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When Your Grapes Get Crushed Revelation 14:6-20

My boys are at the age when they like gliders, the inexpensive balsa wood airplanes. The plane fuselage and wings are pre-stamped out of light balsa wood so that you can punch out the parts of the airplane and put it all together. The balsa wood is supposed to break off in the grooves made by the machine stamp. Sometimes it does not. Occasionally you will splinter or break off, not the waste wood, but break off part of the airplane by accident. When this happens the planes don't fly as well as they are designed to. Life can be delicate sometimes like that balsa wood model. When we are broken in the right places, we will fly higher and smoother than when we break in the wrong places....breaking in the wrong place can lead to a terrible crash.

Breaking in the wrong places comes from not allowing God to break you free the weak and sinful areas in your life. God may want to have us break along a divinely-planned line of self-centeredness, or pride. When God places His strong but benevolent thumbs on the weak grooves of our lives, he wants to break us free from our sin. God may want to use a pressure to confront us with difficult moral choice so that we will be broken in the right place and the waste wood of our glider will be removed correctly so we can fly. But when we say no. I'm sorry God but I won't let you break me in that place. I won't let you break me in that area of selfishness, in that area of pride. I like that sin too much, I know I'm weak there but God you may not break me there. When we hold on and try to resist the refining pressure of God, know that we will break, but we break in the wrong places, we get rid of the things we should be keeping and keep some of the things we should be getting rid of. Our broken emotions keep us from loving others around us effectively. We avoid future setting where further hurt could take place. When we are broken in the wrong places it is very difficult to see God working and we see no fruit of the Spirit taking root in our lives. Allowing God to break us in the right places demands a willingness to break us free of our weakness so we can be put back together and fly smoothly under his strong arm.

Our problem is that we have individually elected self to sit on the throne of our lives and to call all the shots. I will not be broken there. We are convinced if we look out for number one we will be much better off. We are convinced that we can run our lives far better than anybody else could and that includes God. We feed our self. We feed our ego. We pamper ourselves and honor ourselves and reward ourselves. In fact, it is self that calls all the shots. We worship ourselves and refuse to surrender the sword of control over to God. Or we play this very strange game of giving it to God and when it doesn't appear that things are going to work out the way we wanted, we quickly reach back up and take the sword of control and power out of God's hand. Because we have placed self on the throne so much we tend to fear the wrong things. We give glory to the wrong things. We worship the wrong things. And our priorities and values and whole system of the way we live our lives is messed up.

This is a struggle we deal with personally but it's easy to see this in a bigger picture as well. Socially, corporately in our culture, the world around us tends to fear the wrong things and give glory to the wrong things and worship the wrong things....all because they refuse to be broken in the places they need to be broken. We live in a mixed up world where the pay professional athletes and popular musicians, some who have terribly flawed character traits, multi-million dollar salaries to run up and down a rectangle shaped field of grass and sing and jump around, while we reward school teachers, child care givers and those who enforce the law of the land, protect our homes from fire a mere subsistence wage. Why? Why does it seem our value system is beginning to turn upside down? It can be discouraging to look at our world and see that it seems this world values seem to be getting stronger and stronger and the world systems and false religions seems to be gaining...but we read in the book of Revelation and we know that ultimately the worlds false system of life's priorities will crumble. We know that ultimately the world false religions and false political systems that are set against God will fail. We know that self-centered personally life systems that ignore God or possibly even a blatantly against God...they too will ultimately fail. For the One who created all things is getting ready to judge all those who refuse to follow His leadership. All who refuse to allow the Lamb to break them in the right places.

