

The “Christian” Scoffer
Genesis 21:8-21
Halifax: 8 November 2015, 10:30 AM

Introduction:

Today we are returning to our regular sermon series in Genesis.

- We will be looking at Genesis 21:8-21.

In our most recent sermon from Genesis, we looked at the first seven verses of Gen 21 where we have the account of the birth of Isaac—the son God promised to Abraham.

- This was a huge event in redemptive history!
 - God had promised to give Abraham a son through whom He would raise up a great nation that would be His people—a people that would be saved from their sins and who had eternal life!
 - God would preserve these people for Himself and bring forth the Messiah, Jesus Christ, through whom all the nations of the earth would be blessed.
- But as we have seen, though God made all of these great promises to Abraham, he and his wife were barren into old age—past the age when it was possible to have a child.
 - In an effort to bring forth an heir, they had even resorted to Abraham taking Sarah’s maid as a second wife—a slave wife or concubine—to produce an heir.
 - And a son had been born, but God had told Abraham and Sarah that this son (Ishmael) was not to inherit the promise of redemption.
 - God insisted that *He* would yet give Abraham a son by Sarah.
- And in Genesis 21:1-7, we have Abraham and Sarah rejoicing greatly because God fulfilled His promise—14 years after Ishmael was born!
 - God had told them to name this son Isaac which means laughter, because they had laughed at the impossibility of him being born when they were past age,
 - And because they would be so amazed and delighted when he was born, and so they were!
 - God was showing that salvation was something that comes by His work and not by human efforts.
 - The Apostle Paul refers to Ishmael as the child of the flesh, or human effort; and Isaac as the child of promise—given by God’s grace apart from human effort.
- This is very important to understand if you want to understand how God saves us.
 - The bottom line is this...
 - We are sinners and we cannot save ourselves—it is beyond us...
 - But God has brought forth salvation through Jesus Christ His Son.
 - We have to trust in what He did and not in what we do.
 - The difference between those who have a real saving relationship with God and those who do not is that those who have a true relationship rely on what Jesus did to save them instead of on what they have done.
 - They recognise that Jesus suffered punishment for His people on the cross—that He suffered the pains of Hell in their place—as a substitute...
 - And that you have to rely on Him to be pardoned.

- And so, instead of trusting in what they have done or in their own goodness, they rejoice with laughter in the amazing thing that God has done through Jesus crucified.

And you see, in Genesis 21, Abraham and Sarah are rejoicing in what God has done toward His promise of providing salvation for them and for the whole world.

- They are rejoicing in the step that God has taken to give them a son through whom this promise was to come...

And when we get to Genesis 21:8, we find that they are still rejoicing in Isaac at his weaning!

- He has survived early childhood (many did not) and is being weaned, and, as folks often did in those days, they are celebrating that he has survived.
- The ordinary practice was for a child to be weaned when he was about three years old, so that means that when we come to verse 8, a few years have gone by...
 - Ishmael would now be about 17 and Isaac would be about 3.

It is a very happy occasion, and Abraham and Sarah are still full of laughter, but as we shall see today, Ishmael is not so happy!

- He was Abraham's son, but this son Isaac was the one in whom God had promised redemption and the blessing of eternal life to the nations.
- Ishmael is laughing, as we shall see, but in a very different way—with a contemptuous mocking sort of laugh—as the New King James translates it, scoffing.
 - And as we saw when read Galatians 4, this whole account is an allegory for us about salvation by the flesh as opposed to salvation by faith in God's promise.
 - Hagar and Ishmael represent bondage and salvation by works, while Sarah and Isaac represent salvation by sonship and salvation by grace.
 - We are going to be looking this false way of salvation today that is characterised by scoffing at God's way of salvation.
 - It is important for us to understand this because it is alive and well in the church today.
 - By "in the church" I mean in those who are baptised and who outwardly are found among God's people.

Before we get into the details, let me read this passage of scripture to you—again it is Genesis 21:8-21.

- Please give me your careful attention because it is the Word of God that I will be reading to you—Genesis 21:8.

