

The Marking of Isaiah Pickett

Wednesday Night Mid-Week

Chicago Church of Christ, North Shore Region

10-6-99

The Bible gives us clear direction in our lives in what we are supposed to do, and how we are supposed to handle situations with one another. God gives us direction into how we are supposed to work things out. Uh, this evening is filled with, uh, a combination of uh, uh scripture obviously and direction from God and (inaudible) on our part over, over (inaudible) scripture.

In the very beginning, (inaudible) uh, I don't remember the time exactly that Isaiah and Sylvia Pickett were, uh, removed from leadership in the Chicago Church as, uh, elder and woman's ministry leader, uh, they were, uh, uh because of issues of sin in their lives, uh. We had a meeting here with uh, Marty Fuqua and Al Baird, uh after that time where we got together and Isaiah was able to speak to them directly. The situation out there (inaudible) position in the ministry (inaudible) was always clear. And it was made to be very clear on that day. They were welcome to move, offer (help?) in a variety of ways. They made a decision at that time, had already actually last time if not the time previous to that not to be (?) with the Chicago Church.

That happens, people leave, people leave the fellowship and go. There is a difference, though that what, what happens when people make, uh accusations against the church, against individual leaders, and the result of their life is people leave the church, and that's what God is talking about here. Now there is divisiveness God says when that, when that is occurring you don't even do, you stay away from people. So what's the reason for it? First Corinthians 5 {Come on John} This is going to sound unloving, it's not like the God that we deal with. It's not like the picture of the Lord, of Jesus that we, that we often view. But in 1 Corinthians 5, God deals with church in Corinth and he says this "It is actually reported among you there is sexual immorality among you, and of a kind that does not even occur among pagans. And you are proud! Shouldn't you rather have been filled with grief and have put out of your fellowship the man who did this? Even though I am not physically present, I am with you in spirit. And I have already passed judgment on the one who did this, just as if I were present. When you are assembled in the name of our Lord Jesus and I am with you in spirit, and the power of our Lord Jesus is present, hand this man over to Satan, so that the sinful nature may be destroyed and his Spirit saved on the day of the Lord" [1 Corinthians 5:1-5]

{Amen} Church discipline is there for the purpose of love {amen} How can that be? God says for the protection of the church. Secondly I am going to give them a shot, an opportunity to repent in all that they do. God wants everyone to come to repentance, as we do. Everyone. Everyone that's in sin, God wants to repent so that they can be restored to the fellowship and be in the fellowship and be (inaudible) forever that's why it's done. {Amen}.

When the Picketts left, there was accusations being made, and people have left the church as a result of that. Uh, that puts us in a situation that no one here wants to be in, nobody. {Pause} What God would like us to do is work it out and gives us direction as to, as to exactly how that, how that is handled. And in this particular case, uh, we are going to live these scriptures because God calls us to. If we are in the church or we are not in the church in 1 Corinthians 1 v.1, here is an interesting statement that Paul makes to the church actually that's very simple. {pause} "I appeal to you, brothers, in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that all of you agree with one another so that there may be no divisions among you and that you may be perfectly united in mind and thought"[1 Corinthians 1:1] God calls his disciples to be united even in the midst of difficulties there is never an option given, it's interesting thing how the Lord works in his people. There is never an option given to leave, there just isn't. Even in a situation like this where there are issues that had to be worked out, leaving was not an

option. Not being united with one another was never an option. Working things out is never and never will be an option for the Lord's church. So when there is division when somebody chooses to leave you have to deal with it God says.

We protect, we protect your families from influences that would be harmful, that would hurt that would in anyway get in the way of a great relationship with one another. If somebody came in from the outside that hurt a relationship between you and your children you would respond, and rightly so because you are the protector of that, that church, oh, uh of that home.

Uh, accusations that have been made. I, I just want to share one thing, at least this story that is circulating. And I want to bring this out very, very clearly because I want, I know this this story is going around and frankly there is nothing, nothing that, that needs to be in any way backed down from. Um, when my family moved to Chicago from Charleston we had a culture shock of our lives. It was interesting coming up here {laughter}. We had turn of the century house complete with porch, porch swing, parlor room, living room, formal dining room, pocket doors you know those things that slide into the wall you know nice wood work all done, top was totally, had totally been redone.

