



New Covenant
BIBLE CHURCH

A Comprehensive Vision of the Christian Life

Luke Series #17

Luke 6:12-49

David Sunday

April 28, 2013

“That day when our faith is changed to sight”—it’s easier for us to say the words we’ve sung than to really live them. Lord, we pray that You would use Your Word to empower the preaching of Your Word by Your Holy Spirit and give us ears to hear. God, we pray You would revive our languishing affections for You and strengthen our faith. We pray You would fill us with more love—more love to You and to one another. For we love because You first loved us. Thank you, Lord. May the words of my mouth and the thoughts of our hearts be pleasing in Your sight, Oh Lord, our Rock and our Redeemer. We pray in Jesus name. Amen.

I hold in my hand a single thread. It is weak, insignificant, hardly noticeable and not very beautiful. But if you take one thread and weave it together with hundreds of other threads, you can get something strong, durable and maybe even beautiful. That’s what happens when Jesus smiles upon us in salvation. He takes the little thread of our individual lives—weak and not very noticeable—and He weaves us into a community of believers. Together, we become strong. If we follow Jesus, together we become beautiful and noticeable for the world to see.

That’s what we’re remembering these days as a church. Three years ago at this time, we were in our last week of engagement—getting ready to be married. We were meeting at Larkin High School and getting ready to enter this building as a new congregation. The first Sunday of May, 2010 was our wedding day. Next week we’re going to celebrate the third anniversary and enter into our fourth year of life together. We’re looking forward to that.

Many of you have been woven into our lives since then and made this church even stronger, more vibrant and beautiful. I love to hear people talk about why they appreciate and love New Covenant Bible Church. I love to hear them say what God has done in their lives. I am always encouraged to hear the many things you appreciate about this church.

But I want you to think about what encourages me the most when I hear people say something about our church. It’s not how much they love the preaching, teaching and ministry of the Word in all of its various aspects in this congregation. That encourages me, but that is not what I love hearing the most. Nor is it when people say how much they appreciate the music. I’m always encouraged by that and so

thankful for our musicians and everyone who puts services together that help us lift our hearts to God. But that's not what encourages me the most. I love when people say they feel they are being led and shepherded well by our elders and deacons. You are God's blood-bought flock and I hope you will be shepherded well in this church. I love when people speak about our great staff—how well organized they are and how hard they work at building ministries that serve the body of Christ. I love to hear about ministries of the gospel going forth into our community and the entire world. Those things are wonderful and exciting, but they are not the things that thrill me the most.

What I love to hear the most is people saying, "I love New Covenant Bible Church because the people there love and follow Jesus. They take following Jesus so seriously, they love Him so much and they love one another." That's what I love to hear the most about our church. Oh that we would be a church that is famous for our love for Christ and for one another. Because I know that if we are a church that loves God and loves Jesus and follows Him closely, that means the preaching, teaching, leadership, worship, ministries we organize and the mission we are engaged in are aiming for the highest goal—to magnify Jesus Christ and make much of Him. That's what we're about: To glorify God through Spirit-transformed lives by the beauty and power of the gospel of Jesus Christ.

If we are known for loving Him—if when people come into our church they say, "These people remind me of Jesus"—then all the other ministries we are doing are moving in the right direction. Furthermore, I know if we love Jesus and one another, Jesus delights in what He sees at New Covenant. Then our Chief Shepherd is pleased, glorified and rejoicing in what takes place here. Jesus' own words in Revelation 2 reveal that we can get everything else right, but if we lose the love we had at first, we're missing the point altogether. So may we learn to love and follow Jesus.

I'm grateful the Lord has us in a portion of Scripture designed to help us learn what it means to be His followers in this world. It's the famous sermon of Jesus called 'The Sermon on the Mount.' Turn to Luke 6:12 in your Bible. This is like Jesus' keynote address. He preached this sermon on a variety of occasions and in different places. There is a direct simplicity and vivid clarity that mark this sermon of Jesus—the greatest Preacher Who ever preached. In this sermon, Jesus demonstrates what the citizens of His Kingdom look like and how we—as His followers—can display the values and ethics of His Kingdom here and now in a fallen world. Jesus is telling us what distinguishes His people from the world around them and what it really looks like to follow Him.

