

PROVIDENCE CHURCH

Glorifying God by knowing, living and proclaiming His truth in the world

Great Things for Yourself?

Dr. Wayne Mack

Jeremiah 45:5

July 19, 2015

...know that so many of you have just enjoyed God's blessing and kindness in giving them to us over these last number of years, making yearly stops in Atlanta. What a blessing it has been. But I do want to take a moment, even though most of you know these things, some of you here probably don't. I just want to share, and some of you may need to be reminded, or maybe you haven't heard of some things, but just to let you know a little bit about what the Lord has done in Dr. Mack.

As we read earlier, Ted read at the beginning of the service, we know that all things are done by the hand of God, by His power, and so we give him glory for everything He does through any human being, but we are thankful that he has used Wayne and Carol Mack in the way that He has. They have pastored churches in Philadelphia, in Pennsylvania, and Louisiana, but they have really been used to be pioneers in the areas of biblical counseling. Along with Jay Adams, they are right there with the work that Dr. Mack has done, writing over 25 books. The Lord has just used them in a mighty way to reintroduce biblical counseling to the church, to recover that area of sanctification to the church. It had been given away to psychology, and by God's grace, it has come back in this reformation that has happened over the last 40 years.

He was involved in the Christian Counseling Education Foundation, serving as an instructor in that organization for over 10 years, almost 15 I think. He was involved in the formation of the National Association of Nouthetic Counselors, that is NANC, if you've heard of that. Dr. Mack was in the ground floor building NANC, and has been a part of it for all these years. Now it is known as ACBC. Don't you hate those acronyms? You just get used to one and then they change it on you. ACBC is the Association of Certified Biblical Counselors. It is the organization formerly known as NANC.

He was also involved in the formation, did the formative work on the finest masters program in biblical counseling in the world, The Master's College, in Santa Clarita, California. He was the one, the architect that essentially put that program together. Then, after doing all of these things, the Lord called him to be a missionary to South Africa, and they have been in South Africa for almost ten years, I think nine years, and they went there to take biblical ministry, in particular

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biblical counseling, to the churches in Africa. Those of you who watch the news over the last 20 years or so, you know that the continent of Africa has been ravaged, so many orphans because of AIDS, and the crisis that that has caused in so many countries. Well, what is the answer? The answer is for the church to be the church, for the word of God to be seen as that which has the answers to bringing people to purity. So they've been doing that for the last number of years. And recently, they just started ACBC Africa. He is involved in that, and is still teaching men and women to counsel biblically there. But most of all, as I said, we just love them, and we thank God for the blessing they are in our lives. So he is going to come and bring God's word to us right now, and we are delighted that you are here today, Dr. Mack.

All right, there, I think we have my chariot all ready there for me to sit on, which I probably won't use, but thank you for the effort. It is a joy to be with you this morning, as we've had that joy over the last few years, and spending some time here at Providence Church. It has been great. A couple of questions that were asked quite frequently as we interact with people is: When did you come? And the answer to that is: We got here about June 23. And then the second question is: When are you going? And our plans are to leave here this coming weekend to go back. We've got a class that begins on the 31st of July, and so I have to get back for that. But another question is: What are you doing while you are here? And we of course have visited some with you folks here at Providence Church, and we also have gone to Pennsylvania to visit with relatives, and to do some ministry with some of our relatives there, giving our testimonies, and seeking to bring some of them to Jesus Christ.

Then we spent several days in Little Rock, Arkansas, where we were with the Bible Church of Little Rock. Actually, we began a ministry down there in the year 2000, and we were going back there at least three months a year to teach, and we were part of a training institute there. Then we were asked to move to Little Rock to live there, and work in that particular ministry, and it was just about that time when we were asked to consider coming to South Africa to teach over there because we were told that there was no place in all of Africa where students can go and get the kind of teaching that they would get through the biblical counseling program. And so at that particular time, we decided to go, and I was 70, and my wife was 70 as well, and we thought that was a good time for us. We were asking the Lord, "Lord, You've given us a little bit of experience," we were in the pastorate for 16 years, then went back to get our doctorate in counseling, and from

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that time on we were either counseling, training counselors, or directing counseling ministries.