Uh, we moved probably in '86, rented the house for a few years to some very reliable disciples that took great care of it, and we sold it in 1989 for \$36,000. We thought we could buy a house up here {laughter}. Six-figure houses in Charleston almost were non-existent, and to find a house that was a reasonable price, we just, there weren't any. I mean they, the prices that, that for a family of 3, 2 of which were in high school, uh 3 children 2 of which were in high school were not even available, uh, in a price range we could afford, and that was really amazing. Paying \$100,000 for a house staggered my imagination.

We began the church in 1982, it was poor. I mean it was rag-tag, I mean, people lived everywhere you could possibly go living as cheaply as you could possibly get. Around at the hospital, the statement made to me was, "How much, how much money do you need? No, no, no really how much money do you need?" (inaudible) we could not eat for a week or month, maybe that would help, but it was, it was getting by with as little as possible cause that's where we were. The people were taking jobs where, where they weren't a bunch of high-powered professionals in any, in any stage. And, and that's good, it was a great humble beginning. I believe it showed that God was gonna grow something awesome and something great.

Uh, as we moved on things got better thank the Lord. I mean the church began to grow, we began to uh, uh, uh convert people in neighborhoods and really all throughout the Chicago Metropolitan area, and we could eat every week of the month, that was a good thing {laughter} things got a little bit better. As it stands now, we're talking uh, we're just about everywhere in the Chicago Metropolitan area, with one exception. The only geographic area we're not in is the North Shore. That area Wilmette, Glencoe, Winnetka, Highland Park, Lake Forest. What does that remind you of? Money {laughter}. I tell you what it just, you know, you get that group that started out (inaudible) there was no way. Matter of fact we tried several years back and some of you are here because of that. Um, how many of you were in Milwaukee? Just a few of you, that came down, ok that uh, we decided, to s-s- disperse you around to other regions, but uh, we thought we were gonna attack and uh, uh evangelize the North Shore of , o- of Chicagoland. And we brought a bunch of great people, great disciples with awesome hearts down from Milwaukee church with the idea of planting the North Shore (inaudible) to be able to afford what the North Shore had to offer.

As a result, they wound up living around in Skokie, Evanston and surrounding areas, and started converting people in those neighborhoods which is awesome, but the North Shore remained dark to the light of God. And, uh, it's been that way ever since and really up until this point in time and frankly we made the decision, uh, for a couple of reasons. One of which was we, we have got to reach this, this place {Amen's}. We can't say that everyone else deserves salvation but them. But you know what, they are not the kind of neighborhood you just sort of, uh, live over in, uh, uh, live over in Berwyn and go knocking on doors in Glencoe {laughter} it just doesn't work you know what I mean? It becomes almost a private club.

And so the decision was made and we had, the the time is right we believe, to begin the North Shore Ministry {Amen, Amen}. Uh, and uh, you know in doing that (inaudible) we're at the decision now where we're going to do this and do it right. {Yup} Now an interesting thing happened the last time the church was audited, and we're audited every year by.....who? Grant, Clark, and (inaudible) and made a statement, to uh, uh leadership then that the church, church needed to own some things. It's a good investment it's what we should do. Ah, that's fine. If we're gonna evangelize Wilmette. If we're gonna evangelize Glencoe, well somebody's gotta be in that area to establish a beachhead (inaudible), that you become part of the community. You don't go in there as transient people and say "we're gonna evangelize this area". And so the decision was made that we're gonna go we're gonna move into those areas. We kind of looked at areas, and talked about different and there wound up being a address in Wilmette on the very south side, almost, just borderline Evanston. So, actually, frankly, we looked at a house over there. The neighborhood looks pretty ordinary (inaudible) it's not extravagant by any stretch. These homes had been built years and years and years ago when they were cheap back then. And, uh, and the decision was made that Chicago would purchase a house. We were all in total agreement with this. Uh, now the cost, another culture shock {laughter}

BYRON PARSONS: (inaudible) What about that \$36,000?

