

I. Introduction to Spiritual Growth and Church Focus

Today is Easter, and I need to explain what we do around here. We do not just set one day aside to celebrate the resurrection of Christ, just like we do not set one day aside to commemorate the birth of Christ. We look at every day and give thanks for the fact that our whole church, our whole salvation, is based on Him coming out of that tomb. We preach it all the time. I appreciate Easter, and I am not against Easter in any way, shape, or form, but I want you to know that this is a church that has a mission. We are focusing on trying to train men and women. We have a number of young men and women, moms and dads, young couples, moms and dads of all ages, that really want to learn the Bible. That is what we have been focusing on, and I do not know of a time that we do not preach or open up that book that we do not, in some way, shape, or form, talk about the fact that Christ arose.

We have been in a study over the last couple of months, showing and helping people understand how to grow spiritually. Obviously, there is no way that we could even begin to grow without Christ's death on the cross. That is where it all starts for us, and that is where it all starts for every child of God. There is no spiritual growth; there is no ability to grow in the Lord without understanding the concept of spiritual growth, and that goes back to Calvary's cross. We have been going through and laying out seven stages found in the Bible that show you how you and I should be growing spiritually based on the resurrection of the Lord Jesus Christ.

Last week, we talked about fathers. We have come through and shown you how the Bible recognizes young Christians called babes in Christ. From babes in Christ, they go to little children, and then children. The Bible talks about young men. Last week, we talked about fathers, and with each group, we see a different concept of spiritual growth.

- With the babes, we saw discipline.
- With the little children and the children, we saw the relationship factor.
- With the young men and the fathers, we saw the beginning of responsibility that we take.

Today, we are going to talk about the elders and the aged. With that, we see probably the greatest concept of spiritual maturity, and that is leadership. We want to talk about that today, and I think that you will go away today with a little more understanding of how the Bible works. As I have said earlier, anytime that I can help you with the Word of God in any way, shape, or form, my house is always open. You can call me; my phone number is on the back of that little bookmark. Call me, and I will be glad to sit down and help you. If you are going through struggles in your life, problems in your life, or maybe you just want to help get on track to grow spiritually, that is what we are all about. As I said, that is my job as pastor: to help you understand the Word of God and apply the Word of God to your life.

If you have your Bible this morning, with all that I have said so far, I want you to turn to the book of 1 Peter, chapter 5, verses 1 through 4. If you do not have a Bible, just look on with

somebody that does, or just listen because I will read the scriptures, and you may get more out of it today just listening to what I have to say than trying to find everything, and that is fine too.

Last week, as I said, we talked about the concept of spiritual growth, and we talked about fathers. We made the parallels of how growing spiritually through these seven stages is much like growing up physically. We talked about how when a man becomes a father, he has to give up what he wants to do with his own life. He cannot buy the things that he used to buy when he was single. He cannot go the places he wanted to go. He now understands that he has a wife and he has a family, and tremendous responsibility comes with that. Of course, growing up spiritually, it is the same way. This stage we talked about last week would represent when you and I come to the point that we begin to understand what God is doing. We begin to realize that there is something that God has saved us for. There is a reason for being in church. There is a reason for reading your Bible. You begin to see at this point how the plan of God is laid out through the Word of God like a gigantic picture.

It is like going through an art gallery, and on the walls, you see all the different pictures that men have painted. Most art galleries bring you through periods of painters. You will go through the Baroque period, the classical period, much like the music aspect of it. All the paintings will be put in periods, starting from the early paintings right up to the modern paintings. It gives you an understanding of how artwork has developed as you come through those different periods. Well, the Bible is the same way. The Bible is like a picture book. It shows you through the stories the pictures of how God is enacting His plan and what God is trying to do. So today, when we look at the aspect of the elder and the aged, we are going to see and we are going to begin to understand how this next level is what we all ought to try to get to at some point in our life.

II. Church Governance and Leadership Roles

In the Bible, God ordained three institutions. Back in Genesis, He ordained civil government. Back in Genesis, He also ordained marriage and the concept of the family. In the book of Acts, He ordained the concept of the local church. Those are three institutions by which God has ordained and put into effect for you and for me.