So it has been our joy to be that, it has been our joy to know you folks here who are committed to biblical counseling. We went to the Master's College, two of the distinctives of the Master's College are, one is that they believe in a young Earth. Science, not over a period of time, but we believe Genesis 1, and Genesis 2, is really true, and that God created the heavens and the Earth in six days, and rested the seventh day. It wasn't a process of theistic evolution, it is a process of divine creation. That is one of the distinctives of Master's College.

The second distinctive of Master's College is that they are totally committed to the sufficiency of Scripture when it comes to addressing the problems, the issues that we face in life. They believe 2 Peter 1:3, which says that in Christ, God has given us everything we need for living, and for godliness. Everything we need in terms of our relationship with God, the vertical aspect of our lives, and then everything we need for living, that is the horizontal aspect of our lives, in terms of marriage, and family, and all of the personal problems that exist.

And so we had that privilege, as Ty said, of being involved in the development of that program, because there was a point back in the beginning of the 1990s when Master's College had a psychology department that was basically like, at least to some extent, with a few verses, Bible verses thrown in, much like psychology that you get in other places. At that point, they became convinced that the Bible was sufficient, and that it should be reflected in the courses, and so they phased out their whole what they called the Behavior Studies department, psychology department.

At that point, they began to ask the question: Now what do we do? With that they looked to NANC, the National Association of Nouthetic Counselors, for direction as far as beginning a biblical alternative to psychology, and using the word of God to understand people, to understand why they have their problems, to understand how to solve their problems, and it was at that particular point where they looked around the United States, and most of us who were academically qualified for that position, as well as experientially qualified, most of us were already involved in a ministries. So at that point, a medical doctor by the name of Robert Smith in Indiana, Indianapolis, Indiana, actually Lafayette, Indiana, was willing to give up his medical practice. He had been involved in biblical counseling since the inception here in the United States, and Bob Smith came, and he told them he

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would only be there for a little while because he wanted to go back to his medical practice. But he gave up his medical practice for a period of time, and primarily focused on the biblical counseling at the Master's College. Meanwhile, they began to pursue me to come and replace Bob, which I did.

Carol and I agreed to come and we spent a considerable period of time, and then we came to the place where we asked the Lord, "What do you want us to do with the rest of our lives?" We, at that point, were considering going to Little Rock, and working there, or going to South Africa. Well, we ended up going to South Africa, and we've been there since December of 2005. So we've been there, in December, it will have been ten years that we've been there, and it has been a great time of challenge, and for us to see what the Lord is doing. And by this time we've had the opportunity of training more than 300 men from South Africa, and then some from Zambia, and some from Namibia as well.

Just recently we formed the Association of Certified Biblical Counselors in Africa, and the purpose is, of course, to train people for biblical discipleship, to strengthen churches, and help pastors to use the word of God more effectively, and to help other Christians to do the same. At any rate, we appreciate your prayers for us on behalf of that. We are grateful that we send messages back, and Carolyn puts them on the Internet, and you guys get them, and hopefully read them, and we would appreciate it if you would pray for us, and if you have any questions you'd like to ask about any of those things, we, of course, are ready to receive them.

Now I want to direct your attention this morning to Jeremiah 45, and in particular we are going to be looking at Verse 5 of Jeremiah 45. But to get the context, I'm going to read Verses 1-5.

Jeremiah 45:1-5 ~ This is the message which Jeremiah the prophet spoke to Baruch the son of Neriah, when he had written down these words in a book at Jeremiah's dictation, in the fourth year of Jehoiakim the son of Josiah, king of Judah, saying: 2 "Thus says the LORD the God of Israel to you, O Baruch: 3 'You said, "Ah, woe is me! For the LORD has added sorrow to my pain; I am weary with my groaning and have found no rest." 4 Thus you are to say to him, 'Thus says the LORD, "Behold, what I have built I am about to tear down, and what I have planted I am about to uproot, that is, the whole land." 5 But you, are you seeking great things for yourself? Do not seek them; for behold, I am going to bring disaster on

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all flesh,' declares the LORD, 'but I will give your life to you as booty (King James says 'as prey') in all the places where you may go.'"

So Verse 5 was historically given to a man by the name of Baruch. Now who was Baruch? Baruch happened to be the, technical term, 'amanuenses' of Jeremiah the prophet, which means he was a secretary of Jeremiah the prophet. In fact, Baruch was Jeremiah's right hand man. According to Jeremiah 36:4-10, what happened was that Jeremiah would receive a message from the Lord, and then he would dictate it to Baruch, and Baruch would write down that message, and then Baruch was given the distinct privilege of actually presenting that message to the people.