Genesis 21:8-21: So the child grew and was weaned. And Abraham made a great feast on the same day that Isaac was weaned. 9 And Sarah saw the son of Hagar the Egyptian, whom she had borne to Abraham, scoffing. 10 Therefore she said to Abraham, "Cast out this bondwoman and her son; for the son of this bondwoman shall not be heir with my son, *namely* with Isaac." 11 And the matter was very displeasing in Abraham's sight because of his son. 12 But God said to Abraham, "Do not let it be displeasing in your sight because of the lad or because of your bondwoman. Whatever Sarah has said to you, listen to her voice; for in Isaac your

seed shall be called. ¹³ Yet I will also make a nation of the son of the bondwoman, because he *is* your seed.” ¹⁴ So Abraham rose early in the morning, and took bread and a skin of water; and putting *it* on her shoulder, he gave *it* and the boy to Hagar, and sent her away. Then she departed and wandered in the Wilderness of Beersheba. ¹⁵ And the water in the skin was used up, and she placed the boy under one of the shrubs. ¹⁶ Then she went and sat down across from *him* at a distance of about a bowshot; for she said to herself, “Let me not see the death of the boy.” So she sat opposite *him*, and lifted her voice and wept.

¹⁷ And God heard the voice of the lad. Then the angel of God called to Hagar out of heaven, and said to her, “What ails you, Hagar? Fear not, for God has heard the voice of the lad where he *is*. ¹⁸ Arise, lift up the lad and hold him with your hand, for I will make him a great nation.” ¹⁹ Then God opened her eyes, and she saw a well of water. And she went and filled the skin with water, and gave the lad a drink. ²⁰ So God was with the lad; and he grew and dwelt in the wilderness, and became an archer. ²¹ He dwelt in the Wilderness of Paran; and his mother took a wife for him from the land of Egypt.

May the LORD bless the reading of His holy Word.

You see how Ishmael, though born in Abraham’s house and circumcised according to the promise of God’s salvation that was to come through Isaac,

- scoffs at Isaac instead of rejoicing in him.
- In doing this, Ishmael becomes an example of all those who are outwardly in God’s covenant (whether the circumcised of the OT or the baptised of the NT), but who hold God’s way of salvation in contempt.
 - I am going to refer to such persons as “*Christian*” *Scoffers* today because whether in the Old or the New Testament, it is ultimately Christ crucified as God’s only way of salvation whom they scoff at.

We are going to look at the following three things...

- I. The profile of the “Christian” scoffer.
- II. That the “Christian” scoffer will not inherit the kingdom of God.
- III. That God often raises up and prospers “Christian” scoffers.

I. The profile of the “Christian” scoffer

A. His chief characteristic is that he scoffs at God’s way of salvation.

1. You can see in verse 9 how we are told that Sarah saw Ishmael scoffing at Isaac.
 - It does not say that she took it that way, but that he actually was scoffing and she saw it. v. 9: **And Sarah saw the son of Hagar the Egyptian, whom she had borne to Abraham, scoffing.**
 - The word that is translated *scoffing* is actually a strengthened form of the word *Isaac*, or *laughing* which often carries the idea of mocking or scoffing.
 - It is used, for example, when Potiphar’s wife asks if her husband has brought “this Hebrew” into their house to mock her...
 - Perhaps Ishmael was saying, “So here is the prince! Prince Laughter! Here is the one that everyone has been waiting for to save the world! What a joke indeed! Definitely something to make us laugh.”