JOHN: That would have bought a door to the garage {laughter}. The price when we were looking at houses, Byron was up there looking at houses, uh, the price on the house we looked at was \$400,000 {gasps from audience}. We said "Mercy". Gather your thoughts. Why? Because we've got to get in there. And that's, that's the, that's the far south side of Wilmette. There is no cheap areas in Wilmette. Church then, what we did was bring it to the board of directors. Our decision as a ministry staff is to is what we're gonna do and where and why. That's our decision as ministry. The Board of Directors, which was made up of four out of six of us, are non-staff people. Jeff Balsom and I are on staff, Jim Lefler is not on staff uh, um Charles Neely uh, is not on staff, uh Jim works with uh, um Alliance Health Care (inaudible) guy, uh, smart, uh, smarter than me. {laughter}. Uh Lori Irons, Lori Devin, uh, excuse me, is a uh, uh a pediatrician. She is in the (inaudible) region, Jeff Jones is an attorney, he is in the West. And we presented the financials of this.

What the Board's responsibility is, is this a good investment? Is this good financially for the church? Is it fiscally sound. That's their, that's their responsibility, they went over, they asked the questions. Jeff and uh, (Rod Eckersley) who is the controller to the church, uh put a presentation together that frankly, for all of us, surprised the heck out of us. Uh, what, what Jeff and Rod did was put together a total a of over, over 20 years if we owned this piece of property with a minimal increase in uh, um, uh a appreciation thank you very much. I think 11/2 percent per year, if I remember right, which is very, very if you look at the trends behind that's, that's very, very conservative, but if we use that and if we use also then what would be uh, to rent someplace for 20 years with I think an increase ah, 2 percent increase in rent which is also conservative for way rents are going. Over a 20-year period, and then if we would sell the house at the end of 20 years using that appreciation. This is what we saw, it was, it was so, so surprising, uh especially when you see it up a screen. The savings, the combined savings to the church if we were (be able to?) 1 1/2 interest a year in appreciation would be \$773,000 savings over renting {amen}. Now the board of directors look at that and thought well (inaudible) uh, no matter how staggering the amount is this is the most fiscally sound thing that we can do. (Inaudible) purchase. The money is, the money because of where we are. Either we invest or we say this area of the city is not open to evangelization.

We can't do that. We can't, then the questions was who goes there? {laughter} Byron's going there, now for a couple of reasons. Uh, Byron's a smart man. Byron has the ability to move in and out of circles and not be intimidated by money or a lot of things. Byron is extremely spiritual man, is a man of God, he knows the Bible, and he knows how to convert people. Uh, he knows, he's got to ground himself in that community, as a matter of fact he moved in, uh what, what day did you move in? Monday, Monday, uh Byron's already been with the neighbors and knows more about the neighborhood then probably most of the neighbors in there. I would (inaudible) because Byron's already working the neighborhood. (inaudible) and that's what it takes. {Amen, loud clapping}.

It's an interesting thing, and it's good, it's good for the church, it'll be good for the church in the long run, no matter even if, even if that money which we think is conservative, doesn't prove out to be that much. It's still going to be a great savings, it's going to be worthwhile when we start converting people in those neighborhoods it's going to make a difference. I think the other, other, the other interesting thing is that's a predominantly white area {Amen & laughter}. We just said "Byron you go" {loud laughter}. If you think that's going to be a cake walk, it's not, but you know what I think that (inaudible) {Amen} I think the statement is who we are, and what we believe, and the convictions about righteousness that we have. And uh, there is nothing but good about that decision that was made. And it is, uh, I think it is going to prove true in a number of ways, financially and spiritually (before it's time)? {amen}.

Now if you turn to Acts Chapter 20 {come on John}. What is my position in this? As an elder in this church? Verse 17:

"You know how I lived the whole time I was with you, from the first day I came into the province of Asia. I served the Lord with great humility and with tears, although I was severely tested by the plots of the Jews. You know that I have not hesitated to preach anything that would be helpful to you but have taught you publicly and from house to house. I have declared to both Jews and Greeks that they must turn to God in repentance and have faith in our Lord Jesus. "And now, compelled by the Spirit, I am going to Jerusalem, not knowing what will happen to me there. I only know that in every city the Holy Spirit warns me that prison and hardships are facing me. However, I consider my life worth nothing to me, if only I may finish the race and complete the task the Lord Jesus has given me -- the task of testifying to the gospel of God's grace. Now I know that none of you among whom I have gone about preaching the kingdom will ever see me again. Therefore, I declare to you today that I am innocent of the blood of all men. For I have not hesitated to proclaim to you the whole will of God. Keep watch over yourselves and the flock of which the Holy Spirit has made you overseers. Be shepherds of the church of God, which he bought with his own blood. I know that after I leave, savage wolves will come in among you and will not spare the flock. Even from your own number men will arise and distort the truth in order to draw away disciples after them. So be on your guard! Remember that for three years I never stopped warning each of you night and day with tears." [Acts 20:17-31]