You read in Jeremiah 36:14-15 how this went. It says Baruch, the son of Neriah, took the scroll in his hand, and he went to the people, and they said to him, "Sit down please, and read it to us." So Baruch read the message that Jeremiah had given him, to him. So in that sense, Baruch was the assistant pastor who functioned under and with, Jeremiah. I think it is clear that Baruch was a man who desperately hoped that revival would come to the nation of Israel. The nation had become very backslidden, and then God said, as a result of that, that He was going to bring judgment upon His people. He describes that judgment earlier in Jeremiah, Chapter 43:1-4, and other places as well. So God says, "I'm going to bring judgment. My people have not listened. They've been given the word of God, but they didn't hear the word of God."

Now Baruch, of course, was the instrument that God used to present the message. The message originally came to Jeremiah, then Baruch would receive it from Jeremiah, and present it to the people. Now Baruch desperately hoped that revival would come to the Nation of Israel. Through his preaching, he desperately hoped that the people would see the error of their ways and repent, and turn to the Lord so that the nation would be spared the judgment of God, but revival didn't come. The people heard, but the people did not obey, and refused to believe what Baruch was bringing to them. So God pronounces judgment on them which is described pretty graphically in Chapter 44:11-14. Now when God pronounces judgment upon His people, what was the response of Baruch? Well, according to Jeremiah 45:1-3, he became very sorrowful. He was sorrowing, he was experiencing emotional pain. It says that he said, "I'm weary in my groaning and I found no rest."

Now at first glance, you might think that Baruch was sorrowful because he was concerned about the people that they were not repenting, and that they weren't going to be given the opportunity for future repentance because God was going to

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bring judgment upon them. As I say, you might think that that was his concern, but God knew that that was not his primary concern. He knew that that was not what was disturbing Baruch. He was not thinking of the glory of God, nor was he thinking of the people. Primarily, he was thinking about himself, and it is in this context that God comes to Baruch, in Jeremiah 45:5, and He says, “Are you seeking great things for yourself?” It is right after you read about his mourning, his groaning, and so forth, and God comes, and He says, “What is the matter with you, Baruch? Are you seeking great things for yourself?” The King James actually puts it a little more plausibly. He says, “You *are* seeking great things for yourself.”

Now you might say, and I hope you do, “That is all very interesting, but what does it have to do with us?” Well, I believe it has a lot to do with us, because if we are honest, every one of us should admit that we have sought great things for ourselves. Jeremiah 45:5, “Are you seeking great things,” and the most important words are the last two, “for yourself?” Now there wasn’t anything wrong with what Baruch wanted. He wanted revival, he wanted the people to turn back to God, he wanted the people to listen to God’s word, and obey God’s word. So there wasn’t anything wrong with what he wanted, but there was something very wrong with the reason for which he wanted it. He wanted them to turn to God for himself. He wanted the people to respond because that would mean something about him as a person. He wanted to be a great preacher. He wasn’t satisfied with being the assistant pastor of Jeremiah. Where Jeremiah would get the credit, no, he wanted the credit to be given to him, and God knew that, and so He said, “Seek them not. Don’t seek glory, for great things for yourself.”

Now, as I said, there wasn’t anything wrong with what Baruch wanted, but there was something wrong with his reason. Earlier in our service, Pastor Ty read from James 4, and what you have here is an illustration of what James 4:3 is talking about. James says, “Sometimes you don’t receive things because you don’t ask.” Now he is dealing with the subject of unanswered prayer. Have you ever wondered why some of your prayers are not answered? Well, James is giving you at least a partial insight into the answer to that question. He says, “Sometimes you don’t receive because you don’t even ask. You take God for granted, you assume that the Lord is going to do certain things, and you don’t ask.” But then he says as a second reason, “Why are your prayers not answered? And that is you ask, and you don’t receive because you ask amiss, that you may consume it upon your own lust.”