Within the structure of the church, down through church history, you will find that four basic formats have developed, or four basic different governmental structures of the church.

1. You have, down through the history of the church and even today, what is called the Episcopal. That is a government where all the churches are run by a group of bishops, and they decide what everybody else is going to do.
2. The second one you have what they call a synod or a presbytery. That is where all the churches and what they do are controlled by a group of ordained elders, and they decide where all the churches are going and what they are all going to do.
3. Then you have probably the one that most people understand, and that is called the Papal. That would be like the Roman Catholic Church, where you have one man over in Rome who sets the course for all Roman Catholics wherever they go, and he sets the course and dictates what the churches teach and what they believe. In all three of these, you are not allowed to

step outside this framework that the leadership puts out. In fact, the first two, Episcopal and Presbytery, are really variations of the Papal and are in the church at Rome because those churches came out of the Reformation. When they came out of the Reformation, that means that they broke with the rule of the Roman Catholic Church under Martin Luther back in the 1500s. What they did was they set up their own form of government within their churches, and many of them followed or kept traditions from the Roman Catholic Church.

4. In the book of Acts, you are taught the fourth one, and that is the congregational concept. The congregational concept is the one that is taught in the Bible, and that is simply this: that local churches themselves decide what they teach and what they preach. People find in the early book of Acts, when the church gets started, that the leadership within that church, that every local church, is unto itself. This is the format that Paul follows when he writes the New Testament, or three-quarters of it. He addresses them to individual local churches, churches that are separate from other churches, that as they read the Bible and they study the Bible, it is the Bible itself that dictates how they operate and what they preach and what they do.

Of course, that is what we are; we are in that form. Some people call that the independent movement or whatever you call it, but the bottom line is that we take our authority for everything we do from the scriptures. We believe that within this book is everything that tells the church how to operate. We believe the Bible is the one book that has the answers to all things in faith and practice in life on planet Earth, and that is what we stick with.

Within that Bible, within the congregational mode or the biblical mode of setting up a church structure, you will find that there are men who get into offices that help structure that church. In Acts chapter 6, you find the first deacons are called. We talked about that before. In 1 Peter chapter 5, where we are at, it talks about elders, and then in 1 and 2 Timothy, it talks about bishops. Let me explain this; it is not complicated. A bishop is really a pastor; the word bishop and pastor are synonymous in the Bible. I am a pastor; I am also a bishop because I am a pastor, but the terms are used interchangeably. The elders in the church, as we are going to see in a moment, are people who have come to the point where they are not ordained yet, because an ordained elder becomes a bishop or becomes a pastor, but they are the men and women who really hold the leadership of the church. We are going to talk about that here in just a moment because we are going to talk about the elder and then we are going to talk about the aged, the last two groups.

III. The Role of Elders: Feeding and Overseeing the Flock

Before we read 1 Peter chapter 5, let us pray, and then we will get on with our time this morning.

Father, we thank you and praise you for the Lord Jesus. We love you. We thank you for today. We pray, Father, on this day that the world looks toward your resurrection, that we too would not forget today, as we do every week, Lord, the price that was paid on Calvary's cross. We will thank you, Father, and we just pray, Lord, that you will just bless us this morning, give us all that we need today. Thank you for our visitors here. May their hearts be challenged, and may they understand, Father, that this is the church that stands on the Word of God, that loves the Word of

God, and loves to teach people the Word of God. Bless us today, and we will thank you and praise you for all you do, in Jesus' name and sake we ask it. Amen.

He says in 1 Peter chapter 5, verse 1:

1 Peter 5:1-8

The elders which are among you I exhort, who am also an elder, and a witness of the sufferings of Christ, and also a partaker of the glory that shall be revealed:

Feed the flock of God which is among you, taking the oversight thereof, not by constraint, but willingly; not for filthy lucre, but of a ready mind;

Neither as being lords over God's heritage, but being ensamples to the flock.

And when the chief Shepherd shall appear, ye shall receive a crown of glory that fadeth not away.

Likewise, ye younger, submit yourselves unto the elder. Yea, all of you be subject one to another, and be clothed with humility: for God resisteth the proud, and giveth grace to the humble.

