

# The Danger of Appearances

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at Oak Grove Baptist Church, Paducah, Ky.  
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John 7:24

*Do not judge according to appearance, but judge with righteous judgment.*

Friday night John Piper shared at the Cross Conference Simulcast something that I had not heard about the 21 Christians martyred last month in Libya by ISIS terrorists. I thought it so wonderful and because it beautifully introduces my subject that you should hear it. A few days after the brutal murder of these men a brother to two of the martyred victims, Beshir Kamel, called into a Arabic Christian television program and thanked the Islamic State for not turning off the audio during the beheading so the declaration of these men's faith could be heard.

He said, "ISIS gave us more than we asked when they didn't edit out the part where they declared their faith and called upon Jesus Christ. ISIS helped us strengthen our faith." He added that the families of the men were "congratulating one another" and not in despair: "We are proud to have this number of people from our village who have become martyrs," he told the host of the television program. Beshir continued: "Since the Roman era, Christians have been martyred and have learned to handle everything that comes our way. This only makes us stronger in our faith because the Bible told us to love our enemies and bless those who curse us."

When asked about forgiving the Muslim terrorists for murdering his brothers, Beshir relayed a conversation he had with his mother. She shared how she would react if she saw one of the men who killed her sons. She said "she would ask [him] to enter her house and ask God to open his eyes because he was the reason [her sons] entered the kingdom of heaven."

Now we know why Jesus said, "Don't judge by appearances." When those men were martyred we thought, *How senseless a tragedy that was.* We judged by what we heard and what we could see that this was an act of hostility and murder and savage barbarianism—which it is. But what we could not see unless we were listening to the Spirit is what God can do with barbarianism. What Satan meant for evil God meant for good.

The same day the video was broadcasted by ISIS, the president of the Egyptian Bible Society decided that a tract needed to be quickly published showing two roads. On the front cover of that tract is a picture of the two rows, one row of black-cloaked terrorists and one row of their victims clad in orange jumpsuits. The tract says, "The Two Roads," the black road of despair and death that leads to eternity without God or the orange road leading to life and power. More than 1.6 million of those Gospel tracts have been distributed in the last two weeks in a predominantly Muslim area. Do not judge according to appearance because you will often be wrong. What we

think is devastating and tragic is not the final word. The final word does not come from the circumstances that you and I see and hear. Thank God that is not the final word.

God has this uncanny ability to orchestrate seven billion lives at the same time and every molecule in those seven billion bodies and make it all work to a glorious plan that He purposed before He made a single one of us. Jesus says to you and me today, “Don’t judge by what you see and what you hear, judge a righteous judgment.” Never say, “This is the end,” because you don’t know what the final end is, only God has determined that. Learn how to see like God sees. Learn to hear what God says about a given circumstance.

I want to speak for a few minutes today on the danger of appearances, assessing, determining circumstances by simply what you see, hear, taste, smell, and touch.

## **I. THE PROBLEM OF JUDGMENT SOLELY BASED UPON THE SENSES**

### **A. Senses Can Only Assess the Physical.**

When you judge solely by the senses you’re only taking in part of what’s true. This is very difficult *not* to do because we are physical beings made to relate to a physical environment. God made a physical world made up of matter and in order for you and I to relate to that matter He made us physical beings. The five senses are the means by which you gather information about your physical surroundings. Scientists call it empirical data. Empirical data is information that can only be proven by the senses, physical data in the physical realm to prove something to be false or true. But there’s a problem when you make a judgment based solely on empirical data. When you do that, you’re only assessing one part of reality.

The Bible says that the physical realm in which you and I live came out of a spiritual realm. God is spirit and He dwells in spirit. Since God who is spirit made the physical matter out of the spiritual that means the spiritual takes precedence. It’s more important than the physical. The physical is not the predominant truth; it is secondary to the spiritual because the physical came from the spiritual. When you and I judge only by what we can see, hear, taste, touch, and smell, we are not taking in all the facts of reality. There is another dimension, a spiritual realm where God moves and has His activity, which has a great deal to say and a great bearing on the physical. Don’t judge and assess by appearances because you only see partial reality.

Another problem with judging by appearances is:

### **B. Senses Rely Totally on Human Understanding.**

Human reasoning isn’t wrong. God designed human reasoning. Right now, by your sense of hearing you are listening to me and relying upon human reasoning to process my words and to make sense of them. That’s not bad, that’s good. Part of the image of God in us is the intellect and ability to reason. That’s good. But Jesus is saying to us in this text not to just rely upon human reasoning in order to come to the truth because if you do that you will often be wrong in your judgment.