He does this within the context of a community. He refreshes our vision of what a community of Christ followers looks like. Oswald Chambers says, "The Sermon on the Mount is a statement of the life we will live when the Holy Spirit is having His way with us." This is a picture of what the Holy Spirit of Jesus Christ wants to do in our lives as a community of believers.

If you've been attending a church that preaches the Bible for a while, you've probably heard a whole series of sermons on the Sermon on the Mount. I've done that in the past and—if the Lord allows—I'd love to do that in the future. Today, I'm not going to start a series of messages on the Sermon on the Mount. Instead, I want us to hear it the way the first hearers heard it—the way Jesus preached it for the first time. I want us to hear the words of Jesus in one sitting rather than over a series of weeks.

I interacted with a few of the elders before deciding to take this approach and one of them said, "I think we sometimes treat this sermon more like a random collection of fortune cookies or 'proverbs' rather than a comprehensive vision of the Christian life." I think that is wise. It's helpful for us to see that in this sermon Jesus is giving us a comprehensive vision of what it looks like to be His followers. So let's listen now as our Master calls us to love and follow Him. Listen as He calls us to become a radically distinct counter culture in this fallen world. Listen to the keynote address of the greatest Preacher Who ever lived and Who lives forevermore. Listen to the Word of our Savior, Jesus Christ:

¹² *In these days he went out to the mountain to pray, and all night he continued in prayer to God. ¹³ And when day came, he called his disciples and chose from them twelve, whom he named apostles: ¹⁴ Simon, whom he named Peter, and Andrew his brother, and James and John, and Philip, and Bartholomew, ¹⁵ and Matthew, and Thomas, and James the son of Alphaeus, and Simon who was called the Zealot, ¹⁶ and Judas the son of James, and Judas Iscariot, who became a traitor.*

¹⁷ *And he came down with them and stood on a level place, with a great crowd of his disciples and a great multitude of people from all Judea and Jerusalem and the seacoast of Tyre and Sidon, ¹⁸ who came to hear him and to be healed of their diseases. And those who were troubled with unclean spirits were cured. ¹⁹ And all the crowd sought to touch him, for power came out from him and healed them all.*

²⁰ *And he lifted up his eyes on his disciples, and said:*

"Blessed are you who are poor, for yours is the kingdom of God.

²¹ *"Blessed are you who are hungry now, for you shall be satisfied.*

"Blessed are you who weep now, for you shall laugh.

²² *"Blessed are you when people hate you and when they exclude you and revile you and spurn your name as evil, on account of the Son of Man!*

²³ *Rejoice in that day, and leap for joy, for behold, your reward is great in heaven; for so their fathers did to the prophets.*

²⁴ *"But woe to you who are rich, for you have received your consolation.*

²⁵ *"Woe to you who are full now, for you shall be hungry.*

"Woe to you who laugh now, for you shall mourn and weep.

²⁶ *"Woe to you, when all people speak well of you, for so their fathers did to the false prophets.*

²⁷ *"But I say to you who hear, Love your enemies, do good to those who hate you, ²⁸ bless those who curse you, pray for those who abuse you. ²⁹ To one who strikes you on the cheek, offer the other also, and from one who takes away your cloak do not withhold your tunic either. ³⁰ Give to everyone who*

begs from you, and from one who takes away your goods do not demand them back. ³¹ *And as you wish that others would do to you, do so to them.*

³² *"If you love those who love you, what benefit is that to you? For even sinners love those who love them.* ³³ *And if you do good to those who do good to you, what benefit is that to you? For even sinners do the same.*

³⁴ *And if you lend to those from whom you expect to receive, what credit is that to you? Even sinners lend to sinners, to get back the same amount.*

³⁵ *But love your enemies, and do good, and lend, expecting nothing in return, and your reward will be great, and you will be sons of the Most High, for he is kind to the ungrateful and the evil.* ³⁶ *Be merciful, even as your Father is merciful.*

³⁷ *"Judge not, and you will not be judged; condemn not, and you will not be condemned; forgive, and you will be forgiven; ³⁸ give, and it will be given to you. Good measure, pressed down, shaken together, running over, will be put into your lap. For with the measure you use it will be measured back to you."*

