he led them both within the compass of a net, in which they were both so entangled, that they knew not what to do; and with that the white robe fell off the black man's back. Then they saw where they were. Wherefore, there they lay crying some time, for they could not get themselves out.

CHRISTIAN: Then said Christian to his fellow, Now do I see myself in an error. Did not the Shepherds bid us beware of the flatterers? As is the saying of the wise man, so we have found it this day, "A man that flattereth his neighbour, spreadeth a net for his feet"

HOPEFUL: They also gave us a note of directions about the way, for our more sure finding thereof; but therein we have also forgotten to read, and have not kept ourselves from the paths of the destroyer. Here David was wiser than we; for, saith he, "Concerning the works of men, by the word of thy lips, I have kept me from the paths of the destroyer"

Thus they lay bewailing themselves in the net. At last they espied a Shining One coming towards them, with a whip of small cord in his hand. When he was come to the place where they were, he asked them whence they came, and what they did there. They told him that they were poor pilgrims going to Zion, but were led out of their way by a black man, clothed in white, who bid us, said they, follow him, for he was going thither too. Then said he with the whip, It is Flatterer, a false apostle, that hath transformed himself into an angel of light. So he rent the net, and let the men out. Then said he to them, Follow me, that I may set you in your way again. So he led them back to the way which they had left to follow the Flatterer. Then he asked them, saying, Where did you lie the last night? They said, With the Shepherds, upon the Delectable Mountains. He asked them then, if they had not of those Shepherds a note of direction for the way. They answered, Yes. But did you, said he, when you were at a stand, pluck out and read your note? They answered, No. He asked them,

Why? They said, they forgot. He asked, moreover, if the Shepherds did not bid them beware of the Flatterer. They answered, Yes, but we did not imagine, said they, that this fine-spoken man had been he.

Then I saw in my dream, that he commanded them to lie down; which, when they did, he chastised them sore, to teach them the good way wherein they should walk; and as he chastised them, he said, "As many as I love, I rebuke and chasten; be zealous, therefore, and repent". This done, he bid them go on their way, and take good heed to the other directions of the Shepherds. So they thanked him for all his kindness, and went softly along the right way, singing—

*Come hither, you that walk along the way;
See how the pilgrims fare that go astray!
They caught are in an entangling net,
'Cause they good counsel lightly did forget:
'Tis true, they rescued were, but yet you see,
They're scourg'd to boot. Let this your caution be."*

What is this flattery that is so dangerous to our souls? How do we combat it?

Dictionary: Flattery - Praise that is not sincere; Excessive and insincere praise, especially when given to further one's own interests; A pleasing self deception; Exaggerated and hypocritical praise; Cajolery; Sweet talk; Puffery.

Simply put: flattery is telling us what we want to hear - things that our fleshly hearts desire to hear – things that make us feel good in our flesh! The flesh desires to hear smooth things, rather than right things. If we will give heed to such flattery, then we will little by little leave off from the narrow path, and find ourselves ensnared by Satan. Flattery is insincere, and it comes with an agenda. Flattery uses your pride, in order to achieve the goal of the flatterer – it is NOT intended for your good! We have to recognize flattery as the desire of our depraved hearts, so that we can war against it. Not only do we desire flattery from others, but our deceived, depraved hearts can be the worst offenders, when we flatter ourselves.

How are we flattered?:

- **Flattering our person – playing to our pride and lust:**
 - **Proverbs 2:10-19 "10 When wisdom entereth into thine heart, and knowledge is pleasant unto thy soul; 11 Discretion shall preserve thee, understanding shall keep thee:...16 To deliver thee from the strange woman, even from the stranger which flattereth with her words; 17 Which forsaketh the guide of her youth, and forgetteth the covenant of her God. 18 For her house inclineth unto death, and her**

paths unto the dead. 19 None that go unto her return again, neither take they hold of the paths of life.”