How many of you will confess that you have taken in by the senses what you thought were the facts, only to find out the facts didn't give you the right conclusion? I've done that a great deal.

I think of the story Emerson Eggerich shares in his book *Love and Respect* and in his conferences where he talks about the father with the three children on the red eye bus. The bus was traveling late at night and the three children were small and misbehaving. They're running up and down the aisles; it's midnight, and people want to sleep while the bus takes them to their destination. But the children are causing such commotion that no one can sleep. The father is looking out the window, seemingly not paying attention to his children, and definitely not correcting them or making them behave.

This went on for several minutes until one of the passengers got the attention of another person seated right behind the father and with nothing but visual communication he made that man to know the other bus passengers had elected him to talk to the dad about corralling his kids. Finally he got up enough nerve and he said, "Sir?" No response. "Sir?!" No response. Finally he tapped him on the shoulder and said, "Sir!" The father came out of his daze and the man said to him, "Sir, your children are keeping us awake. We would like to get some sleep." The man, finally realizing what was happening, began profusely apologizing. "I'm so sorry. I'm so sorry. Their mother just died and I'm sitting here trying to process all of this. Please forgive me." Well, now that piece of information changed that whole scenario, now didn't it?

By the appearance, you've got three brats and a father who isn't a good disciplinarian. That's what the *appearance* tells us. But appearances don't always give us all the facts. That is certainly true when you don't take into consideration the spiritual realm.

Yet another problem of judging by appearances only:

### **C. It Leads to a Faith that Can Only Believe What It Sees.**

If you only judge by what you can see, hear, taste, touch, and smell, then your faith is always going to be dependent upon the senses. Regardless of where you're born—whether you're born in Missouri or not—every one of us are made to believe only what our senses tell us. That's why, often, we can only believe God for what we see Him do and we cannot believe without seeing.

Everybody has faith, whether you're saved or not. It's not right to say only Christians have faith. No, it's part of being a human. You can't get through life without having faith. Everybody exhibits some kind of faith. The question is what determines what you will put your faith in? How do you come to assess what is true and what's not? If you're not a Christian, all you have are the senses, the physical. But that doesn't mean Christians will always be people of faith in the spiritual.

### **D. We Are People of Two Worlds.**

Christians are people who have been born twice. A man comes to Jesus, you know him as Nicodemus. This man is perhaps the best Bible teacher in all of Israel and he comes to Jesus because he's confused by what he's seeing. By appearances he knows Jesus is not an ordinary man. Listen to what he says to Jesus,

*“We know that You are a teacher come from God; for no one can do these signs that You do unless God is with him.”*

In other words, Nicodemus is saying, “By appearances we know something is different about You, but are You just a prophet? But when I look at what You do, You've done a lot of things other prophets have never done. Are You just a great teacher? But I listen to You and I hear things that contradict what I have learned and teach. Who are You?” That's what he's really getting at.

Notice how Jesus responds to him.

*Jesus answered and said to him, “Most assuredly, I say to you, unless one is born again, he cannot (watch the word) **see** the kingdom of God.”*

Is Jesus talking about physical eyes? No. He's talking about spiritual perception. I haven't explained that yet but hold on. Most of you know what I'm talking about already but some of you may not. Just bear with me. Jesus is saying, “Nicodemus, you've got to be born a second time if you're going to be able to see, discern, and know the kingdom of God where He works.”

Nicodemus is thinking with human logic alone and he doesn't get it.

*Nicodemus said to Him, “How can a man be born when he is old? Can he enter a second time into his mother's womb and be born?”*

All Nicodemus knows is the physical realm.

*Jesus answered, “Most assuredly, I say to you, unless one is born of water and the Spirit, he cannot enter the kingdom of God. That which is born of the flesh is flesh, and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit. Do not marvel that I said to you, ‘You must be born again.’” (John 3:3-7)*

There are two births. One is physical—into the physical realm and one is spiritual—into the spiritual realm. Christians can see two worlds at the same time. I am in two different worlds right now. Every believer in this room is in two different worlds. How is that possible? This is not sci-fi. This is not fantasy. We are literally in two dimensions. One we can see with the physical, the other you can only see with the spirit.