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James is saying that, “What you are asking for isn’t necessarily wrong,” but he is saying, “God doesn’t hear your prayers because you are asking for the wrong reason.” The two words in Jeremiah 45:5, at the end of that sentence, are tremendously important. “Are you seeking great things *for yourselves?*” Baruch wanted to be acknowledged as one of the key men who brought Judah back from destruction. One commentator has said, “He wanted to play a prominent part in the impending crises. He wanted to be the hero of a national revival, and when this didn’t happen, he sank in despair at the seeming fruitlessness of his efforts.”

And dear ones, I submit to you, there isn’t a person here today who is qualified to throw stones at Baruch because there is probably not a person here today who is not guilty of seeking the right thing for wrong reasons. Seeking for themselves, and not ultimately, all we can say with our lips, “We’re doing this for the glory of God,” but many times what we are concerned about is the glory of self. Sometimes we can be doing what appears to be Kingdom of God work, while in reality we are doing kingdom of self work, and that is what was true with Baruch. He was doing the right thing, but he was doing it for the wrong reason. He was doing it for the glory of Baruch, and God came and rebuked him for that.

So here is a woman, for example, who comes to God and says, “Oh God, I want you to save my husband. Please save my husband.” Or, “Lord, please save my children.” Now it certainly isn’t a wrong thing for a woman to ask, if she is a believer, of course she wants her husband to become a believer, but she may be asking for that for the wrong reason. Because she knows that if he becomes a real believer, he is going to treat her, the Bible says he is to love his wife as Christ loved the church. He gave Himself up for her. The Bible says he is to love his wife as he loves himself. He is to nourish her, and cherish her. She thinks, “If he only becomes a Christian, then he will become that kind of husband that will love me in the way that I want to be loved.” Or, “I want my children to be saved, and one of the reasons I want my children to be saved is because I want people to think well of me. That I’ve done such a good job as a parent.” Or, “I want my children to be Christians because then they’ll be easier to manage. They will be easier to control.” Now she may be asking for the right thing, but she is asking for it for a wrong reason.

Or here is a person who comes to God and says, “Oh God, teach me to pray. Oh God, open my eyes to behold wondrous things out of your law.” That is what the Bible says, and it is proper for us to ask for, but sometimes our motive may be that we want to see wonderful things out of the law so we can share them with

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somebody else, and then they can know how spiritual we are, and how much knowledge we have, and so we are asking for the same reason that Baruch asked. He wanted for himself. We are so much like the Pharisees that Jesus described in Matthew 6. They prayed on the street corners, they prayed in the synagogues, and why did they do it there? Was there anything wrong with praying on the street corners? Anything wrong with praying in the synagogues? Absolutely not, but the reason they did it was because they wanted to impress people, it said, that they might be seen of men. So we can even ask for good things like, “Lord, help me in my prayer life,” and do that for a wrong reason.

Or here’s a person who said, “Oh God, give me power. Give me the ability to work effectively for You. Lord, make me a blessing to other people.” Now, there’s nothing wrong with that request. In fact, in 1 Corinthians 12, and again in 1 Corinthians 14, the Bible says we should pursue and eagerly and earnestly desire spiritual gifts. Come to God and ask for help in being a blessing that He wants us to be. There’s nothing wrong with that request unless we want it for the wrong reason, to glorify and exalt ourselves rather than to edify and strengthen the church.

Or here’s a person who says, “Lord, help me to make money. Lord, You know I don’t have much money, and please help me to be able to get a job where I’ll be able to make a lot of money.” Now, there’s nothing wrong with asking God to help you to make money, if you’re asking God to help you honestly to make more money so you can give more heavily to the Lord’s work, or so that more can be done through the church, or out on the mission field, or through literature. And so if a person sincerely asks, “Lord, give me more money, so that I can give more fully to Your work,” there’s nothing wrong with that. But if a person prays because they’re not satisfied with their present home which is adequate but not as nice or as big as they would like it to be, or because they would like to have a Cadillac or a Lexus instead of the puddle jumper that they have, or they would like to have five suits in the closet instead of one that they have, or because they like to have steak once a day or maybe twice a day, and that’s why they’re asking for more money, I fully believe that one of the reasons God keeps some of His children poor is because He knows they would not use that money properly. They’d use it on themselves, or as James puts it, they would consume it on their own lusts.