- **Proverbs 6:20-28 “20 My son, keep thy father’s commandment, and forsake not the law of thy mother: 21 Bind them continually upon thine heart, and tie them about thy neck. 22 When thou goest, it shall lead thee; when thou sleepest, it shall keep thee; and when thou awakest, it shall talk with thee. 23 For the commandment is a lamp; and the law is light; and reproofs of instruction are the way of life: 24 To keep thee from the evil woman, from the flattery of the tongue of a strange woman. 25 Lust not after her beauty in thine heart; neither let her take thee with her eyelids. 26 For by means of a whorish woman a man is brought to a piece of bread: and the adulteress will hunt for the precious life. 27 Can a man take fire in his bosom, and his clothes not be burned? 28 Can one go upon hot coals, and his feet not be burned?”**
 - The flattering words of a proud, whorish woman are an ever present danger - it applies to both genders. We are most susceptible to this when we have left off of diligently, industriously serving the King, and ministering to the Saints. A little bit at a time, we withdraw ourselves, and begin to surround ourselves with the trappings, and people of the world (schoolmates, co-workers, etc.). Little by little we are allured, until one day, the heart is ripe for the plucking, and the whorish woman talks sweetly to you, playing upon your pride – the siren song that will charm you while you make shipwreck upon the rocks! Her words are a sweet perfume which conceals deadly poison! If you have some classmate, or co-worker that is sweet talking you – RUN THE OTHER WAY! There’s death in that pot!
- **Psalm 5:9 “For there is no faithfulness in their mouth; their inward part is very wickedness; their throat is an open sepulchre; they flatter with their tongue”**
 - Matthew Henry: “Do they speak fair? Do they talk of peace and friendship? They flatter with their tongues; it is designed to cover their malice, and to gain their point the more securely. Whatever they pretend of religion or friendship, two sacred things, they are true to neither: Their inward part is wickedness itself; it is very wickedness. They are likewise bloody; for their throat is an open sepulchre, cruel as the grave, gaping to devour and to swallow up, insatiable as the grave, which never says, It is enough,”
- How often have our enemies flattered our pride in this wise: “Those are some of the most intelligent, well educated, hard working, dedicated, kind, loving people ... if they could just understand how hurtful they are to [fags][the cause of hippy jesus][etc]” - Or – “Those people are way too intelligent to believe some

ancient, flawed, human writing about a hateful, invisible God.” – Or - as one foolish, blaspheming atheist put it: “We need to construct ‘off-ramps’ that appeal to their sense of logic and reasoning, that way we can get them to forsake their foolish religion.” All of which plays to our pride, and whispers in our ear, that we ought to reason away the truth of God.

- **Flattering us as God’s people:**

- **Daniel 11:34 “Now when they shall fall, they shall be holpen with a little help: but many shall cleave to them with flatteries.”**

- Haven’t we experienced this? “You guys are so good! Look, I know so much about you ... I can even imitate you! Now – just excuse me as I continue to walk in sin and darkness; a hearer of the word, and not a doer.” How often have we dealt with people, even those who were members of the church at one time, who present flattering lip service, but ultimately require that we change the doctrines of the scriptures – lower the bar - to accommodate them. Satan’s hope is that we will be so flattered that there is another soul in this dark wilderness that even gives lip service to serving God, that we will be willing to forsake God, in order to join hands with them!

- **Romans 16:17,18 “17 Now I beseech you, brethren, mark them which cause divisions and offences contrary to the doctrine which ye have learned; and avoid them. 18 For they that are such serve not our Lord Jesus Christ, but their own belly; and by good words and fair speeches deceive the hearts of the simple.”**

- When Satan can’t get us to take more obvious bait, he employs this far more subtle approach: “You’re so holy! You’re so righteous! You’re so wise!” As though YOU brought holiness, righteousness, or wisdom to the table. Having now puffed you up in pride, and therefore pulled you away from the Spirit, he will play to your human, fleshly intellect, and reasoning, hoping to get you to forsake God’s perfect standards, and create new standards.