My responsibility today as an elder, uh, and is to protect the church {that's right, yeah} to (inaudible) this room. It's with great sadness, uh (Isaiah)?, I declare before all men and God that I love you. I do not agree in the least with what you've done. I believe the Scriptures are clear on the course of action that must be taken and the only course of action that's allowable by God is {that's right, come on John} to be resolved and be unified. **And on this day, Isaiah, you are marked before God as a divisive man.** [emphasis added] What the Bible says is you don't have anything to do, anything. That's a hard teaching from God, it's not rude, it doesn't mean you're rude, doesn't mean you don't show compassion, it doesn't mean you don't pray {that's right}. It means until there is a unity of heart, there's a danger. I pray that God will forgive you, daily. I pray for your children, daily by name before God. There is no winners in this. Except the Lord, who will be upheld no matter what. {that's right, Amen}.

If there are questions, you are free to ask them, there is not, there is not at this time, um I'm sorry you are free to ask people. We don't have time to go into questions at this time, uh, there are people here that can talk, there are you can there feel free to call.

There are a lot of things I would rather do today {yup} just about anything {you}, then what I have to do today then what I am doing here. But I believe there is no option that we have before God. This church is the church of our Lord Jesus Christ. It's his, it's his direction that we follow {Amen}. And understand the things about division and divisiveness, when we divide people against one another, when we cast doubts of shadows. When we slander, you (inaudible) slander, you're out to gossip, you watch your hearts {ooh} you guard your heart before God, you will answer to God. {that's right} God gives (me?) directions, Christians to be righteous and to so what you should do {Hmm, mm Amen} You deal with one another in love, you deal with one another

according to the gospel, according to the (Laws of our Lord)? {amen}. I love you very much, and I'm sorry this ever came about, but we'll do what's right. Okay?

Uh, the Picketts also know available to them is an avenue of recourse. There are people in leadership that absolutely the door is open to. Again, I pray to God that we can resolve it, that (inaudible) restored to the fellowship {Amen}. But until that time the charge is out to all of you - you will obey the scriptures {Loud Amens} here you are called a disciple of Jesus Christ to be righteous here, and Christians. Amen. At this time Byron will come up {C'mon Byron} {very loud clapping}

BYRON: It's, a, good to see so many familiar faces, and a very encouraging to see unfamiliar faces. {Amen} There are new Christians in the room, and people who've become disciples, uh really, uh the last couple of months. Uh, since I last had a chance to address, uh what is now the North Side Region. {Amen}. You know everything that, that John just presented is absolutely Biblical and true. {Amen} It has all been bounced off of Marty with great counsel from Al Baird as well, and I am, uh, not just in 100 percent agreement with this, but as a leader that is helping to bring this Biblical conviction back {Amen}. Now, there is no joy in doing it at all, but you know the bible from Genesis to Revelation has a lot of passages where God's people are distinguished by obeying God and not doing what they feel like doing {Amen, that's right}.

God's people are distinguished by being a people who will not be sentimental {that's right}, but will be loving, sacrificial, and will serve in a tremendous capacity. This is not a new thing, this is had to be, this has, has been done before. Fortunately it's not an annual event in the church {Amen} and praise God for that. {Amen} But having seen this done before, I know the temptations. I just want to address a couple of those as a brother and as your leader in the Lord. One is the temptation to say "I'm special, I'm different, I'm gonna go ahead and talk to someone who has been publicly marked." (pause) You're not special in that way. {Amen, preach it bro} We're all special to God and look around the room we are definitely unique {laughter}. There is not a copy of one another in this room. It's a (inaudible) very good thing to say "I mean well, I love God, I love them, surely this won't hurt". All sin hurts. It is a sin to disobey the passage about warn a divisive person once, twice, and then have nothing to do with them. So I charge you as a brother and as your leader in the Lord. Do not communicate with Isaiah who has just been marked {Amen} Amen? {Loud amens}. Does anyone not understand what do not communicate means?