What we are dealing with is spiritual perception. God not only gives you eyes, ears, a nose, taste, and touch in order to retrieve information from your surroundings, but He put within you a spirit. You are a spirit and that spirit is an intuitive organ. It is the part that knows the

spiritual realm in which God dwells and works. The spirit can communicate with the spiritual realm. I don't want to waste time talking about folks who have not been born twice and yet they can understand things that go on in the spiritual realm. But those spirits they know are evil spirits. The problem with that is the spirits who are evil that communicate to people never ever quite tell the truth. They may speak the truth but they will always do so in a way that misleads. You can't determine truth by a demonic or evil spirit. Only the pure, Holy Spirit of God communicates truth to your spirit. He opens the eyes, we call it the eyes of the heart because we don't really know how else to say it, in other words, the inner person. He opens who you really are to the spiritual realm so you can be in heaven at the same time you're on earth.

*I've never heard anything like that, you say.* Paul writes in the second chapter of Ephesians that all believers are seated in heavenly places in Christ Jesus. We have the ability to see two worlds at the same time.

The same apostle writing to the Corinthian in 1 Corinthians 2 says,

*Now we have received, not the spirit of the world,*

He's making a distinction between the spiritual dimension that rules this world and the spiritual dimension of heaven. When you turn your computer on see a window come up and you hear a certain sound, that's the operating system coming on that makes your computer do what you want it to do. If you have an Apple come up, that's the sign of an Apple computer operating system that allows that computer to function. The world has an operating system as well, but we haven't received that spirit, Paul says.

*but the Spirit who is from God, that we might know the things that have been freely given to us by God.*

You can know about God, who He is, what He's doing, what He has done, and what He will do for you by the Holy Spirit. It's the only way you can know. Human reasoning alone doesn't do impart that information.

What happens when God's Spirit speaks to your spirit? Well, it's not an audible voice; it's intuitive. You just know. The brain is not disengaged but the brain catches up to the spirit. In other words, God doesn't speak to the brain, He speaks to the spirit and the brain perceives and understands what the spirit has received. If you have to explain how you know something you'll have to say, "I don't know, I just know." It's not contrived by thinking in your brain, it's communicated by revelation in your spirit. That's what Paul is saying.

*These things we also speak, not in words which man's wisdom teaches but which the Holy Spirit teaches, comparing spiritual things with spiritual.*

The mind is not shut off and disengaged. The mind is informed by the spirit. God speaks the truth to the mind but only the Spirit of God in the spirit of man can perceive and know that truth. Again, the mind follows the spiritual illumination and is brought into understanding.

*But the natural man does not receive the things of the Spirit of God, for they are foolishness to him; nor can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned. (1 Corinthians 2:12-14)*

That's why even religious people who know a lot about the Bible may not be Christians—there are a lot of people like that—because their mind has been informed by the spirit hasn't. They're approaching it backwards. They're trying to learn it in the mind but something is missing in the spirit. The spirit hasn't shown up and said, "This is the truth—Jesus Christ." When He does that, He does it in such a way that the Bible calls it bearing testimony.

In Romans 8:16 the Bible says,

*For the Spirit bears witness with our spirit that we are indeed children of God.*

How do you know if you've been saved or not? The Spirit of God who now comes inside starts to talk and He gives a testimony, He gives witness. If you call someone to the witness stand you're asking them to testify about what they witnessed. The Spirit witnesses to your heart that you are His. You belong to Him. You are no longer a child of the devil. You have been set free.

How do you know that's happened? You don't, except by the Spirit. That's why it's so dangerous to build your assurance of faith on things you do or don't do because that's human reasoning operating without the Spirit. I can convince myself I'm saved. I did. But the Spirit had never spoken to me and testified that I was a child of God. But one day He did. It was in May of 1986. I was preparing a message for that night, it was Wednesday, I was in Romans 6:6 before it became anything special to me.

*Knowing this, that our old man was crucified with Him, that the body of sin might be done away with, that we should no longer be slaves of sin. For he who has died has been freed from sin. (Romans 6:6-7)*

While reading that passage, the Spirit of God spoke to me. I'm still amazed. He told me that what I was reading had never happened to me. I knew immediately that after 26 years of trying to convince myself that it had happened, was not true about me.

No more convincing. No more trying to persuade myself. I knew that I knew I had never truly been born a second time. So you can't base your hope of eternal life on what you do or don't do or whether you go to church and read your Bible or if you get emotional feelings. Even though this witness of the Spirit contains emotions, it's not apart from emotions; it's much deeper than that. It's intuitive. It's a knowledge you don't figure out, it's a knowledge imparted. That's what Paul is saying.