There are two main aspects that we see in this time period of spiritual growth when you get to this point and you have grown spiritually. I have told you every man in the Bible, every woman in the Bible, goes through the process of spiritual growth and these same seven stages. I am in the process; every one of you is in the process. At some point in your life, if you continue to grow, we will enter into this stage here where we really set the example of leadership based on what God has done in our lives. There are two main aspects in this time period found in here:

- The concept of feeding the flock.
- The concept of being an overseer.

Both the elders and the aged are very unique concepts, and I think they are very important to study in the Bible because up to this point, we know that deacons and pastors in the New Testament are always male. Women, though they have very important jobs in the church, and that does not lessen women in any way, shape, or form—I think a woman has a greater advantage over a man in many ways, and in fact, I think that they both have strengths and weaknesses, and when you put it together, they balance each other out. So understand what I am saying this morning, but the New Testament does not recognize female deacons or female pastors. However, it says specifically that in the elder realm and the aged realm, there are both men and women; there are women elders and there are women that are aged in the sense of their spiritual relationship with God. You find that in Titus chapter 2 and 1 Timothy chapter 5, which we are going to look at a little bit later on. But in both cases, whether men or women, their role is very clear, and it is the role of strong leadership, the role of being a leader.

Of course, you remember the process we talked about: we started with the discipline in babies, the relationship with little children, the responsibility with the young men and fathers, and now here we are. We are to the point where the elders and the aged really represent the leadership. Verse 5 of this passage in 1 Peter says, "Likewise, ye younger, submit yourselves unto the elder."

You see, you learn from them. It talks about in verse 3 that we are to be ensamples as elders to the younger Christian.

Now, an ensample is a great word. You are going to find that it is not used much in the English language today because we use the word example. But the Bible is much more exact. When your Bible was translated into English, English was at its perfect form. All languages go through a process of developing, coming to a perfect point, and then degenerating from there. We are in the degenerate side of the English language today, but its perfect point was when Shakespeare did his works. That is why the works of Shakespeare are considered literary classics, because the language that he writes them in is the classical, pure, sometimes called the Elizabethan English, because Queen Elizabeth was on the throne during that period of time. Your King James Bible was translated in 1611. The English language in it is at its greatest, perfected form during that period of time, so it will use words differently. So you will find in the Bible not only the word example but you will find the word ensample.

Let me explain the difference because it is important in your own walk with God. An example is something you do, but an ensample is something you are. When you begin to look at that concept and you begin to see the aspect of leadership in the New Testament Church under the elders and the aged, you begin to find out that it has more to do with who they are than what they do. Anybody can go to church. Anybody can learn the Bible. Anybody can do the things that a Christian is supposed to do, but not very many people live the things that the Bible says to do. That is where the key is of the aged and the elders: they are not just examples; they are ensamples. Their lifestyle and the things that they do in their life amplify what the Lord Jesus Christ is.

Today is Easter, and everybody around this world is showing up today. A lot of people, I do not know how much it is, but when I was a kid growing up, Easter was a really big deal. Everybody went out and bought something new to wear. You all see the ladies wear hats that day, and everybody goes out and buys all, and that is fine. But I have looked over the years as I look back at this thing, and I have learned a little bit about God in the Bible. I have come to the conclusion that, yes, human beings sometimes we take the event and we use the event as an example, but we never learn the ensample of the event. In other words, if Easter is really what the Bible claims to be, and it impacts our lives to the point that we go out and change our habits by not doing what we normally do today, come to church, go out and buy this, how much more should it impact us tomorrow morning when we go back to work? Many times, it is outward and never inward. So from that, I learned over the years that many of God's people give the example, but not many of God's people give the ensample, because the ensample is what you really are on the inside.

IV. The Crown of Glory and the Overseer's Responsibility

He says in 1 Timothy chapter 5, talking about the elders, verses 1 and 2:

1 Timothy 5:1-2

Rebuke not an elder, but intreat him as a father; and the younger men as brethren;

The elder women as mothers; the younger as sisters, with all purity.

Then on down in verse 17, he says:

1 Timothy 5:17

Let the elders that rule well be counted worthy of double honour, especially they who labour in the word and doctrine.