³⁹ *He also told them a parable: "Can a blind man lead a blind man? Will they not both fall into a pit?" ⁴⁰ A disciple is not above his teacher, but everyone when he is fully trained will be like his teacher. ⁴¹ Why do you see the speck that is in your brother's eye, but do not notice the log that is in your own eye? ⁴² How can you say to your brother, 'Brother, let me take out the speck that is in your eye,' when you yourself do not see the log that is in your own eye? You hypocrite, first take the log out of your own eye, and then you will see clearly to take out the speck that is in your brother's eye.*

⁴³ *"For no good tree bears bad fruit, nor again does a bad tree bear good fruit, ⁴⁴ for each tree is known by its own fruit. For figs are not gathered from thornbushes, nor are grapes picked from a bramble bush. ⁴⁵ The good person out of the good treasure of his heart produces good, and the evil person out of his evil treasure produces evil, for out of the abundance of the heart his mouth speaks.*

⁴⁶ *"Why do you call me 'Lord, Lord,' and not do what I tell you? ⁴⁷ Everyone who comes to me and hears my words and does them, I will show you what he is like: ⁴⁸ he is like a man building a house, who dug deep and laid the foundation on the rock. And when a flood arose, the stream broke against that house and could not shake it, because it had been well built. ⁴⁹ But the one who hears and does not do them is like a man who built a house on the ground without a foundation. When the stream broke against it, immediately it fell, and the ruin of that house was great." (Luke 6:12-49)*

Lord Jesus, we thank You for Your living Word. We thank You that it is a firm foundation for us. We pray that as we think about these words You would firmly plant our church's feet back on this firm foundation. Refresh our vision, Lord Christ, so we can go into a fourth year of life together, earnestly committed to following You and reflecting You to a world that so needs to see You. Thank You, Lord. Amen.

So what makes God's people distinct in this world? What sets us apart? What makes the community of Christ's followers different, compelling and attractive for Christ? It's easy for us to get off track in answering that question and miss the point. So let's look at Jesus' teaching in some broad strokes and let Him refresh our vision.

1. **The church of Jesus Christ is not made up of natural friends (12-19).** We're not woven together by the threads that normally bring people together in this world. That is distinct. The church of Jesus Christ is made up more of natural enemies or rivals than natural friends.

The setting of this sermon is a mountain. Jesus has spent all night in intense prayer. He comes down from the mountain and chooses twelve from among His disciples who will be His apostles—the ones He will send into the world to carry forth His Kingdom message and build His church. What does this remind you of in the Old Testament? Who else came down from a mountain with the law of God? When Moses came down to the twelve tribes of Israel to give them God's law, God was saying, "I am forming a people for Myself." They had already been redeemed from slavery. The law was not given so they could earn God's salvation but rather so they could learn how to live as God's holy, happy society in this world—as the people whom God had redeemed and blessed. God says, "I am forming you as My holy people, a light to the nations."

Israel largely failed in that calling. But now Jesus—the true Redeemer of God's people, the true Israel—comes down from the mountain with twelve apostles, showing that He is forming a new Israel. A new community and people who will live distinctive lives in this fallen world—a people who will represent His Kingdom on earth until He comes again.

Even among these twelve men we see unlikely alliances. Simon had been a revolutionary—a zealot—seeking to overthrow the Roman Empire. Matthew was a tax collector working for the IRS of the Roman government. Jesus says, "You are both going to be my apostles—a revolutionary and a tax gatherer."

What draws the community of Christ together? It's not even ethnicity. We're told in verse 17 a great crowd came from Judea and Jerusalem but also from the seacoast of Tyre and Sidon. So this community of Christ followers is going to include Jews and Gentiles. What draws us together? It's the call of Jesus—the influence of Jesus in our lives. It's the Kingdom power of Jesus' gospel at work. We come to Him to hear Him, and as we hear Him, He heals us of our diseases—sometimes physical but more importantly spiritual. As we hear Him and He heals us, delivers us

from the power of Satan and we experience His Kingdom power in our lives, we're bound together in a community of people who otherwise would not come together. It's the call, Word, power, salvation and touch of Jesus on our lives that gathers us and makes us a people.

Friends, until you have experienced His touch, you cannot submit to His teaching.

- First He must become your Savior; then He becomes your teacher.
- First you have to experience His call of salvation and grace in your life—setting you free from your bondage to sin—then you can follow His will.
- First you have to be adopted into His family, then you can learn to follow the family rules.