But just because you've been born in two worlds doesn't mean you choose to live in two worlds. Christians can choose to only believe what they see by the senses and not the spirit. There's our problem, isn't it? When I have a problem spiritually it's because I'm making judgments based upon appearances in the physical not in the spiritual.

*And I, brethren, could not speak to you as to spiritual people but as to carnal, as to babes in Christ. I fed you with milk and not with solid food; for until now you were not able to receive it, and even now you are still not able. (1 Corinthians 3:1-2)*

This proves a Christian is someone who has been born a second time can still not believe and not walk by faith in this realm of the Spirit but continue to judge everything by what you the senses. These Christians can only believe what they can see.

That's what happened here with the Jews to whom Jesus is addressing in our text.

## **II. THE JEWS MISJUDGE JESUS BASED ON APPEARANCES**

Look at verse 14. They had misjudged Jesus based upon appearance. Jesus is at the Feast of Tabernacles in the fall of the year and was at the temple teaching.

*Now about the middle of the feast Jesus went up into the temple and taught. And the Jews marveled, saying, "How does this Man know letters, having never studied?"*

*How does this man know so much when He's never been to seminary or received a degree? They're judging by appearances. This man ought not to know what He knows because He's not been trained by the professionals. He doesn't have a degree. How can He do this?*

*Jesus answered them and said, "My doctrine is not Mine, but His who sent Me. If anyone wants to do His will, he shall know concerning the doctrine, whether it is from God or whether I speak on My own authority. He who speaks from himself seeks his own glory; but He who seeks the glory of the One who sent Him is true, and no unrighteousness is in Him. Did not Moses give you the law, yet none of you keeps the law? Why do you seek to kill Me?"*

Judging only by appearances they make another judgment:

*The people answered and said, "You have a demon. Who is seeking to kill You?" Jesus answered and said to them, "I did one work, and you all marvel. Moses therefore gave you circumcision (not that it is from Moses, but from the fathers), and you circumcise a man on the Sabbath. If a man receives circumcision on the Sabbath, so that the law of Moses should not be broken, are you angry with Me because I made a man completely well on the Sabbath?" (John 7:14-23)*

Jesus is referring to a miracle He did six months earlier when He was last in Jerusalem at the Feast of Passover. He went to one man in a large gathering at the Pool of Bethesda and He healed

him on the Sabbath. If you go back to John 5, you'll realize that from that moment on the Jews plotted to kill Him. Why? Because by *appearances* this guy from Nazareth is a lawbreaker. According to them He broke the Sabbath. Jesus responds and says not to judge by what you see or even by what you think because what you think is often based upon your senses.

Rather, our Lord commands that we make a "righteous judgment." What does this mean? It means you see things the way Jesus sees them. You judge them the way He judges them. You look into the spiritual realm and you see God's activity. You realize that the spiritual trumps the physical and manipulates, controls, and dictates the physical.

### **III. AN ILLUSTRATION OF THE PRINCIPLE**

The best illustration of this is found in the Old Testament and it deals with two men, Jacob and his eleventh son Joseph. Are you familiar with the story of Jacob and Joseph? Jacob was the grandson of Abraham, the great man of faith, and Jacob had twelve sons.

The eleventh son Joseph was his favorite for two reasons. He was the firstborn of his favorite wife, Rachel, but there was another reason why Joseph was favored. There was something unique and special about him that the others did not possess and that was a sensitivity to God. Jacob realized that this was the son of promise, at least he thought so, because his eldest son Reuben had violated his father by sleeping with one of his wives. Therefore he had forfeited his birthright and the blessing. Jacob assumed that it must be Joseph that the Messiah and His genealogy will come through and he favored him. In fact, Jacob made Joseph a beautiful coat of many colors. What do you think that did to the other eleven brothers?

One day Joseph shares with his brothers a dream he had, "Guess what I dreamed last night, guys? It was harvest time and we were gathering the harvest and we gathered our sheaves (a sheave is where they cut the barley or wheat and wrap them up into little bundles and tie them). There were twelve sheaves standing and your eleven sheaves bowed to mine." How do you think that went over with those eleven brothers? They knew immediately what Joseph was saying. They were going to bow down to him.