Now, if they’re asking for more money honestly and sincerely, because they want to glorify God, they want to demonstrate how God is faithful and God is able, they’re like George Mueller. George Mueller, of course, was used of God in

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founding orphanages where thousands of orphaned children were kept, and George Mueller, one of the purposes he had, he has a book which was written by George Mueller, I think it was *Ten Thousand Answers to Prayer*, and he says in that book that what he wanted to demonstrate to God's people is that God is able to provide for our needs and to supply the need that we have for the work to which He calls us.

So this idea of seeking great things, there's nothing wrong with seeking great things if we're doing it for the right reasons. God says, "Are you seeking great things for yourself? Stop it!" And then in the text He goes on to give some reasons why we shouldn't seek great things for ourselves. I want you to notice just briefly those three reasons. He says:

Jeremiah 45:5 ~ ...Seek them not, for behold, I am bringing disaster upon all flesh,...

And what He's saying here is that He's going to bring judgment, and He's the one who decides when judgment should come. The Bible says in Romans 1 sometimes He brings judgment by removing the restraints, and we see the wrath of God being revealed, and perhaps we should be asking at this particular time in light of what's happening in the United States of America, whether God is beginning to bring judgment. I'm not a prophet, and so I'm not saying specifically, but I'm saying that one of the things God does is He removes the restraints. He gives them over, is what Romans 1 says. They want it and God says, "Okay, have it," and they have to learn that that isn't really the solution. That really doesn't answer. So many times we are the one who judges what is right. We're the one who wants to judge what is wrong, and God says, "Wait a minute. I am the Judge." Sometimes we live for the approval of people. We allow people around us and even our own hearts, to determine what is right and what is wrong. We have the world's idea of what is a success and what is a failure. And when we stand before the judgment bar of Almighty God, many of the things that we thought were so great and so important will seem very insignificant. At that point the approval of the crowd and of other people is not going to be that important. It won't matter what others think about what marriage is, what the proper role of sex is. That won't matter. The only thing that will matter is what God says about it. We're living in a time where we who are believers need to lovingly, gently, and yet firmly stand for what we know is the truth. And if the world doesn't like it, then the world doesn't like it, but we stand for what God stands for, and we submit to Him. The approval of people around us won't make that much difference at that time.

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At that time some of the things that we considered to be so important, some of the things that keep us away from the services of the church, some of the things that keep us away from reading the Bible as we should, from praying as we should, some of the things that we get so involved in in our business that it hinders us as far as our relationship with God and service to God, it's not going to make any difference at all. This was of course the conviction of the apostle Paul. He says in 1 Corinthians 4, "Let a man regard us in this manner as servants of Christ." That's who we are. We're servants of Christ, and we're just stewards. We don't invent. We don't develop. We're just stewards of the mysteries of God, and it's required of the steward that one would be found trustworthy.

"For to me it's a very small thing that I should be examined by you or by any human court. In fact, I don't even examine myself." And that's what God was saying to Baruch at this point. "Baruch, what you're concerned about is the approval of people, the opinion of people, the applause of people. It's not worth it, because they're not the Judge. I am the Judge, and I'm the one to whom you're going to give account and stand before Me in judgment." So we need to remember that as we live in a world where people are trying to push us into thinking the way they think, into accepting what they believe, what they accept. We have to remind ourselves that God is the ultimate judge, and it's to Him that we will give account. That's one of the things I believe that God said to Baruch at this point, and one of the things we need to learn too.

The second thing that he said to Baruch is, "I will give your life to you," and He's reminding him that God is the one who gives life, and that life is a gift from God. ***I will give your life...*** And this is true in both the physical and spiritual sense. The Psalmist said, "Unto the Lord belong the issues of life and death." If I'm alive physically, it's only because it pleases God in His providence that I should live, and that's true of you too. Jim Elliott said many years ago, "Man is immortal until God's work for him in this world is done." Acts 17:28 says, "In Him we live and move and we have our being." If I'm alive physically, that's true. If I'm alive spiritually, that's true also. God has given me spiritual life. I was dead in my trespasses and sins, but God quickened me and He gave me spiritual life. And if you're a believer that's happened to you as well.

Jesus says, "I give unto them eternal life. I'm the one who does it, and no man shall pluck them out of My Father's hand." So if we're alive either spiritually or physically, we need to remember that it's God who makes us alive. That's what He said to Baruch, and sometimes we need to be reminded of that in our own life.

