

"How, then, do you find yourself living like you're living after I have done what I did in your life"? You know, when we talk about this scene it is a mess. You're coming down off the mountain. The people are naked, dancing around the calf. The calf is standing up there, a big, old golden calf in the middle of the desert. Everything is on fire and smoke is everywhere. It's a real mess, but it is not their nudity that is offensive. It really is not their nudity. They could have stripped nude and washed down by the river. It would not have been an odd occurrence in the times. It is not their nudity that is obnoxious. It is the audacity to backslide away from something greater to something lesser.

No, no, no, no, no, no, no, no, don't think it's clothes, lest you become pious and sanctimonious and start talking about how holy you dress. No matter how holy you dress, if you are hellish inside... One of the big things on the mind of God, the number one commandment, "Thou shalt have no other god before me". He didn't say, "Thou shalt wear long dresses. Thou shalt cover up your elbows". That wasn't the problem. The problem was: how you use me when

you want something and forget me after you get it? How y'all doing over here? I'm gonna come over here and talk to y'all for a while. Moses has just gotten started, and it looks like it's all messed up. I mean, he spent 80 years figuring out how to do this, and it has gone south on him, just totally ridiculous on him. He is in a mess. He's brought them out from the familiar to the unfamiliar and now it is total chaos.

Now, now let me say something about the children of Israel. They are not in this chaos, because they are evil. They are in this chaos, because they have not worshiped God purely for 400 years. They have been associating with the Egyptians so long that they have taken on the ways and the characteristics of the people they associated with, until they have lost their uniqueness in their need to be accepted by a lesser society. They have forsaken their own uniqueness. Be careful how much of you you compromise to fit in. They have compromised their uniqueness for what they see as an advantage of acceptance, and gradually not only have they taken on the customs of the Egyptians, but now they have taken on the ways

of the Egyptians to the degree that when they get ready to make an image of what God looks like they make an image of an Egyptian god in the midst of a Hebrew people.

Is your God your God, or have you adopted the god of the people you're around and committed yourself to a cause that really isn't your own just so that you can fit in? That's not my message. I'm just on the way to the message and stopped over at the 7-Eleven and thought I'd pick up, you know, that and give it to you. What I want you to see, the chaos is not just the external. Yes, they're dancing naked around the calf and smoke is everywhere and there is a big, old golden calf down there, but the real chaos is on the inside, because what the chaos on the outside introduces is the chaos on the inside.

We are dealing with over a million and a half people who don't know who they are, a million and a half people who don't know who they are, a society of people who don't know who they are. A society of people who don't know who they are may do things like define themselves by brand-names. Because you think if you take on

the name of the designer it makes you important. They missed up on, Lord. May be they got it on the internet.

When you don't know your name, you need my name to make you great. And then you say, "I'm a Jake-ite. I'm wearing this, I'm wearing that". But when you know who you are, when you know who you are. I wanna make sure you see the chaos of these people who have decided to make a graven image of God, and the graven image reveals that they don't really know who God is, and it also reveals that they don't know who they are, and it also reveals that they don't understand their own lives, that it was the invisible God that brought you out, and you need not be like the other people and show a god you can exhibit to impress people, when the invisible God has been more effective in your life, than the visible god, that your neighbor is worship.

Now, into this chaotic moment, Moses comes down off of the mountain more convinced than other, ever that God is with him. His face is lit up with the glory of God. Some theologians say that God's glory was coming through the pores

of his skin, shooting forth like glory beams, so strong and so intense that they had to put a veil over his face so that the glory from prayer did not fall on people who were carnal, because there are some glories you cannot get from association. There are some glories that only come through dedication and just because you hang around people who are anointed doesn't mean that you get to have my anointing, because the anointing does not come through association. The anointing comes through consecration. Stop looking for cheap grace, because grace will always veil itself when you try to get it without earning it.