Then he had another dream with the sun, moon, and twelve stars. In the dream, the sun, moon, and eleven stars bowed down to one star, Joseph's star. He even told it to his dad, Jacob, and his response was a little unusual. "Are you telling me that your mother and I are going to bow down to you?!" But the Bible says Jacob remembered that dream and pondered on it, kind of like Mary "pondered it in her heart." It's the same phraseology. He never forgot that. He knew something was going on there.

One day, as it was in the agricultural customs of the times, as a Bedouin people—that means they traveled from one place to another for good grazing for the flocks—ten of the brothers went off quite a ways from the main camp to feed the herds. Evidently the grass wasn't as plentiful nearby so they were off a few days journey and Jacob hadn't heard a word from his ten elder sons so he



said to Joseph, “I want you to take some goods to your brothers. Find them, see what’s going on with them, and come back and tell me how they are.” Joseph took off on his journey and finally found them. The brothers saw him and his beautiful coat their father had made and they said, “Here’s what we need to do. Let’s kill him and be done away with him. Dad will never know; we’re so far from home. Let’s just get rid of this dreamer.” Reuben speaks up, “No, here’s a pit, let’s just throw him in there and discuss what we’re going to do with him.” That’s exactly what they did.

A caravan of slave traders was passing through about that time and one of the brothers got the idea, “Let’s not kill him, there’s no profit in that. Let’s sell him and at least make some money. Let’s sell him to the slave traders and then we’ll take his beautiful coat and rip it up and we’ll kill a goat and dip the coat in the blood and we’ll present it to dad and dad will simply conclude that Joseph was killed by an animal.” So they did as suggested. They sold Joseph into slavery and they brought this torn, bloody coat back to Jacob.

*Then they sent the tunic of many colors, and they brought it to their father and said, “We have found this. Do you know whether it is your son’s tunic or not?” 33 And he recognized it and said, “It is my son’s tunic. A wild beast has devoured him. Without doubt Joseph is torn to pieces.” 34 Then Jacob tore his clothes, put sackcloth on his waist, and mourned for his son many days. And all his sons and all his daughters arose to comfort him; but he refused to be comforted, and he said, “For I shall go down into the grave to my son in mourning.” Thus his father wept for him. (Genesis 37:32-35)*

Do you know how long Jacob mourned for his son whom he thought was dead? Twenty years. For twenty years he lived believing a lie. Why? Because he judged by appearances. *There’s the bloody torn coat of my son, what else could have happened?* There was no thought of the treachery of the other sons, that never entered his mind. His only conclusion by human reasoning—taking in what the senses had seen—was *my son is dead*. And for twenty years Jacob lived in unbelief, whereas his son lived in a continual faith in God.

While Jacob mourned, Joseph was taken to Egypt where he was sold to none other than the chief of the bodyguard of Pharaoh. God blessed Joseph and Potiphar saw there was something special about this young man. “Everything he does succeeds and I’m getting wealthier. Why don’t I just make him the steward, the manager, of everything I possess?” And the household of Potiphar grew in wealth and prosperity as Joseph conducted the affairs of his master. Everything was wonderful. Joseph believed and trusted God. He carried in his heart the promise of God. He didn’t know how it would happen but he still believed.

One day, Potiphar’s wife could no longer resist the handsome features of this young man. Her heart burned in lust for him and she pleaded with Joseph to compromise himself with her, which Joseph refused. One day she grabbed his coat and again begged Joseph to go to bed with her. Joseph, by faith, said, “I cannot do this thing and sin against my God,” and so he ran. But what does he leave behind? His coat. Joseph had a problem with coats, he couldn’t keep a good coat. Potiphar’s wife waves the coat as evidence before her husband. “This Hebrew you’ve brought in

here has mocked me and tried to rape me. Here's the evidence." And what does Potiphar do? He makes a judgment based upon appearances and has Joseph cast into prison.

We don't know much about the prison years of Joseph. We know he was there several years. However, we do have a little glimpse in Psalm 105:19 that says, "Until the time that his word came to pass, the word of the LORD tested him." In other words, he got close to doubting God in the prison because he started looking at his appearances, his surroundings, his circumstances, and thinking, "Maybe it was only a dream of my mind not from God." But somehow God did not let his faith fail and eventually one day Pharaoh, the king of Egypt, had a dream and nobody could interpret it. The dream triggered the memory of the chief butler, Pharaoh's right hand man, and he said, "Pharaoh, I've sinned. I remember two years ago there was a Hebrew in the prison who interprets dreams. He can surely interpret your dream. You remember, you had me and the baker put in the prison? You were upset with both of us and we both had dreams while in prison. We both told the young man and he told us to the letter exactly what happened. You restored me in three days and you hung the baker. I know he can tell you what your dream means."