It's not the other way around. We obey Jesus because we are secure in our Father's acceptance, not because we're trying to gain His approval. So Jesus calls together an unlikely group of followers and forms a new community—united through the experience of His grace in the gospel.

2. **Followers of Jesus are moved and motivated by a radically different value system than the ones we find in this world (20-26).** Jesus outlines two very different systems of values:

- The Kingdom of this World — What is it that the value system of this world esteems? It is things like riches, power, the satisfaction of material desires, comfort—sensual needs such as food, clothing and bodily appetites—happiness, success, recognition, a good reputation and prestige. These are the values of this world. This is what people are chasing after.
- The Kingdom of Christ — But then Jesus comes and—in verse 20—lifts His eyes on His disciples and says, “Here is where blessing is found in this world. It is in poverty, weeping, mourning, hunger, rejection and exclusion. These are the things that My followers esteem. They prize these things and suspect the values of this world's system. If you want to follow Me, the blessings you will experience are poverty, hunger, weeping, reviling and exclusion. Who wants to join? Are you ready to be My follower?”

He is emphasizing that His followers have ceased looking to this world for satisfaction. We're earnestly seeking a Kingdom still to come. Justin Taylor pointed out to me it's not that we don't enjoy food, drink, sex, safety, clothing and happiness. All these things are part of God's good creation and we do enjoy them. But Justin said, “They are wonderful goods but horrible gods.” Isn't that a great statement? Wonderful goods but horrible gods. Jesus is our God and He tells us the blessed life is a life that embraces poverty. Jesus is not saying everyone who is materially poor is blessed. He is saying, “My disciples who follow Me and experience poverty in this life are blessed, because in the Kingdom to come they will be filled with all God's riches. They are already blessed with every spiritual blessing. The blessed life embraces hunger and cries out to God to meet the needs that only He can meet, weeping in rejection because we've banked our

hopes and treasures on the Kingdom of God and the world to come. That's why we can sing songs like Jesus, I My Cross have Taken:

Jesus, I my cross have taken, all to leave and follow Thee.
Destitute, despised, forsaken, Thou from hence my all shall be.

(Henry F. Lyte, 1824)

There is real freedom when we don't need the treasures of this world or the power, comfort, success and recognition of this world to find joy and peace. But Jesus says in Luke 6:24, "*Woe to you...*" How terrible and sad is your condition if you have everything you could ask for and desire in this life. You are so satiated with the things of this life that you never feel the need to cry out to God to satisfy desires only He can fill. Woe to you if that is your condition. Because one day everything that you are filled up with in this life is going to evaporate and you will have nothing.

Look at the things that animate, energize and move you—the value system you esteem—and ask yourself, "Are my affections and priorities increasingly marked by the values of Christ's Kingdom? Do I know the blessedness of seeking my all in Christ alone?"

3. **Christ followers are distinguished by the revolutionary love they show for those who are still outside the Kingdom (27-38).** In verses 20-26, Jesus is addressing our inner values. But then in verses 27 and following, Jesus starts addressing how we treat those who are still on the outside—those who don't know Christ. I love how N.T. Wright summarizes the gist of this section in his commentary. He says it is talking about "a glorious, uproarious, absurd generosity characterizing the followers of Christ." As if Jesus is saying, "Think of the best thing you can do for the worst person and go do it! Think of what you would really like someone to do for you and go do it for them. Think of the people to whom you are tempted to be nasty and instead lavish generosity on them."

New life—beauty—is springing up in verses 27-38 as God's followers—Christ's followers—demonstrate real love to those who not only don't love us but hate us. For what is love? Love is a genuine concern for others reflected in generous actions with no thought of whether or not that person is attractive or can repay us and no thought of what we can get out of it. How can we love like that? How can we love our enemies and do good to those who hate us—bless those who curse us? That is otherworldly and does not come naturally. Jesus says the first thing we have to do is to pray for our enemies. We have to pray we will be emptied of all ill will, malice, bitterness and

resentment. We have to be emptied of any desire to hurt the person who has hurt us. Pray to get your own heart conditioned.