Now we begin to see this thing develop for us. The first thing we see here is the association in verse 1 with fathers. We learned last week that a father is someone that takes responsibility, but when you enter into the aged state or the elder stage, it does not mean you cease being a father; it just means you become a better father. You take more responsibility; you see more opportunities, and God uses you in a greater way. The same way with the elder women in verse 2. Then it says down here in verse 17 that they should get double honor, especially those that labor in the word and doctrine. A great factor in a person who gets to this spiritual point of life is their ability to teach the Bible, to train people in the Bible, not only by what they know (example) but by how they live it (ensample) on the inside.

This is why in 1 Peter chapter 5, verse 4, it says:

1 Peter 5:4

And when the chief Shepherd shall appear, ye shall receive a crown of glory that fadeth not away.

I do not know how much you know about the Bible, but in the Bible, there are five crowns. Those five crowns are what you and I, in our life after we are saved, are going to get at the judgment seat of Christ—our reward for faithfully serving the Lord. You can go through the Bible and study those five crowns individually, and here is one of them right here. This is called the crown of glory. This crown is given to an elder who teaches and labors in the Word of God, teaching people the Bible, male and female. This is not restricted to just men; this is anybody who can grow to this point. When you come to the point as an elder that you live what you say, at that point, you have the ability to teach others, and the Bible says at that point you have earned or you are earning that crown of glory. That is the key for the millennial rewards as far as what you get at the judgment seat of Christ, and it is an incredible concept and an incredible study.

Another word on here that we want to look at is the word in 1 Peter chapter 5, verse 2: the word oversight or overseer. It says, "taking the oversight." As a pastor, that is my job. Proverbs chapter 27, verse 23 says:

Proverbs 27:23

Be thou diligent to know the state of thy flocks, and look well to thy herds.

My job as a pastor is to look after the flock that God has given to me. I am to be an overseer. I am to look at people, pray for people, help people in any way that I can, put myself into position to always be there when somebody needs me, and to always focus on teaching somebody else the Word of God.

As the church leadership grows, and this is where we are going in our church, this is where we have been now almost two years, not quite two years—two years in June we have been in existence. We have built a strong base. God has brought the men and women who want to really learn the Word of God, brought us some who know the Word of God, and we are kind of a mixed-up hodgepodge here. But we are beginning to develop this thing where we take and begin to train leadership in teaching somebody else at some point to get to the point in their life where they take the oversight along with the pastor. An elder is someone who helps the pastor. He is someone that is on basically the same level as a pastor; therefore, he is under the same responsibility as the pastor. When he looks at the church like the pastor does, when he looks at the church and has to give up the things of himself to be there for somebody else, as we talked about last week, "You that are strong out there, bear the infirmities of the weak" (Romans 15:1). When he or she comes to that point in her life, then they take part of the ministry of that church, and many times they labor not just in word but in doctrine, the deeper things of the Word of God.

I will tell you what, it will be a great day when this church gets enough men and women in it that really look at the church and look at the concepts of the church the way that they need to look at it and see what needs to be done. Yet at the same time, we have a number of people that are looking in that direction or really beginning to understand the whole concept. As you teach and train people in the Word of God, it just becomes a natural thing.

V. Life as Choices and Trade-offs

I think the two greatest concepts that make a Christian, when he gets to this point, really valuable—I know there are lots of other things, but I think if I were to boil it all down and somebody would say to me, "When a man or a woman gets to this point in their spiritual life, what are the two greatest things that they have learned, not necessarily about the Bible, but about life that you apply the Bible to?" I will tell you, if you ever get to the point where you really grasp these two concepts—I am not talking about just intellectually; I think we can all get to it intellectually—I am talking about when you see it in every aspect of your life. I must confess to you, when I spend time with you throughout the week, teaching you the Bible on Thursday night when we set up our special little deals where I help you learn things in the Bible, my job underneath is to get you to this point. Everything we talk about, everything that I teach you, is to try to force you into that funnel where at the end of the funnel, you come out, and you have these two concepts.