2. The scoffer has contempt for God's way of salvation—he sees it as foolish and stupid...deficient and even wrong.
 - How could one man die for the sins of other people?
 - How could it be right for God to punish His Son in the place of others?
 - How does that teach responsibility?
 - And why should God be so severe that He can't accept people the way they are, especially when they are doing their best?
 - If God is like that, they say, I want nothing to do with Him!
3. This is the way of mainstream Judaism and mainstream Christianity...
 - When you really check out what most of the circumcised people were trusting in and what most Christians are trusting in today,
 - It is that God will be a good fellow and accept them so long as they do the best they can—and that you can't ask for more than that!
 - Scoffing Christians may even speak very highly about Jesus—as a great teacher, as a prophet, even as the Son of God...
 - They don't ordinarily *claim* that they are scoffing at Him...
 - But the scoffing comes at the notion that they deserve only to be rejected by God, and that their acceptance with God is based entirely upon Jesus' atoning for their sins on the cross.
 - They are happy to talk about his death, and even about how wrong it was for him to be crucified,
 - but they are not prepared to say that they and everyone else is accursed unless they trust in Him...
 - Some of them will even say that they are trusting in Him for forgiveness, but then when you talk to them more, you learn that they do not think it is necessary to trust in Him...
 - They think that other people are saved in other ways...
 - Such a person obviously thinks that salvation is based on doing our best rather than on Jesus dying in our place...
 - And trusting in Him is one of many good religious works that a person might do—but it is not a necessary thing.

B. At heart, the scoffer is fuelled by pride and envy.

1. When they hear the gospel, their response is, "I can take care of salvation for myself, thank you very much!"
 - "I am a good person at heart, and you cannot tell me that I need the Son of God to die for me."
 - "If God cannot accept me the way I am, then I don't want anything to do with Him," and then they add of course, "But I don't think God is like that."
2. We run into this pride and envy all the time in scripture.
 - a. It is, of course, right here with Ishmael...
 - He is not against God—but why does he and his father Abraham and his mother Hagar need to rely on *Isaac*, his little brother?
 - Isaac is no better than he is, so why should salvation come through him?

- b. We will see this same thing later on in Genesis...
 - with Esau when he learns that the promised salvation is to come through Jacob, and then with Joseph's brothers...
- c. And of course it is seen with the Jews when Jesus comes...
 - They cannot endure the thought that salvation should come from a carpenter's son from Nazareth...
 - besides, God was already their Saviour and they don't need one to die for them—they need a Messiah who will free them from the Romans.
 - That is like people today who say, we don't need a crucified Saviour, we need God to deal with poverty and with terrorism.
 - And of course God is going to deal with those things at last, but the main thing that needs to be dealt with is our sin...
 - And that is where their pride gets in the way.
 - There is an envy of Jesus if He is put in the place of the only way of forgiveness for sinners...
 - He is great as a reformer and a guide and an inspirer, and even as a Saviour, but He is out of place if I am condemned for my wickedness apart from faith in Him!
 - That is where envy comes in—to say that He is the only one who can take care of my sin!

TRANS> So you see that Christian scoffing has been and still is alive and well...

C. And I want you to see that none of us are entirely free of this scoffing.

1. You can see it in Abraham...
 - You can see it in the way that he and Sarah thought, as they grew older, that God's plan was not going to work—not quite in the way He said...
 - That is what brought this whole thing with Ishmael about...
 - It was Abraham's defective faith that caused him to look to his flesh to make up the deficiency in God's plan.
 - I guess you might say that our faith is defective to whatever extent we think that God's way of salvation is defective.
 - To whatever extent we take matters into our own hands.
2. But don't misunderstand here—having a defect in your faith is not at all the same as not having saving faith.
 - Abraham, like you if you have saving faith, was still fundamentally looking to God for His salvation...
 - He just thought he needed to help out a little.
 - We do that when we feel that we need to spruce up the gospel so that people will believe—to make church more entertaining, or to leave out some things in our preaching that might offend people...
 - Or when we turn our prayers into a work instead of them being our souls crying out to God for salvation because we know it is all in Him.
 - Or when we think that we have to get the right person into political office or else God's kingdom will fail.
 - There are lots of illustrations that can be used—but I will leave it at that.

TRANS> But though true believers struggle with this, the one we are calling the “Christian” scoffer, is the one who does not trust in God’s way of salvation.

- He holds it in contempt and favours his own way.
- And having seen the profile of the scoffer, I now want you to understand that...