Then Jesus says we need to know something about our God. We need to understand this is what God is like. Do you see what Jesus is telling us about God in verses 35-37? It's unbelievable! Who can say all religions are the same when our Savior describes God like this: "*He is kind to the ungrateful and the evil*" (verse 35). Is there any other religion that has a god like that? A God Who is kind to the ungrateful and wicked? A God Who is merciful to those who deserve nothing but His wrath? (verse 36) Jesus says, "This is what your God is like. Though we deserve judgment, He offers amnesty; though we deserve condemnation, He provides justification and life; though we deserve punishment, He gives us forgiveness; though we deserve eternal deprivation, He adopts us into His family and lavishes us with every spiritual blessing in the Heavenly places in Christ Jesus. This is what we have experienced from our God."

Therefore, "*Love your enemies*" (verse 35).

For while we were still weak, at the right time Christ died for the ungodly. For one will scarcely die for a righteous person—though perhaps for a good person one would dare even to die— but God shows his love for us in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us. Since, therefore, we have now been justified by his blood, much more shall we be saved by him from the wrath of God. For if while we were enemies we were reconciled to God by the death of his Son, much more, now that we are reconciled, shall we be saved by his life. (Romans 5:6-10).

This is what we've experienced through the gospel: a God Who loved us and

Pitied us when enemies,
Called us by His grace, and taught us,
Gave us ears and gave us eyes:

(From Let us Love and Sing and Wonder by John Newton, 1774)

What if all the churches in America started taking these words seriously? What would our country look like? What if everyone who named the name of Christ cared less about their own property, rights and comforts and more about blessing their neighbor and making sure his needs were met? In loving our enemies, what if we took the gifts God has given us and said we would pour ourselves out in service to others irrespective of payment, not caring whether the person was attractive or desirable to us. We would pour ourselves out because we love our Master and have experienced His lavish generosity in our lives.

Friends, it's not that we don't understand or get what Jesus is teaching us here. Jesus had no problem with being an unclear preacher. He is clear as day, obvious, direct, memorable and says it in so many ways that we won't forget what He said. The problem is not that we don't understand what He is asking us to do but rather that we don't want to obey. The problem is that it's hard to live like this. G.K. Chesterton said, "The Christian ideal has not been tried and found wanting. It has been found difficult and left untried."

May that not be the case with us as a church. May we love our Savior, listen to Him, hear His words and do them—empowered by the Holy Spirit. May we truly follow Him and love a world that does not even desire our love—a world that spurns, reviles and excludes us. Let's stop worrying about where we fit in the grand scheme of American politics and start figuring out how we can love our neighbors more effectively. I am thankful when I hear people speak about the kind of love of Jesus they experience from New Covenant Bible Church because it shows we are truly His disciples.

4. **Let's test ourselves.** Ask yourself the question: "Am I following Jesus?" In this sermon, Jesus is dividing His audience. He's saying, "If you follow Me, this is what your life is going to look like." If you are not seeing these things in your life, you need to ask yourself if you are really following Jesus.

Jesus gives us four very vivid illustrations or pictures to help us test ourselves and ask, "Am I following Jesus? Are the distinctive marks of discipleship evident in me?"

- a. **Am I becoming more like Him?** (Luke 6:39-40), First John 2:6 says, "*Whoever says he abides in him ought to walk in the same way in which he walked* [and must live as Jesus did]." Am I becoming more like Jesus? Jesus said to be careful who you follow. There are teachers out there (He is probably referring to the Pharisees) who are blind men. Where are blind men going to lead blind men? Straight into the ditch! But Jesus says if you follow Him there is good news. You will become like Him.

I want you to see that in Luke 6:40. I hear a wonderful gospel promise in the second half of this verse. "*A disciple is not above his teacher, but everyone when he is fully trained will be like his teacher.*" Wow! Isn't that good news? When you come under the discipleship and instruction of Jesus, He's going to make you like Him. Christian, isn't that what you aim for and desire more than anything else—to be like Christ?

How wonderful if you are a musician and get to come under the tutelage of a great musician. He tells you when you are 18, "If you just follow my instructions and this course of rigor and

discipline, one day you will be able to play the piano just like me.” Wouldn’t it be motivating to be taught by an instructor like that? Imagine you are an athlete and you get to come under the coaching of someone who had been a world-class athlete in his day. He says to you, “If you will follow this routine and listen to my instruction, I can guarantee you will become like me.” You would say, “I want to follow that teacher.”