And so, here we are, and they have come into this situation, and Moses comes down off of the mountain, and he looks at this atrocity, and he asked, he sees the confusion and the chaos, and he says, "Who is on the Lord's side"? Now, you've got the 12 tribes of Israel. I want you to get this. You've got all of them surrounding. You've got Dan and Issachar and Naphtali. They're all around them. You've got Benjamin and Judah and all of the tribes around them, and everybody is embarrassed, and everybody is trying to cover up and trying to

find my skirt. "Where is my skirt"? "Give me my britches. Those are my pants over there", and they're trying to get it together.

Have you ever had a moment of chaos come at a time that you're trying to get it together, and you're saying, "Lord, I could deal with this better if I were at another stage in my life, but at this time in my life this is not a good time for me to be up under attack? Where are my pants at? Don't come against me now. I just lost my job. Don't come against me now. I'm going through a divorce. Don't come against me now. They're downsizing at my company. Don't come against me now. Where is my t-shirt? Don't come against me now. I'm going through depression. Don't come against me now. I'm not sure of myself", but it is the insecurity of the times that defines who you really are. You will not be challenged in your convenience. You will be challenged in your chaos.

"Who is on the Lord's side"? Naphtali says, "I ain't saying nothing else. I ain't doing nothing to Benjamin. No, I ain't getting into that dancing. I'm out here dancing. Mum's the word". And here come old Levi, Levi saying,

"I'm on the Lord's side". And he was, like, the most unlikely person. I know you're not gonna stand up here and going to talk about you're saved, just like some of y'all. You know, you can pass for saved in here because we all know you. But when them people that do what you do and did it with you when you did it, like you did it... brother please. I fix that up for y'all. Brother please.

And here they are in this total chaotic situation, and Levi stands up and says, "I am". Now, you must understand why Levi is the most unlikely person to do that. Levi has been cursed. Levi has been cursed. Levi was a trickster and a schemer and a con artist, so much that when Jacob was dying in the bed and passing out blessings, he was dying and still mad at his son, Levi. He said, "Levi and Simeon are instruments of cruelty". He was upset with Levi and Simeon, because Levi and Simeon had come against the men of Shechem, who had raped their sister, Dinah, and they had...

Lemme tell you how slick Levi was. Levi figured he couldn't whip the men of Shechem in a fair fight, so he convinced the men of Shechem that

he was gonna convert them and got them to circumcise themselves. First of all, lemme say this about that. Circumcision is best done at eight days old so that you have the rest of your life to get out of the trauma. You don't wait till you get in the middle of your life, if you can help it, and start trying to cut off stuff that should have been cut off a long time ago. Let the men say amen.

The other problem with this text is if you are going to do this at this inopportune moment, you don't wanna do it yourself. No, y'all do it. Knock me out and wake me up 30 days later. Make that 90 days. So, the men of Shechem had circumcised themselves and, to put it mildly, they were a little bit sore, slightly uncomfortable. There was no Bayer Aspirin, no pain pills, no penicillin, no drugs. Now, I want you to see this, is you are on treatment like mud. Put some mud on it. I am in trouble.

And while they were hurting and while they were vulnerable and while they were weak, that's when Levi came in and killed all of them, and God always hates people who take advantage of your weakness. I'm gonna say that again. God

always hates people who take advantage of your weakness. I say that in case they are in here today, those stalkers and those schemers who sit back and hunt down weak-minded people, and then try to destroy them. God hates people who take advantage of your weakness.

Levi was cursed and when Jacob got ready to pass out blessings, he said, "Not to Levi nor Simeon. You are instruments of cruelty".
Footnote. Jacob, before you go absolutely off on Levi, might I remind you that your name means "trickster"? That you are a conman yourself and the problem you are having with your child is coming from you. And your mammy was sneaky, too. You remember how she did to get you the birthright and taught you how to be the con that you are? This didn't start with Levi, no more than the problem you're dealing with now started with you. The problem you're fighting right now is several generations old.