Turn with me in your Bibles to the book of Revelation. You will find it at the very end of your Bible and we will be looking this morning at the 14th Chapter. Revelation chapter 14. In the first 5 verses we were encouraged by the characteristics of a leader we could follow. Jesus the lamb was a leader we could trust. He has uniquely crafted us for a special purpose, a new song He has placed in our mouths that only we can see as He promises to preserve us until we have completed the mission He has called us to here on earth just as he has preserved the 144 thousand witnesses. Now read with me beginning in verse 6 as we see God makes a shift from using human witnesses to using heavenly angels to proclaim the gospel in his continuing effort way up until the very end to lead people back to where they belong, back to the gospel, back to the good news, back to the truth about God, for the one who created all things is getting ready to judge all those who refuse to follow His leadership? Are you ready to be broken of yourself and fully follow the leadership of the lamb? READ with me. (REV. 14:6-20)

Look with me at verse 6. John is writing down a future vision of what he sees. He sees an angel flying in mid-heaven area. Probably from heaven to earth. He is preaching an eternal gospel to everyone on the earth. This gospel, or good news lasts forever, it's eternal. The good news from God will never lose it's power and meaning. For all eternity we will be praising God for what He has done and will do. It is good news that Christ died to save sinners. It is also good news that Christ will one day return and is getting ready to judge the earth, establishing righteousness in the world. It is good new that one day all earth's kingdoms that shake their fist at God in rebellion will fall and fail miserably. It is good news that one day all wrongs will be made right.

This good news has no racial barriers. The good news knows no language barriers. The good news knows no class distinctions. It knows no geographical barriers. The number of people who must hear the message is not impossible. The angel is not overwhelmed by the task. He is called to preach the gospel and that is exactly what will be done so that all will hear. For we know from Matthew 24:14 "God's promise that the gospel will be preached to all of the world as a witness to the nation prior to His return. God continues to offer His forgiveness right up until the very end, to every nation, tribe, tongue and people.

The angel in verse 7 shouts out his message with a loud voice, the Greek there you will recognize, megalay phoney. Mega phone literally means loud voice. No missing it. All the world will hear the message from God. Fear God. Give God glory and worship God. Why? Because God who created all things is getting ready to judge all those who refuse to follow His leadership. Look at the end of verse 7 It was God who made the heaven. It was God who made the earth. It was God who made the sea. It was God who made the springs of waters. The springs of water are those unexpected sources of cool refreshment, clear and life-giving, life-sustaining blessings from God. It is God who made all things. He is the ultimate source of the creative, of creativity itself. Not just by reshaping things in a new and different way, but ex-nilo, out of nothing God created something totally new, that which never existed before and not even the parts of the sum ever existed before. The message is that God is sovereign and our greatest joy consists in recognizing His creative authority and leadership and following Him, allowing His loving, strong and benevolent thumbs to break us in the right places.

We must realize this morning, and this is point number one. We will be controlled by whatever we fear. The message of the angel begins with the loud statement. Fear God. That which we fear, in the biblical sense of an awesome respect. Whatever or whomever we have an awesome respect or outright fear...whatever we fear more that is what will control us. If we fear the ridicule that others may say to us because we claim and try to live out the truths of God...then we fear man more than God...we will be controlled by someone other than God. If we fear that we will be taken advantage of. If we fear that we will lose our security. If we fear we won't have any more fun. If we fear we will never get a date again just because we stand up for the truths and values that God holds important. Then that is what will control us. That which we fear will be that what has the greatest hold on us. If we want to be men and women of God, we must fear God.

TIME magazine had an article in August 14, 1989 about a man from eastern Detroit who died from fear. he had taken a number of fur-trapping expedition over the years and had been bitten by his share of ticks. Then he heard about Lyme disease, which is carried by deer ticks. he became obsessed with the fear that he had been bitten in the past by

a tick with the disease and that he had passed this disease on to his wife. Doctors tested him and assured him he did not have the Lyme disease and that even if he did it was virtually impossible for him to be able to transmit this disease to his wife. But the man didn't believe the doctors. Paranoid do to the fear of the disease, the man killed his wife and then himself. The police found the man's mailbox jammed with material describing Lyme disease and a slip confirming a doctor's appointment for yet another Lyme disease test. Fear will distort your reality. Fear will consume a persons energy and control you. It is very important that we fear the right things. We are called here in verse 7 to fear God, to have an awesome respect for God, for what we fear will control us.