MALE: Not me

FEMALE: I don't understand

MALE: Neither do I, I don't understand

FEMALE: I don't understand.

BYRON: Okay, it means do not talk to.

MALE: Don't talk to my brother? I can't do that.

FEMALE: That's not Jesus (inaudible)

BYRON: Don't correspond. Jesus told what he wants us to by giving us the scriptures right here, now here's what we're going to do. We're going to conduct an orderly...

MALE: It's not right, It's not right.

BYRON: ...an orderly meeting.

FEMALE: What would Jesus do?

MALE: He changed my life for the better I'd been (inaudible) if it wasn't for that man.

MALE: C'mon (Ralph?).

BYRON: Then praise God.

MALE: I'd been dead too.

BYRON: Praise God

MALE: I think, I think, Isaiah, he brought me to God, he showed me what was right.

BYRON: Let me... let me...address here we are going to have an orderly meeting {Amen}. This action is not being taken as a statement that everything that Isaiah has done in this church is in error and wrong {that's right}.

MALE: Then let --

BYRON: That's not what we're saying at all no one has said that, but --

MALE: How can you just toss him out?

BYRON: Because the Bible judges (inaudible) from and hopefully all of us possess give us very clear direction on what to do, and (inaudible) everyone the distinction of being a disciple and the distinction of being a Christian is doing what the Bible says {amen} {mixture of screaming, cheering, and loud clapping} It's hard, there's nothing pleasant about this what so ever {that's right}, but it is God's expressed will for the purpose of saving as many, and preserving the salvation for as many as possible {amen}. We all have a choice, you know what? We are all here because we're totally united {Amen}. This is not something that now you know Byron's got his side of the story and the Pickett's have a side of their story.

MALE: We'd like to hear their story.

MALE: (inaudible) be interesting

BYRON: All stories were presented before Marty and Al Baird.

MALE: How about us?

FEMALE: Come on, Isaiah.

MALE: How about the church?

MALE: Byron, can we see Acts Chapter 1, Chapter 6, and 15?

BYRON: Let me finish speaking here.

MALE: Well then...

BYRON: Let me finish speaking here.

MALE: Can (I or Isaiah?) speak afterwards. (I'll be real respectful)?

BYRON: I'm not gonna, I'm not gonna promise you a podium here.

MALE: I (inaudible)

BYRON: That's, that's we're speaking here.

MALE: (inaudible) that's okay.

BYRON: As I was saying going before, things taking care of things. This is a Chicago decision. That has been heard and validated and completely agreed upon by our Northern Federation World Sector Leader and Kingdom Elder Al Baird.

FEMALE: (inaudible)

BYRON: (this?) understand to be a kingdom decision.

MALE & FEMALE: We are the kingdom! We are the kingdom!

MALE: We just want to hear both sides that's all!

MALE: I just want (inaudible) as a church he should be presented to us, as in Acts chap 1, Chap 6, and 15. Bring it to us, let us (inaudible)...

MALE: He's convicted without a trial! He's convicted without a trial!

{At this point, many people were speaking out very loudly, and it's difficult to understand what they are all saying}

BYRON: You know, this is, this is not the US Government, this is not a court, this is not a trial, this is the kingdom of God we go by the word of God. {many voices speaking out again, can't understand them} {Loud clapping} that's what we do. You know this is so good for the church.

FEMALE: (sounds like crying) We are, you know.

BYRON: This is so good because it is always a challenge to have to make a decision will I follow Jesus according to the scriptures in all things.

MALE: I want to follow the man that brought me.

BYRON: Understood in things that we (inaudible) and things that we don't understand and things that are difficult and hard. And you know there is no one in this room no one in this room who has to be a part of a congregation that you think is violating the scriptures {that's right} You know in Russia they build walls and fences to keep the people in, the kingdom of God is not that way. {that's right}

MALE: Byron.

BYRON: No one put a gun to our head to bring us into the kingdom. It's a heart that loves the Lord (inaudible) the word of God.