You didn't get here by yourself. But be that as it may, that makes you no less cursed just because you have an excuse. The real problem with Levi is he is cursed by a bad decision. Isn't it crazy how one decision can wreck the

next 50 years of your life? One dumb thing can mess up your kids and your kids' kids and your kids' kids' kids. One dumb thing. Young people, please don't make big decisions too soon. Just 'cause you're chronologically old enough doesn't mean that you're mentally old enough to make a great decision, and there is nothing as reprehensible as spending the rest of your life living with the consequences of a dumb thing you could have avoided.

That was Levi's situation. He did something stupid, and it wrecked his life and his children and his children's children, living up under the generational curse of what their father had done. And in this moment of chaos God sends Levi an opportunity. You got it? One thing about God, he is justice, but he's also mercy. He's truth, but he's also grace. If he were not a God of the second chance this whole church would be empty right now and most of us are probably on our 16th, 18th, 25th chance, not our second chance, but I'm just gonna say two so you can have some dignity while you're sitting there.

You learn as you go and all of a sudden God says in the chaos, "I am going to give you an opportunity to correct the mistakes of your past. I will not hold against you the bad choice of yesterday if you will correct it with the good choice of today". Opportunity comes in chaos, a chance to stand up, a chance to get it right, a chance to make a U-turn. It comes in chaos.

The other day I was driving down the street, and I had my GPS on, and I made a wrong turn, as I so often do. And the GPS was trying to talk to me, and it's only a machine, and the machine is not necessarily wired for people who are busy and talking on the cell phone and driving and trying to do a paper at the same time. And I made a wrong turn, and I think the GPS was confused, because it couldn't even tell me when to do that. It says, "When possible". I said, "Now you're trying to be funny". You're supposed to know the road, and you're over here telling me, "When possible, make a U-turn". So, what I had to do, even though I had the benefit of the GPS, I had to look for a turning point.

Now, here is my dilemma. When I saw the place to turn, it was at an intersection with a lotta traffic, so I had to get in the position and wait for the moment to make the turn to reverse the mistakes of my past. Oh, y'all don't hear what I'm saying to you. Touch three people and say, "I'm waiting on something. I'm waiting on something. I gotta fix this thing. I gotta fix this thing. I gotta fix it. I gotta fix it. I gotta fix it".

You know, one person slowed down and let me make the turn, 'cause they thought I was going into the store, but I told 'em, "Go ahead. Your vision is too small. You think I'm trying to go into the store. I'm trying to make a complete U-turn and go in another direction". Sometimes you have to let some opportunities go past you to get to the real opportunity that will correct... y'all don't hear what I'm saying to you. High-five somebody and tell 'em, "It's bigger than that". What I'm trying to do is

bigger than that. It's bigger than that little thing. I'm not trying to veer to the left or veer to the right or gradually get it together. I'm too old to gradually get it together. I don't have time to gradually get it together. I'm getting ready to do something so radical and so massive, I'm gonna turn the whole thing, 180 degree.

Yeah, yeah, yeah, yeah, yeah, yeah, yeah, I came to tell somebody you got just enough strength left. You got just enough time left. You got just enough energy left to make one big turn that will bless your children and your children's children and your children's children. This is the big one. This ain't no small thing. This is a mighty thing. I don't know who I'm preaching to, but whoever it is God is setting you up to completely turn your life. Yeah, yeah, yeah, and you've been telling God what you don't have. "I don't have this, and I don't have that, and I don't have enough friends, and I don't have the right degree, and I don't have a husband, and I don't have". But the devil has got you counting what you don't have, when you ought to be looking at what you do have. What you do have is an opportunity.

Slap your neighbor and say, "I got an opportunity". Give God a praise for the opportunity. All hell is breaking loose, but I got an opportunity. The storm is rolling, but I got an opportunity. Run over and slap somebody and tell 'em, "This is my opportunity". This is my opportunity. I don't have time to play. I don't have time to get in a battle with you. I don't have time to get into war. I don't have time for he say, she say, they say. I don't even care what anybody says. This is my chance. I got the goal. Get a hold of your neighbor and say, "Don't fool with me. Don't tie me down. Don't hold me back. I've been waiting too long for this opportunity to let you distract me from what God called me to do. As for me and my house, I will serve the Lord"!

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