Jesus says if we follow Him we will be like Him. Jesus is not just a Teacher Who gives us a standard we cannot fulfill. Oswald Chambers said, “He came to make us what He teaches us we should be. He makes us like Him.” So ask yourself: “Am I becoming more like Jesus?” That is the mark of those who follow Him.

b. Do I deal severely with my own faults but gently with the faults of others? (Luke 6:41-42).

Jesus tells that really funny story of a man who has a log sticking out of his eye trying to remove a speck from his brother’s eye. It’s very funny but Jesus is making a serious point. Whose sins have you been most preoccupied with this past week? What bothers, irritates and troubles you more: the faults you see in other people or the faults that God sees in you? Whose sanctification or lack thereof has been foremost on your agenda this week: your own or someone else’s? The closer we walk with Jesus, the more we purify ourselves as He is pure. As we get closer to Jesus and grow in His likeness, we become more tender, sympathetic and gentle with the faults and failings of our brothers and sisters. One of the marks of Jesus’ followers is that we deal severely with our own sins but gently with the sins of others.

So are you following Him? Do you see the evidence of that grace in your life? Are you less judgmental and do you resist condemning others? Do you forgive? Someone once said to John Wesley, “I never forgive anyone.” He wisely said, “Then I hope, sir, you never sin.” Thomas à Kempis said, “Be not angry that you cannot make others as you wish them to be since you cannot make yourself as you wish yourself to be.” Deal severely with your own faults but gently with the faults of others.

c. Is the fruit I am bearing evidence of the Holy Spirit’s gift of a new heart? (Luke 6:43-45).

Jesus makes it very clear as He comes toward the end of His sermon that no one can follow Him, no one can obey Him ‘Nike style’—“Just do it.” It doesn’t work that way. Men can wash and dress a corpse but only God can make it alive. In order to obey the teachings of Jesus and really follow Him, we need the promise of Ezekiel 36:26 to be fulfilled in us. We need God to give us a new heart and put a new spirit within us. We need Him to remove the heart of stone from our flesh and give us a tender heart of flesh. We need Him to put His Spirit within us and cause us to walk in His statutes. Jesus says the only way you can produce the kind of goodness that He is extolling in this sermon is by having a good heart. The only way a sinner can get a good heart is through the miracle of the Holy Spirit making you alive and giving you new life in Christ. “*Out of the abundance of the heart [the] mouth speaks*” and the actions flow (Luke 6:45). Does the fruit of your life demonstrate that you have experienced the miracle of the Holy Spirit’s regeneration in your life? If not, He is able to do that for you even now.

d. Am I building my life on the firm foundation of Jesus and His words? (Luke 6:46-49).

Storms are going to come into our lives and they will test the reality of what our foundation is. Storms will test whether we've only heard the words or are doing them, whether we are just listening or living according to Christ and His teaching. I and many other believers can tell you from personal experience that in the raging storms of life, His Word is a firm foundation for our feet. His Word is a rock that will hold you, keep you secure and sustain you through the raging waters of life's afflictions. But there is coming a great storm in the end to which all the storms in this life are but a prelude. That is the great storm of God's wrath and judgment that will come on the world because of sin. When that final judgment comes, there is only one Rock you can stand on—one Foundation will hold you secure—and that is Jesus Christ and His Word. So does your life demonstrate that you are not just listening but being transformed by His Word living in you and changing you? Jesus says, "Don't just call me, Lord, Lord. The question is will you do what I say? Is my Word changing you?"

Let's pray.

Lord Jesus, we thank You that Your Word is alive and powerful—sharp and penetrating. We pray as a church entering our fourth year of life together that more and more we would be built upon Your Word and teaching; that people who come into our midst would notice first and foremost that we remind them of You, Jesus, because we love, follow and obey You in our life together and love to the world.

Lord, I pray for those who are going through storms. Give them confidence in Your Word to trust You and build their lives on the firm foundation of Your teaching. I pray, Lord, for those who do not really know You or follow You—that they would hear You and be healed of all the ravages of sin in their lives. I pray they would experience the beauty and power of Your gospel breaking through, giving them a new heart and making them alive.

Jesus, we mean it when we say, "All we have is You, Christ, and You are more than enough. You are our life." So we worship You. Amen.

New Covenant Bible Church

4N780 Randall Road, St. Charles, IL 60175

(630) 584-2611 ♦ www.newcbc.org

All Scriptures quoted directly from the English Standard Version unless otherwise noted.

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