II. The “Christian” scoffer will not inherit the kingdom of God!

A. In our text, Sarah is technically correct when she says that Ishmael must be cut off.

1. She is correct when she says to Abraham, v. 10: **“Cast out this bondwoman and her son; for the son of this bondwoman shall not be heir with my son, namely with Isaac.”**

- This is exactly what God had told Abraham in Genesis 17 when he had prayed for Ishmael...that Ishmael might live before the LORD...
 - In Gen 17:18-21, it says: **And Abraham said to God, “Oh, that Ishmael might live before You!” Then God said: “No, Sarah your wife shall bear you a son, and you shall call his name Isaac; I will establish My covenant with him for an everlasting covenant, and with his descendants after him. And as for Ishmael, I have heard you. Behold, I have blessed him, and will make him fruitful, and will multiply him exceedingly. He shall beget twelve princes, and I will make him a great nation. But My covenant I will establish with Isaac, whom Sarah shall bear to you at this set time next year.”**
- If Ishmael was to find salvation, it would be through Isaac—through the salvation that God was going to bring through him—not through his own way.

2. You can see in our text how the LORD affirms what Sarah has said.

a. Abraham is highly displeased with what Sarah has said—some say that when it says that he was **highly displeased** in verse 11, the words in the original indicate that he exploded with anger.

- The words can convey that meaning, but they do not necessarily mean that—they do mean, at least, that Abraham did not at all like what Sarah had said to him.
- I think a lot of us men can relate to that—if our wives tell us something that God has told us that we are trying to ignore...
 - we don’t like it at all!

b. But you can see how God steps into the picture—

- We have no record that He has spoken directly to Abraham for almost four years...but here in defense of what Sarah has said, He comes and tells Abraham to listen to his wife:
 - **Gen 21:12-13: But God said to Abraham, “Do not let it be displeasing in your sight because of the lad or because of your bondwoman. Whatever Sarah has said to you, listen to her voice; for in Isaac your seed shall be called. Yet I will also make a nation of the son of the bondwoman, because he is your seed.”**
- Christian men, the Bible instructs Christian women with disobedient husbands to win them without a word by their good conduct,
 - but I hope that you are not one who is disobedient to God!

- Abraham was not such a one, and his wife is here giving him advice that he needed to listen to.
 - In fact, God commands him to listen to her because, as God has already told Abraham, his seed will be called through Isaac, not Ishmael.
 - Ishmael will be a separate nation, not the nation through which eternal salvation is to come.
 - He could not continue in the household of faith trusting in his own way of salvation—not trusting in what God had promised.
 - c. But let me add that although Sarah was technically correct, it does not necessarily mean that she spoke out of a right heart...
 - We are not told what her motives were, but at best her words do seem harsh...she does not even name Ishmael or Hagar but refers to Ishmael as “the son of the bond woman”...
 - There is an important lesson for all of us here—especially as reformed Christians who are trying to follow the word...
 - Just because you may be technically right about something does not mean that you are righteous about it.
 - A sour, haughty attitude can make your technical accuracy stink.
 - It is important for us to speak the truth in love, not with strife and bitterness and pride!
- B. Nevertheless, Abraham has to face the truth—God has spoken.
1. And you see that, as characterises him, Abraham immediately obeys...
 - a. Even though it was hard for him to swallow, he takes action early the next day: v. 14: **So Abraham rose early in the morning, and took bread and a skin of water; and putting it on her shoulder, he gave it and the boy to Hagar, and sent her away.**
 - b. This is what we must do in the church as well...
 - When we discover those who do not cherish God’s way of salvation among us, we must expel them from the church.
 - If covenant children grow up, surrounded by the promises of God, and then scoff at the gospel when they get older,
 - we have to cut them off and declare that they will not be partakers of God’s inheritance with the other children unless they repent.
 - It is our duty to declare the truth concerning them, both for their sake and for the sake of the whole church and for the honour of Jesus Christ.
 - One of the reasons the church is in the sorry state that it is in in North America is because churches have ignored God’s command to remove the wicked person from our midst.
 - We need to recognise that being faithful to Christ will not always look the same.
 - c. Sometimes being faithful will mean that *we* are the ones who are cast out from the organised church because sometimes often the leaders in the church become corrupt and intolerant of God’s way of salvation.