If you can learn that, you see, life looks really hard. It looks hard because the world makes it look hard. Life looks complicated many times because of the complicated things we have put in our lives. When you stop at 50 years old and look back at your life after you have pretty much done whatever you wanted to do and you have made a lot of dumb mistakes, life is going to look complicated. But if you break it down, when I start to work with somebody in their life in counseling or discipling or whatever it may be, I will chisel whatever problems they bring me down to these two concepts. Once a person understands these two concepts, life becomes really simple. Your job becomes more understandable. Your family becomes more understandable. People you work with, life in general, the decisions you make, the mistakes we have all made, whatever the case, they actually become very much more simplified. This is because it takes

away the fog, it takes away the confusion, and it leaves you basically with what you just have. That is the way God intended the Bible to be. God never intended the Bible to be complicated. God never intended world society to be complicated.

When you go back to Genesis and you see how God started out and get an idea of God's plan, that thing was basic and simple. It was so basic and simple you did not have to get up and go to work in the morning. You did not have to dig food out of the ground. You did not have to go to the grocery store. You did not have to pay any light bill. It did not matter how high gas went because nobody had cars. You see how simple it was? But no, when man thought he knew more about it than God did, he sinned in the garden, and you do not go two chapters, you find a man that builds the first city, and off we go, complexity upon complexity. But if you can get these two simple things down in your life—and they are not profound, but they are profound in their concept—life is nothing but a choice. Life is a choice; it is nothing but choices, and in life, we make bad choices or good choices.

When I teach somebody the Word of God through discipleship or down the line, you teach somebody the Word of God, there are a lot of things that you are doing, but the main thing you are doing is taking people and showing them how to make the right choices, showing them how to make the right choices. Because whether you know it or not, or whether you want to believe it or not, you are responsible for the choices you make. That is what our society does not like today because we like to blame it on everybody else. When a guy goes out and kills six people, or a kid goes and kills his grandparents and goes into a school and kills a bunch of people, we want to blame it on the fact, "Well, he did not have this growing up, and he did not have that, and he did not have this." Or somebody goes out and becomes a mass murderer, "Well, his school teacher did not let him play with the other kids." No, you have to come to the point in life where we begin to take responsibility for what we do, and that responsibility has to be based on the choices that we make. Life is choices, and you have to be aware of the choices you make in life. That is why the Bible says in 1 Corinthians chapter 3, verse 10, that we are to be a wise master builder. The first concept, which I told you was not very profound, but you will see how it works here in a second, is that life is a choice, and everything in life you have to choose.

The second great concept that goes along with the first: when you choose a choice, you trade something for it. The second great concept you have got to learn is that everything in life is not only a choice, but every choice you make is a trade-off. You will trade something for this. You came to church this morning; you may have had other plans, but somebody called you and said, "Why do not we all go to church today? It is Easter," and you decided to go. You know what you did? You chose; you traded what you were going to do for being here today. Life is a choice, and when you make that choice, you have to trade for that choice.

I was never a very good kid growing up because kids growing up, at least in my day and age, we traded. I was never a very good trader. I collected baseball cards, as many of you guys did, I am sure. At one point, I had Mickey Mantle's rookie year card, and I probably traded it for two Jeffrey Schmertz because I was not a very good trader. But I was a kid growing up; we played marbles. How many ever played marbles? Good. Well, I was never a very good marble player. What you did in our school lot, we had recess, and before school, we had asphalt, we had

concrete or blacktop, but then we had cinder block. What you did is you drew a circle with your foot like this. I got it down. You put a marble and put a couple of marbles, and then you have a shooter. Now your shooter is your favorite marble. In my day and age, the most favorite shooter was what they called a cat's eye. You remember them? They had a little black one. They only made 20 black cat's eye shooters in the whole world, I think. I remember I finally got one, but guys would trade marbles, and I was never very good. I lost my black cat's eye, I lost my red cat's eye, I lost my swirlies. There is more than one time I went home and told my mom, "I lost all my marbles." I mean, and I still do many times when I go home, my wife. But that is not a bad deal, and you can laugh if you want, but Moses was a basket case when he started. Look what he did. That will hit you about 2:30 just after you eat. If you need help, go back to Exodus chapter 1, 2, and 3. You may get a little light on the subject there.