- That Greek word translated as “fair speeches” is “eulogia”: Polished language; in a bad sense, language artfully adapted to captivate the hearer: fair speaking, fine speeches; an invocation of blessing. This is the word where we get the English word “eulogy”. How fitting is that? At what point are we more apt to hear Satanic flattery, than a funeral? What’s the design of flattering the dead man? To cause all who watched his manner of life to be convinced that they should follow after it! What wickedness and peril!

- **Flattering us in our sins, with the smooth words of false doctrine:**

- **Psalm 55:21-23 “21 The words of his mouth were smoother than butter, but war was in his heart: his words were softer than oil, yet**

were they drawn swords. **22 Cast thy burden upon the LORD, and he shall sustain thee: he shall never suffer the righteous to be moved. 23 But thou, O God, shalt bring them down into the pit of destruction: bloody and deceitful men shall not live out half their days; but I will trust in thee.**”

- Spurgeon: “The words of his mouth were smoother than butter. He lauded and larded the man he hoped to devour. He buttered him with flattery and then battered him with malice. Beware of a man who has too much honey on his tongue; a trap is to be suspected where the bait is so tempting. Soft, smooth, oily words are most plentiful where truth and sincerity are most scarce.”
- **Isaiah 30:9-11 “9 That this is a rebellious people, lying children, children that will not hear the law of the LORD: 10 Which say to the seers, See not; and to the prophets, Prophecy not unto us right things, speak unto us smooth things, prophecy deceits: 11 Get you out of the way, turn aside out of the path, cause the Holy One of Israel to cease from before us.”**
 - That word translated as “smooth things” is translated as “flattery” in three other verses. The wicked DEMAND flattery – smooth words – about their sins. They WANT to be deceived. They want to be told that sin is indeed NOT SIN. Further than that, they want their sin to be glorified – they want to be called a hero for the rebellion that defines their lives! [Just to point out some obvious examples – think gay pride parade. Think Bruce Jenner.]
 - Thomas Brooks: “Flatterers dare call vice—virtue; they dare call pride—civility; covetousness—good economy; drunkenness—good company; prodigality—liberality; wantonness—a foible of youth; passion—zeal; revenge—courage, etc. They dare call enormities—infirmities; and wickednesses—weaknesses. They dare call great sins—little sins; little sins—no sins. They gild over all their poisonous pills with gold. They draw the fairest glove upon the foulest hand. They lay their neatest colors upon the filthiest sores. They put their best paint upon the worst faces, and the richest robes upon the most diseased bodies. And by these devices they entangle many to their utter ruin.”
- Satan’s hiss is the father of all flattery: “Thou shalt not surely die ... in fact, you’ll be as a god ... and you deserve that, because you’re an empowered, independent, intelligent woman!” Did Satan have the least desire to help Eve? Does he have the least desire to help us? NO! He hates us with every fiber of his being! Satan is looking out for #1 – every human being is simply a pawn in his battle against God, and he is willing to use anyone in any way that will advance his own rebellious agenda.

- We flatter ourselves in our sin. NONE OF US, while we are in this flesh, will ever be totally free from that fleshly desire. When we are thinking right, it is a fleeting thing – we see that wicked operation happening in our heart, and in a moment, seek the Lord to crush it on the spot. When we are thinking wrong, and sowing to our flesh, then we give place to it, and we put ourselves and our beloved friends into danger! We flatter ourselves – deceiving ourselves - in order to continue upon a course of action that we desire. When we are thinking wrong, we surround ourselves with those who will be likeminded, or will indulge our self-deception, or who will be too timid to tell us plainly what we need to hear. This self-flattery inherently puts us in a place where we are looking down on our brothers and sisters in the faith – when we lift ourselves up, we are putting someone else beneath us. Such a thing is contrary to the Spirit, and our duty to esteem one another better than ourselves.
 - **Psalm 36:1-4 “The transgression of the wicked saith within my heart, that there is no fear of God before his eyes. 2 For he flattereth himself in his own eyes, until his iniquity be found to be hateful. 3 The words of his mouth are iniquity and deceit: he hath left off to be wise, and to do good. 4 He deviseth mischief upon his bed; he setteth himself in a way that is not good; he abhorreth not evil.”**

How do we combat this flattery?