- That is exactly the way it was with most of the prophets and with our Lord Jesus Himself!
 - It was not the wicked who were cut off, but the faithful, and being faithful meant bearing the reproach of being cut off by the church.
- Stephen spoke of this just before he himself was cut off by stoning by the authorities of the church under the old covenant...he said:
 - **Acts 7:52: “Which of the prophets did your fathers not persecute? And they killed those who foretold the coming of the Just One, of whom you now have become the betrayers and murderers.”**
 - Those among the people who had contempt for the true way of salvation resorted to murder, so that in these cases it was those who were partakers of God’s salvation that were cut off.
- The same thing happened at the reformation when those who were doing nothing but preaching the true gospel to reform the church when many were preaching falsehood were cut off by those who held the true gospel in contempt...
 - And in our day, we know of those in liberal protestant churches who have been rejected for adhering to the gospel as the only way of salvation.

TRANS> So being faithful to the gospel will lead to painful separation from those we love in the visible church...

- When we are in authority, we must enact that separation by casting out the wicked from the church,
 - When Christian scoffers are in authority, we must be willing to be cut off for the sake of Jesus.
 - It is a very grievous thing in either case.
2. It is right for us to be grieved when we must be separate from our brethren.
- a. There is no doubt that Abraham was grieved by this.
 - You can see his tenderness here as he personally places bread and a skin of water on Hagar’s shoulder,
 - He himself gives the boy to her, probably with many tears.
 - We cannot imagine the grief that he had as he painfully obeys what the Lord has told him to do.
 - Some have questioned why he did not give them a greater provision, and it is a good question,
 - But it may very well be that he also gave them money that they could use as they moved on—
 - and that the details of placing the water on her shoulder are mentioned to show us the pathos and because it was due to a lack of water that problems arose for the mother and her son...
 - We are later told that, although Isaac was the sole heir, Abraham gave gifts to his other sons...
 - In other words, it appears that he assisted them with their physical needs.

- b. We also ought to be grieved when we must separate from our brethren...
- 1) We have the example of our dear Lord Jesus Christ lamenting as He enters Jerusalem because of their rejection of Him and the destruction that it will bring to them...
 - In Luke 13:34, he says: **“O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, the one who kills the prophets and stones those who are sent to her! How often I wanted to gather your children together, as a hen gathers her brood under her wings, but you were not willing!”**
 - Here He was, coming to lay down His life for His people, and these who were numbered among them were rejecting Him.
 - How our Lord loved them!
 - 2) And there is the example of the Apostle Paul as he declares with an oath, **Rom 9:1-5: I tell the truth in Christ, I am not lying, my conscience also bearing me witness in the Holy Spirit, that I have great sorrow and continual grief in my heart. For I could wish that I myself were accursed from Christ for my brethren, my countrymen according to the flesh, who are Israelites, to whom pertain the adoption, the glory, the covenants, the giving of the law, the service of God, and the promises; of whom are the fathers and from whom, according to the flesh, Christ came, who is over all, the eternally blessed God. Amen.**
 - With that kind of deep concern, it is not wonderful that Paul spent himself to get the gospel to them!
 - 3) But understand that even though Paul says that they have the promises and the covenants and that Christ came for them,
 - He makes it clear that are, like Ishmael, not children of the promise.
 - He actually quotes from our passage in Genesis to prove this...
 - He says, in Romans 9:6-8: **But it is not that the word of God has taken no effect. For they are not all Israel who are of Israel, nor are they all children because they are the seed of Abraham; but, “In Isaac your seed shall be called.” That is, those who are the children of the flesh, these are not the children of God; but the children of the promise are counted as the seed.**
 - And then he takes up the example of Jacob and Esau as well to show that it has always been the case that there are people who are in the covenant outwardly that are children of the flesh like Ishmael instead of children of the promise like Isaac.
 - How it ought to grieve us when we are forced to refuse to acknowledge them as heirs of God’s kingdom and break our ties with them as such.
 - Nevertheless, it must be done when we find them to be Christian scoffers...