Joseph was brought before the king of Egypt. Joseph told the king the meaning of his dream. The king said, "I'm going to make you governor of my whole kingdom. Nobody is going to have more power than you, Joseph, except me."

As Joseph had interpreted, a famine strikes the entire Middle East. God brings a famine on that whole region and Jacob, his family, his flocks and herds are starving. Jacob told the oldest ten sons, the mischievous, treacherous ten, "I've heard a report that there's food in Egypt. Go and buy us food so we'll not die." They go and do that and of course they meet Joseph but they didn't know it was Joseph.

To make a long story very short, eventually Joseph reveals who he is to his brothers and he says to them, "I'm not seeking revenge. I'm not judging according to appearance. I know what happened when you sold me. Yes, you meant it for evil but God meant it for good. You sold me but God sent me to save your lives." Go back to dad, gather up all your belongings, I'm going to move you to Egypt where I will take care of you."

I want you to hear what Genesis 45 says.

*Then they went up out of Egypt, and came to the land of Canaan to Jacob their father. And they told him, saying, "Joseph is still alive, and he is governor over all the land of Egypt." And Jacob's heart stood still, because he did not believe them.*

He had been so convinced by the appearances of the lie presented twenty years ago he couldn't believe the truth now.

*But when they told him all the words which Joseph had said to them, and when he saw the carts which Joseph had sent to carry him, the spirit of Jacob their father revived. (Genesis 45:25-27)*

Twenty years he spent in spiritual misery because he simply believed a lie. You say, *Pastor, wait a minute now. Aren't you being a little unfair with Jacob? Because how could he have known what was going to happen. He had no way to know the truth.*

But I submit to you that he did know. Remember, Joseph told him a dream too. We know something about the dream struck a cord in Jacob's heart because he never forgot it. He pondered it, he thought about it. And of all people who should have known that God speaks in dreams it should have been Jacob. The very night he flees for his life having stolen his older brother Esau's blessing, and lays his head on rock as a pillow and dreams. In his dream he sees God and a staircase with angels ascending and descending the stairs. Surely Jacob should have known God had spoken to Joseph. He should have believed the truth. But instead he made a judgment on appearances.

Beloved, I have presented this message to you today for this reason: I'm asking you to not judge according to what you see. I know we're not huge. I know we're small, smaller now than we've been in a long time. I know. You don't need to tell me, I have eyes. But I refuse to believe what my eyes see. I refuse. *That's illogical, you say. That's a sign of somebody on the verge of insanity, denying reality.* I know that's clinically how it's defined. But you see, there's more to reality than what you and I can see and hear. I have a promise and, whether anyone else believes it or not, I believe it. I'm going to believe it. I choose to believe that God is going to fulfill His promise. But, in the meantime, just as He did with Joseph and Jacob, He always tests the promise. He makes the circumstances, what you can see and hear, so bad that you have to choose to believe, not because you feel or see or hear evidence that God's promise is going to come to pass, but in spite of your circumstances. That's where we are.

We can offer a hundred different reasons why we think we are where we are today. Let me tell you that every reason other than one will always be dealing with the physical. The only that deals with the spiritual and not the physical is the same answer that Joseph gave his brothers—what Satan meant for evil, God meant for good. What Satan meant to destroy is God's tool for good.

When ISIS took those twenty-one men and beheaded them they didn't foresee their actions strengthening the faith of Christians. They believe they can so terrorize the heart of Christians that believers will not evangelize or profess that they are Christians. In fact, they think they can so terrorize Christians they will convert them to Islam. That's the assessment of their judgment. When they slit those throats, that's what they believed, and every time God does something amazing.

Can you imagine the frustration of Satan? I'm not sympathizing or feeling sorry for him, but can you imagine that every time he thinks he's going to win a victory by killing a Christian—especially in such a brutal way—that in one Christian's place a hundred rise up? It's got to be frustrating when everything you try to do to destroy the church God takes and uses to build the church. Don't judge by appearances. Make a righteous judgment. And the only righteous judgment is the truth of God and what God has said.

May God help us to not disregard what we see but simply not make it the sole criteria of our judgments. In other words, do not make circumstances the sole criteria of what you believe as truth. Walk by faith and God will be glorified and you will prosper according to His purpose and plan. Amen.