- We cannot combat any danger in our spiritual walk, without having a knowledge of the scriptures, and then exercising that knowledge – taking up our cross daily – applying that knowledge to the continual work of preaching the Gospel, and ministering to the saints of God. As I said before, we are in the greatest danger of being taken by flatteries when we have withdrawn from these fundamental aspects of the spiritual warfare that we are all engaged in. (2Timothy 2:15; Luke 9:23)
- Recognize it for the danger that it is! The best way to deal with the darkness of deceit is to shine light upon it – call it the pernicious sin that it is, and flee from it!
- Exhort one another continually:
 - **Proverbs 27:5 “Open rebuke is better than secret love. 6 Faithful are the wounds of a friend; but the kisses of an enemy are deceitful.”**
 - **Proverbs 28:23 “He that rebuketh a man afterwards shall find more favour than he that flattereth with the tongue.”**
 - **Hebrews 3:12,13 “12 Take heed, brethren, lest there be in any of you an evil heart of unbelief, in departing from the living God. 13 But exhort one another daily, while it is called To day; lest any of you be hardened through the deceitfulness of sin.”**
 - Flattery is a primary driver of this “deceitfulness of sin”. The affirmative duty to exhort, that each of us owes to one another, is the exact opposite

of flattery. It is by this operation that the Lord appointed – an operation of encouragement, and provocation to love and to good works – that we avoid walking into the trap of the flatterer.

- This work of exhortation is a two way street. I must encourage you; you must encourage me. You must be WILLING to encourage me – even when it’s not convenient, or comfortable for you. I must be WILLING to receive encouragement, even when I don’t like what I’m hearing. It is health to our bones! If we are not willing to submit ourselves to one another, for this exhortation, then we are in fact saying that we want to be deceived; we want to be told smooth things; we want to be flattered; we want to walk in the counsel of the ungodly.
 - One of the ways that we can avoid this exhortation, is to keep really quiet about circumstances that are going on in our lives, when we think that someone will tell us that we should take a different course of action than the course that we have already set our heart upon. Or, similarly, when we only seek counsel from those whom we think will give us the counsel that agrees with our desire. That is grave danger! That kind of behavior begins to take us, by slight degrees, down the path toward a snare. God has blessed us to walk with those of like precious faith, each being “full of goodness, filled with all knowledge, and able to admonish one another” (**Romans 15:14**). Take advantage of that blessing, with great thanks to God! We must seek counsel in such a way that will allow a person to be comfortable to give us wisdom on a matter. If we present a thing, front loaded with the answer that we want, then we are really not asking for counsel – we’re looking for flattery. We must seek counsel, and we must do it with an open heart.
- Try the spirits
 - **1John 4:1 “Beloved, believe not every spirit, but try the spirits whether they are of God: because many false prophets are gone out into the world.”**
 - If we try the spirits, and only follow after that which lines up with the scriptures, then flattery is of none effect!
 - Consider these stark words of warning from Paul to the Elders at the church at Ephesus: **Acts 20:28-30 “28 Take heed therefore unto yourselves, and to all the flock, over the which the Holy Ghost hath made you overseers, to feed the church of God, which he hath purchased with his own blood. 29 For I know this, that after my departing shall grievous wolves enter in among you, not sparing the flock. 30 Also of your own selves shall men arise, speaking perverse things, to draw away disciples after them.”**

- This is serious business! Those that would deceive and corrupt by flattery, are not neutral in this fight, they are GREIVOUS WOLVES! They are CONSTANTLY clawing under the fence, looking for a way to get at the flock.
- **Revelation 2:1,2** “1 Unto the angel of the church of Ephesus write; These things saith he that holdeth the seven stars in his right hand, who walketh in the midst of the seven golden candlesticks; 2 I know thy works, and thy labour, and thy patience, and how thou canst not bear them which are evil: and thou hast tried them which say they are apostles, and are not, and hast found them liars:” Let us watch, and pray that the Lord will give this same report of us.

I love you all. Amen.