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Wait a minute. Why are you so concerned about these things? He's the one that gives you life.

Now, I think one of the most disappointing experiences that any human being could have would be to bring another human being into the world, to feed that other human being, to nourish, to cherish, to clothe, to love that little child, and then later have that child either acting differently toward you or even turn on you and curse and blaspheme, and treat you with contempt. That would be a sad experience, and yet this is exactly what people are doing to God. There are millions of people in the world who owe their physical life to God, and yet they're indifferent to Him.

There are millions who are like the man that Jesus describes in Luke 12, who lived, and his crops bore abundantly, and he wanted to build bigger barns to take care of his crops, and the Lord says that God came to him that night and said, "You're a fool." Now, that man as far as we know, the text doesn't say he cursed God, the text doesn't say he wallowed in sin, but it just says this man ignored God. He left God out of his life, and God called him a fool. And that very night his soul was going to be required of him, and then God said, "Of what value will all these things be to you?" at that particular time. That's sad to have people ignore God like that man. But you know, there's something even sadder, and that is to see people who not only owe their physical life to God and their spiritual life to God, they claim to be alive spiritually and yet they treat God with indifference or apathy. There are thousands of people who claim to be Christians, who would tell you they've been forgiven of their sins. I just read in a newspaper about a certain Presidential candidate, a person who hopes to be a Republican candidate. He was at a convention of Christians in Iowa, and he was asked the question whether he ever had asked God for forgiveness. And the newspaper said that his reply was that he had not. Here he is a man who is tremendously blessed in a financial sense, and he's running for perhaps President of the United States, and yet he says, "I guess I should, but I never have." He's never asked God for forgiveness. And he went on to say something about the fact that he guessed that he had sinned. Well, it's not a guess. It's a fact that he really has.

Now, when we treat God with indifference and we're seeking great things for ourselves, that's who we're focusing on, not God, but ourselves. The Lord comes and He says, "Are you seeking great things for yourself? Stop it. Stop it." In Isaiah 1, God writes to His professing people, and He describes them as His children, and

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yet in that passage, He says that they had abandoned Him. He says that they were not listening to Him, and He says:

Isaiah 1:4

***Alas, sinful nation,
People weighed down with iniquity,
Offspring of evildoers,
Sons who act corruptly!
They have abandoned the Lord,
They have despised the Holy One of Israel,
They have turned away from Him.***

And it's as though God as a heavenly parent is expressing His sorrow to see these people treating Him with indifference. Now, one other thing, a reason why God says to Jeremiah, and He says to us as well that we should not seek great things for ourselves, is found in the last part of that statement:

Jeremiah 45:5 ~ But you, are you seeking great things for yourself? Do not seek them; for behold, I am going to bring disaster on all flesh,' declares the Lord, 'but I will give your life to you as booty in all the places where you may go.'"

The King James says, "I'll give your life to you as a prey." And what is that saying? Well, what is a prey or a booty? Well, a booty or a prey is something that the certain animals that we call beasts of prey. They are constantly wanting to devour. They attack other animals. Psalm 17:12 speaks of the lion that is greedy of his prey, and Psalm 104:21 speaks of the young lions that roar after their prey. When a lion is hungry he's not a safe animal to be around. He becomes greedy and he becomes dangerous.

And so, my friends, when the Bible says that I will give your life to you as a prey, God is indicating that we as believers can expect that we'll be under constant attack. There are enemies who will seek to destroy the life that God has given to us. And God reminds us that we're not only indebted to Him for the beginning of life, but also for the continuance of life. "I will give your life to you as a prey." We would not continue to live either physically or spiritually if God did not preserve or protect us. It's in Him we live, and we move, and we have our being. Our lives are

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like the flame of a candle in a windstorm. The only way that candle can continue to burn is if someone shields it from the wind.

If you've read John Bunyan's *Pilgrim's Progress*, you know there's a place where Christian is brought to the House of the Interpreter, and in the House of the Interpreter he is shown seven excellent things. And this is really Bunyan's concept of what new believers need to be taught. And one of the things that he was shown in that House of the Interpreter was he was brought into a room where there was a fire that was blazing, and someone was trying to pour water on the fire and to dampen it. That was Bunyan's description of the zeal of our faith and the zeal of our love for God. We have enemies, primarily the great enemy Satan and all his demons, who are trying to pour water on the flame of our love, our faith, and our devotion to God. But in that same picture that Bunyan gives to us as Christian watches the scene, he sees that there's someone behind a certain wall that is pouring oil on that flame. Even as somebody tries to put the flame out, there's someone else, and it's the Lord Jesus of course, who continues to give us zeal. Robert Murray M'Cheyne wrote a very beautiful poem which became a hymn, and the poem went like this.