Point number two. We will be controlled by whatever we give glory. The angels next phrase in verse 7 implodes those dwelling on the earth during the tribulation period with a megaphone like voice to give God glory and further down worship God. Those things that you honor are those things that will influence you. The things that you allow to influence you will control you. What are those things that you honor, give glory? worship? You wonder what are those things you honor? Take a look at your check book what do you spend a good share of your money that is left over after the basic bills are paid? What is honored in the country will be fostered there. What are you encouraging and fostering? What are you giving glory to? How do you spend your time when you are not working or sleeping? This will give you a clue as to what you truly are giving glory to in your lives. Add up the hours. Is it TV? Is it sports? Hobby? fishing? How many hours a week can you write down...I am giving these hours in glory to God? I am giving these resources in glory to God. How do they compare with the other things in your life you choose to honor and give glory. We will be controlled by those things we give glory to. We will be controlled by those things we fear.

Point number 3 We will be controlled by whatever we choose to consume. Look with me down at the 8th verse. Another angel of the same kind is following the same flight pattern as the first angel in the mid-heaven area. Saying, 'Fallen! Fallen is Babylon. She has made all the nations drink the wine of passion of her immorality. A third angel shout with a mega phone voice in v.9 Those who worship the beast, the image

and take the mark of loyalty to the beast will also drink the wine of God's wrath. He will be force fed God's anger at full strength, undiluted. What you choose to drink, what you choose to consume will control you. Those who have chosen to drink the passion and immoral life system of this world, Spiritual Babylon, false religion, self is God. Those who have bought into the lie of Satan's self loving system of life, described for us in it ultimate in previous chapter 13...will bear the consequences of their choices. Remember Babylon of the Old Testament was a large, prosperous politically and economically, powerful and ungodly city filled with false religion... that at one time captured the people of God prisoners and took them to a foreign land far from where God intended them to be. Babylon is picture of the worlds attempts to succeed in life apart from God. In the end day I believe there will be a literal city Babylon that will be rebuilt and serve as the Antichrist's world headquarters, the World Religion, false of course headquarters. This is why when Sadamm Hussein unveiled his plans to rebuild Ancient Babylon to its former glory in modern day Iraq, it raised some eyebrows of Biblical scholars. Is Hussein the antichrist? probably not but we know there will be one some day who will rise to the power of world dictator. Babylon also stands for worldly systems that are all too easy and seem to be very successful in the short term, but are backed strongly by Satan and will ultimately fail.

A Babylon thinking is impressed with power, self-rule, pride, independence. It lives for self and goes against God. It tells us to, "Live for the pleasure, not the One that created pleasure. It tells us live for nature, not the One who created nature. Live for what feels right not for what is truth and right. Live for your logic and intellect, not for the One who gave you that intellect. Live for things, to the God who is in control of all things. Go for the gusto you only go around once, not live for God, life is just beginning after physical death on this earth. One who is drunk with the wine of Babylon thinking says to live for the short term, the moment. Not for the God who was and is and is to come. Not for the Ancient of Days and Everlasting Father.

Babylon is a warning. What looks like the easy way right now, is not the right way or even the easiest way in the long term. For one will be controlled by whatever they choose to consume. If you choose to

consume the wine of Babylon, the values and thinking of this world...that choice will produce consequences, you will also be given another drink not of your choice, v.10 the wine of the wrath of God. We may choose our actions or our consequences. We cannot choose both. Some people want the consequences of healthy lungs, but they don't want to give up the action, smoking. They choose the action and the consequences are already chosen for them, sick lungs. We want the security of a savings account, but we would rather spend everything we make rather than discipline ourselves to save a little each month. We choose the action of spending all, the consequence is already decided for us. But vice versa, maybe we decide, no I want healthy lungs. If you choose consequences then your actions are already chosen for you, you have to give up smoking. If you choose, I want a savings account, then your actions have already been chosen for you, you can't spend every penny you earn. You can choose your actions, or you can choose your consequences but you cannot choose both. No matter how hard we really, really want good consequences in our lives, we can't just snap our fingers and make it happens. We can't continue to make harmful choices and expect positive consequences. God has given us free will to choose our consequences or actions, but we can't choose both. What we choose to consume, to take in, to drink, the life system will control us.