MALE: Byron the Bible... (inaudible)

BYRON: You know the Bible, the Bible that you keep referring to, brother, says that when one man is speaking, others should be silent so that there may be order in the assembly {Amen}. That's what the bible says, I am that man at this time that is speaking.

MALE: I apologize, but we just want...

BYRON: If we want to present order, and the Bible, then that's going to continue to happen. Whoever is given this podium to speak is the one who will be speaking {Amen}, and if at some point you are given the podium to speak then you will have this audience.

MALE: Will you give us the podium?

BYRON: If you are not given this podium to speak, then you will not have this audience. That's how you maintain order...

MALE: Byron?

BYRON: ...and leadership.

MALE: That's all that's all we want to hear

MALE: (inaudible) the kingdom, or the church we just want to hear both sides it's not fair to hear just one side

MALE: It's not.

MALE: We still don't know what the accusation is!

MALE: Amen.

MALE: What'd he get accused of!?

{Again, many people speaking up}

JOHN: Listen to me, now I tried to think of other meetings in the kingdom. We're taught a lot of hard things. We're told to evangelize, people don't want to evangelize. We study the Bible, we hold each other accountable, think of how many times people, people are and people don't agree with it always. Look at what's going on in their lives. I tried to think of okay meetings, if I don't like it I can just raise enough ruckus to present another case, and do what I want to do. the answer is NO. That venue is available. This is not what we do in church. That venue is available to Isaiah and Sylvia they have presented their case to the leaders in the kingdom of God, they can do that again. They can make a phone call. They can do that again. **This isn't a vote - you're not going to be recognized.** {emphasis added}

MALE: John, he was an elder also.

JOHN: your, your...

MALE: John, he was an elder that's an important thing to the kingdom.

JOHN: He was an elder, that's right.

MALE: We just want to know why an elder would (inaudible)... please.

JOHN: You just need to listen up, I'm not asking you to agree with me (inaudible) you can stay, you can not stay. To be a part of this church you are going to be united. If that's not what you feel, that's fine.

MALE: I'm united in the gospel. I just feel like, "wait a minute"...

JOHN: **You're not obedient at all to the Gospel, don't tell me that!** {emphasis added}

MALE: The Gospel - because of Jesus we're all united

JOHN: Don't tell me that.

MALE: We're all united here, we believe in Jesus, we have baptized into Christ for the forgiveness of our sins.

BYRON: (inaudible) of the division (inaudible) said I'm sorry, I apologize, please forgive me, he'd be given a chance to speak.

MALE: The thing is that...

{Amen's and clapping}

BYRON: It is not going to happen {amen} (inaudible) you have fellowship together and if you violate the command of God {come on, Byron} and speak to someone who has been marked **then you, too, will be marked.** {Amen} **Mark that.** (emphasis added) {Amen, Amen}

Understand this is not an optional thing. The thing that is optional is whether of not we are going to be compliant {there you go, Amen} The thing that's gonna be optional is whether or not we are going to obey our leaders, and make their work a joy and not a burden. Whether we're going to be difficult or divisive. That is what's an option. Now there is a consequence, our choices have consequences. Likewise (inaudible) who know what the kingdom of God is all about {Yeah} and know how to conduct ourselves in the kingdom of God. {Amen} No man is an island (inaudible) The leadership and raised up the people who are now leading you.

MALE: So why are you moving to the Suburbs?

FEMALE: (Inaudible)

MALE: Why are you moving to a \$400,000

FEMALE: Why are you moving to a (inaudible) how's

MALE: Let the man speak!

MALE: (inaudible) cuz we are marked

BYRON: I don't own that house, I have no equity in that house, I pay rent

FEMALE: (sounds like she's crying) don't about people, you don't! Everyone is confused. We don't have a place to even worship God. You, you have seen the suffering of the people, and you buy a \$400,000 house with the money we give the church? (inaudible) We always give our contribution, everything Byron

BYRON: We go back a long, long way

FEMALE: I know! I know! I know!

BYRON: I think there are a lot of people who misunderstand what is going on today. What is going on is needed. If you don't agree (inaudible) We can address any concern in a biblical, simple, brotherly, and sisterly manner

{baby crying}

{much quieter talking}

Let God be God. Let God be the judge

{loud clapping}

We are looking at more people more resources.

{more talking}

End of Tape