*When I see Thee as Thou art,
Love Thee with unsinning heart,
Then Lord, then Lord, shall I fully know,
Not til then how much I owe.*

Now, until we stand in the presence of God, we won't fully know the truth of Jeremiah 45:5, that God gives our life to us in the midst of opposition, in the midst of attacks on it, and He's there to continue to give us that life. Now, in Psalm 57:4, the Psalmist said, "My soul is among lions," and I want you to know, my friends, that that's true of you and it's true of me. If you're a believer, your soul is among lions. There are lions all around us who would devour us and destroy us as the people of God. There are lions of unbelief. Faith is so important. Without faith it's impossible to please God. This is the victory that overcomes the world, even what? Even our faith, and without faith we'll never overcome. But Satan is trying to diminish and destroy our faith, but God said, "I'll give you life even as others are attacking you," and we depend upon Him to do that.

And then there's the lion of lust. We read in James 1 that every man is tempted when he is drawn away of his own lust. 1 Peter 2:11 says we're to abstain from fleshly lusts. Why? It's because they war against the soul. Even though we're

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believers, we still have the remnants of our old nature. We're not the same. We're new creatures in Christ Jesus, with old things passing away and all things becoming new, but Peter says we have the remnants of the old nature, so we need to abstain from fleshly lusts. What are fleshly lusts? It's focusing on self. It's seeking great things that will bring us comfort, that will bring us pleasure, that we come to that place where we abstain, we turn away from those things, we repudiate those things, and we live for God. There's not a one of us who would not succumb to the allurements of the devil were it not for the fact that God has given us life for a prey. God is preserving and sustaining us.

So the third reason why we should not seek great things for ourselves, we should not focus on self, is because God is the one who will protect us. Our souls are among lions, but just as God shut the mouths of the lions when Daniel was in the lion's den, He shuts the mouths of lions that are trying to destroy us today. So why would we seek great things for ourselves? God should be at the center. What we should be seeking is in everything the glory of God. We should be seeking to please God, to lift up God, not to lift up self. That's not where the focus should be. Our focus should be on—1 Corinthians 10 says, "Therefore, whether you eat or drink, or whatever you do, you do it all for the glory of God." So the Lord asks a question. "Are you seeking great things for yourself?" Do you want to make a name for yourself? Is your main purpose in life to satisfy your creature needs, to win the approval of people? Is it to be happy? Is your perspective on life a man-centered, a world-centered perspective, or is it really I want to seek whatever I seek because it will please God, it will glorify God, and will lift up the Lord Jesus Christ?

So Jeremiah says to us, "Don't seek these things the world seeks, for God is Judge. God is the Author of life. He is the Preserver of life as well. And if these things are true, then they ought to govern us and direct us in terms of seeking first the Kingdom of God and His righteousness, and then letting God take care of all these other things. May God help us to reflect on that, and live that way so that we would not have to receive the same correction that Baruch received. "Are you seeking great things yourself? Stop it." And then He gives us those three reasons why He is the one that we should be mainly concerned about, living for Him. May God help us in that regard.

Thank You, Father, for the opportunity of being reminded by Your word, of something that is at the bottom of a lot of the things that we do. So many times, Lord, we're seeking the approval of people. We're seeking the applause of people.

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We're seeking to be popular with people. We're just living for self rather than living for You, and we can do that in such subtle ways. Father, we ask, we plead with You, that by the power of Your Holy Spirit You would work in us so that we might be more and more like Him who said, "I came not to do My own will, but the will of the Father who sent Me." So we pray that You would forgive us for the many times where we seek things for ourselves rather than for You, and help us to be real in our relationship with You. Again, we thank You and praise you for Jesus Christ who is our ultimate example, but who is also our Redeemer and our Enabler. Thank You. Continue Your work in us, we pray, for Christ's sake, Amen.

"Great Things For Yourself?"

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