TRANS> And now I want to move along to our last heading... something that may seem strange and extraordinary to us...that...

III. God often prospers “Christian” scoffers.

A. He is very good to them for the sake of their fathers who knew Him.

1. Of course He was very good to them in the first place to bring the gospel and its promises so near to them...

- In the Old Covenant, He commanded that they should be circumcised if they have believing parents and in the New Covenant they are to be baptised and so numbered with His people.

- I just read to you how Paul says of them that they are **my countrymen according to the flesh, who are Israelites, to whom pertain the adoption, the glory, the covenants, the giving of the law, the service of God, and the promises; of whom are the fathers and from whom, according to the flesh, Christ came**

- Just last week, we saw how Jesus declares that of such is the kingdom of God—and how they are said to be saints.

- They are often, as Hebrews 6:4-5 says, **partakers of the Holy Spirit.**

- They often have some illumination by the Holy Spirit,

- and some conviction of sin and some power to resist sin so that they escape the pollutions of the world...

- and they may even have some spiritual gifts to serve others...

- but they never embrace the gospel because they are children of the flesh—who look to themselves for salvation and not to God’s promised Saviour.

- Ishmael was circumcised and he himself personally saw how God fulfilled the promise of giving Abraham and Sarah a son when it was impossible.

- He was very privileged—he had God’s promises and yet he refused to believe, but instead scoffed at God’s way of salvation.

- It is a horrendous thing to reject God’s salvation when it is so near!

2. And we see in our text how God in His kindness also hears the cries of the sons of the flesh, and very often gives them the desires of their heart!

a. We have the picture of Hagar and Ishmael—an allegory for us of all who are children of the flesh...

- They know all about God, and here we see them crying out before Him in their distress and we see God answering them!

- It appears that Hagar was very upset at being cast out—

- At the end of verse 14, it says that **she departed and wandered in the Wilderness of Beersheba.**

- The word *wandered* that is used here is of a random wandering—a wandering without thinking of where she was going or what she was doing.

- And the result is that she and the boy run out of water and are in great distress in the desert. Look at verse 15-16:

- **And the water in the skin was used up, and she placed the boy under one of the shrubs. Then she went and sat down across from him at a distance of about a bowshot; for she said to**

herself, “Let me not see the death of the boy.” So she sat opposite him, and lifted her voice and wept.

- It appears that Ishmael gave out before she did—
 - Woman are actually known to have more endurance than men in such situations—men are stronger, but run out of energy quicker.
- In any case, both she and the boy are crying out—we are not even actually told that they were praying...
 - But the Lord graciously comes into the situation to rescue them in their distress...
 - Look at verse 17-18: **And God heard the voice of the lad. Then the angel of God called to Hagar out of heaven, and said to her, “What ails you, Hagar? Fear not, for God has heard the voice of the lad where he is. ¹⁸ “Arise, lift up the lad and hold him with your hand, for I will make him a great nation.” ¹⁹ Then God opened her eyes, and she saw a well of water. And she went and filled the skin with water, and gave the lad a drink.**
 - Notice the irony here—
 - God’s provision was there all along, but they could not see it.
 - We are not told that God caused a well to appear, but rather that He opened Hagar’s eyes so that she could see the well.
 - This is a sad picture of the spiritual condition of all who are children of the flesh (and not the spirit) in the covenant...
 - God’s provision is there, held out for them, but they do not regard it—they do not partake of the Lord Jesus but hold Him in contempt.
 - But you see the goodness of God to these children of the flesh...
 - He provides for their spiritual needs for the sake of Abraham.
 - He had promised to take care of them and He had promised that He would make Ishmael into a great nation,
 - So He provides for him and preserves him.
- b. And you see that God does indeed provide for Ishmael that he might become a great nation...
 - We told in verse 20-21: **So God was with the lad; and he grew and dwelt in the wilderness, and became an archer. ²¹ He dwelt in the Wilderness of Paran; and his mother took a wife for him from the land of Egypt.**
 - This is what Hagar and Ishmael wanted anyway!
 - They did not care about eternal life as promised through Abraham’s house—they had their portion in this life.
 - God gave them the desire of their heart, and sent leanness to their souls.
 - We see this again and again with covenant children—they grow up and they prosper and they are successful—often their upbringing in God’s house helps them to get on in the world...
 - but they are spiritually barren because they hold the gospel in contempt.