Verses 8-11 the angel presents the people of the earth with two choices. Worship the beast, give glory to Satan and be damned by God. Or worship God and be damned by Satan. You can re-read the torment. The Bible is not mincing words here. It's serious. There is forever torment for those who do not choose to follow God. There is no rest v.11 for the torment of the conscience never sleeps. Scripture refers to hell as a place of weeping and gnashing of teeth, experiencing God's anger in full strength. Now I'm sure some are thinking. Come on, Jesus wouldn't really send people to hell. Jesus is love and forgiveness and peace and goodness. Folks if you think that you haven't read your Bibles. Jesus talks about hell more than anyone else in the Bible. It is the very same Scripture that also speaks of God's justice and wrath upon the wicked. Do not miss the message and slide into hell unknowingly. God is a God of love and grace, true. But God is equally a God of justice. His righteousness will be vindicated and the wicked rebels will be punished.

Judgment awaits all who refuse to follow the lamb. Choose well what you consume for it will control you.

There is encouragement for those to choose well in v. 12-13. Those who consume the fear of God in glory and worship of God. For those who refuse to take the mark of the beast, those who endure persecution and endure to the end strong for God, there will be a special blessing. V.13 they will experience ultimate rest. This special blessing for the tribulation saints can also be ours. For Jesus said in matt 11, "Come unto me all who are weary and heavy laden and I will give you rest." That word rest anapauw, pictures a sailor who has spent his whole life at sea fighting the wind and waves and finally has come into his harbor, his home. Rest. There is rest at the end of the journey. There is reward at the end of the journey, v.13 there deeds will follow with them. May we be challenged to keep our faith strong until God determines our journey is done.

In v. 6-13 we have learned to choose well, for our choices have consequences. We will be controlled by whatever we fear. We will be controlled by whomever we give glory. We will be controlled by whatever we consume. Now in the final verses we are confronted with a choice. Harvest time is coming...what's your choice? Let me describe for you the picture of events. Sitting on a white cloud is the Son of Man, Jesus wearing a gold crown, authority and holding a sharp sickle, power and judgment. Another angel with a mega phoney voice announces out a message from the very temple, from God the father for all to hear. It's harvest time. The grapes are ready to harvest. There is great debate as to whether this is a harvest of judgment or harvest bringing the tribulation saints home. I think the parable of the wheat and tares gives us some good understanding in this passage. Turn with me to Matthew 13:37-43. (READ) In verse 15 the word for ripe, means withered, no juice left. It could be this refers to the persecuted believers who have undergone so much torment at the hands of the antichrist that it has withered them, sucked the very life out of the them and they are more than ready to come home to rest.

V. 17 There is another angel with a sharp sickle. A third angel who comes from the alter, with fire in his power, announces with a mega phone voice, Harvest for the clusters of grapes are ripe. That is a different word for ripe. It means full of juice in prime condition. V. 18 the angel

swings the sickle, the grapes clusters are thrown into the great wine press of God's wrath. This is the text that inspired the Battle Hymn of the Republic, He has trampled out the vintage where the grapes of wrath are stored. That song has nothing to do with American troops in battle. It is talking about the coming of Jesus with his terrible swift sword to judge the earth in a final battle at Armageddon. Glory, Glory hallelujah Christ has returned to establish truth again on the earth. I find it fascinating the political figures who I have heard sing this with great passion, unknowingly pronouncing judgment on themselves, never bothering to understand the words.

Verse 20 the grapes that seem so full, fat, juicy, ripe...fat with the wine of immorality, fat with the wine of Babylon's world system of self. Will one day be judged and pressed into the wine press of God's wrath. Outside the city, we presume Jerusalem. Jesus blood was shed just outside the city, same word phrase used. His blood shed for me and you so that we could live free from sin and rest in Him. In the final day there will be great blood shed, the payment for sin paid for, since they refused Jesus offer to pay for them. They wanted to live life for themselves. They rejected Jesus offer and then choose to try and pay for that sin, outside the city, by them self. Sad, horrible picture isn't it? It will happen one day. But it doesn't have to be you. You can choose well. You can make the choice to follow Jesus. To fear God. To Give God glory. To Worship the Lord and enter into His rest. Now is the time. No more excuses. Don't wait thinking you will have another chance. For it will be too late when your grapes are getting crushed. Choose well, Choose God, choose now.