- B. What should our attitude be toward those “Christians” who scoff at the gospel?
1. We should show kindness to them, but at the same time we must **not** regard them as joint-heirs of eternal life.
 - As we have seen, if they are under our authority, we must remove them from the church...
 - If they are over us and they cast out those who are preach the gospel, we must go with those who are faithful and bear their reproach, even as the Jews who believed had to do with Jesus and the prophets.
 - But all the while, we must show kindness to them and remember that they are still, at least outwardly, God’s people...
 - and if they fall on hard times, we should do what we can to relieve them.
 - It is our duty to bless those who persecute us.
 2. Secondly, we should not fret when God prospers them.
 - a. As we have seen, He often does prosper them for the sake of their fathers...
 - He often gives them great prosperity in this world.
 - We must not confuse such prosperity with God’s favour.
 - They have their portion in this life, but they will not inherit God’s kingdom with us.
 - b. And we do not need to be afraid when those who threaten us become strong.
 - Yes, they can impose fines on us and they can kill our bodies and they can make our society into a moral wasteland...
 - But they cannot destroy the kingdom of God.
 - In fact, if God raises persecutors up to great power, we need to know that He is doing something that in the long run will be a great blessing to His church!
 - God works in big patterns of history—raising up Pharaoh in Egypt and delivering His people into his hand for 400 years,
 - all that He might reveal His redemptive power and grace to His church in a powerful way for the benefit of us all!
 - Yes, our nation might be going to pot, and so might the church in North America,
 - but the LORD is in it and He will bring blessing to His elect people through it all.
 - Do not fret, but rather pray and give thanks, trusting in the Lord and His promises.
 - It is not about us changing the political landscape—it is about the LORD saving us!
 - He has a purpose for Ishmaelites, Isis, Midianites, Papists, Edomites, Liberal Protestants, Moabites, Emergent Evangelicals, and Samaritans.

3. Thirdly, we should yearn for the salvation of Christian scoffers...
 - a. The LORD tells us in Romans 11 that though they are cut off because of their unbelief, He is able to graft them in again!
 - Jesus instructed His disciples to go the Jew first—that is, to the covenant people first.
 - Even though Paul was the missionary to the Gentiles, he always began by preaching to the covenant people first.
 - The Lord has a special interest in them because they are identified as His people—and we are to also have a special interest in them.
 - b. And the wonderful thing is, God often does bring Christian scoffers to their senses...He brings them to repentance.
 - What a beautiful thing the conversion of 3000 Jews who crucified the Lord Jesus was at Pentecost.
 - What a beautiful thing the conversion of the Apostle Paul was.
 - Today, there are many Jews who are converting to Christianity.
 - The Lord is grafting them in again!
 - And though their lineage is difficult to trace for certain, it appears that there are many descendants of Ishmael who are also coming to the Lord Jesus.
 - c. We need to pray especially for the conversion of those who were once God's covenant people (or who still are in an outward way); that they might be saved...
 - We are to shed tears for them and labour for them as Paul did for the Jews who were born according to the flesh but not according to the Spirit.
 - There are many Christians in that boat—born into the church, but scoffers who are trusting in their own works—
 - And we are to endeavour to lead them to repentance.
 - God is merciful and gracious and this is what He wants of us.

Conclusion: And so my dear brothers and sisters, it is a very sad thing when one who is so close to the Lord scoffs at His appointed way of salvation!

- How sad to be so near to God's salvation, and yet to reject it!
- See that there is not in any of you this contempt for the gospel—this scoffing that keeps you from the eternal inheritance that you might have had.