Anyway, I was never very good at trading. I made bad trades as a kid growing up, and I am telling you, life is a trade-off. I do not know how many times I have seen somebody come to the point where—and it can happen to a couple, it can happen to an individual—where they come to the point in their life where God puts them in a church, they have the ability to learn the Word of God, and they begin to grow. Then what happens? God brings something into their life, like an opportunity for a great job, to make a lot more money. The only thing is, you have got to move to St. Louis. You look over to St. Louis, "Well, there are not any churches over there. There is not anybody where I can really learn the Bible in their church. Nobody is really teaching me the Bible. I do not know what." And then you have a decision. You say, "Well, I have the Bible here, but I have much more money over here." At some point in your life, you have got to make a choice. When you make that choice and you go to St. Louis, you just traded what you had here for something over there.

Now, 20 years from now, that person comes back to see me in a counseling scenario. Their life is a mess. They have all kinds of problems. They have been married two or three times, and all kinds of problems, kids out in the world, and their life is all messed up. They come back to me and say, "Bob, I need you to help me here. What can I do?" Now, I can take the two approaches, and I can just take the psychological approach and just tell him all he wants to hear, or you can get right down to where the problem is, and you can bring him back to the point that, "You know how you got in this mess, because if you do not learn how you got into it, you are not going to get out of it now, because I guarantee you are still following the same pattern." You know what you did? You made a bad trade. God gave you something that you really needed, and then you saw something else over here that gave you what the world thought you had, so you traded that for this. Now, 50 years later, 40 years later, you see the results of that trade. That is all that it is. Life is not complicated. Life is a trade-off.

You find a young man or a young lady, and they want to get married, and they find Mr. Right or Miss Wonderful, and he is not a Christian, he is not saved. She is not saved; they are not Christians. You get the foolish thought in your head, "Well, I am a Christian, and the Bible says, 'Be not unequally yoked,' but the bottom line is you say, 'I can do it. I can make it.'" You do lose yourself into that, so you go ahead and get married, and what you have done at that point is made a choice, and when you make that choice, you have traded something for this. Five, ten, fifteen,

twenty years down the line, when the marriage is in a divorce, and the whole thing is a mess, and you are a battered woman, or your life is all screwed up and all messed up, you come back to me and say, "Bob, what do I do?" It is simple: you traded this for this. That is all life is. Life is not complicated. Life is choices, and life is a trade-off.

We find it all the time that people get to the point where they trade this for that. They make bad choices, and then they have to live with those choices. Many times, they do not want to take responsibility for those choices, but the bottom line is, when it all comes down and all is said and done, you cannot pay your taxes for 20 years because 1,500 people out there told you you did not have to. But when the IRS comes knocking on your door, they do not care who those 1,500 people are. You know why? You made a choice based on something, and here it is. You made a bad choice, and you traded this for that. Ultimately, you have to take responsibility. I have to take responsibility because life is a trade-off, and everything in life is what you choose it to be, and after you choose, you trade something for it. Usually, in God's people's lives, God always gets the short end of the stick. That is just the way it works.

VI. The Wisdom of the Aged: What Works and What Doesn't

The elder man and the elder woman have been around a while. They bring to the table something that most of us do not have, and this is why your parents, if you are young children here, are very valuable to you. Your parents, and I know you do not think they do, and I was just like you when I was 16 to 17, 18 years old. I thought my mom and dad were the dumbest people in the world. When I turned 21, I could not figure out how they got smart so fast.

I like John Buskett's testimony, our famous friend preacher. He gives a testimony of how rebellious he was, how he knew what he wanted to do in life, and how he knew he wanted to do this and he wanted to do that, and he would not tell what his mom and dad said. He says, "I will show them. I am going to live my life the way I want to." So what did John do? He went out and joined the U.S. Marine Corps. Good move, John. I am sure your first day at Parris Island, you told them how it was. I am sure when your mommy came in on the morning when you were working, said, "Johnny, it is time to get up," and you said, "Mom, I am not getting up going to school today." "John, get up!" "I am not getting up today, Mom." "John, get up! This is the last time I am going to tell you. I am going to tell your father." "Well, go ahead and tell him because it takes about nine times to tell me. I can get an hour sleep in." I wonder if that happened the first day on Parris Island. I am sure when the lights came on at 4 a.m., old dark 30 for those of you who have been there, and he walked in there, kicked that garbage can down the thing, and said, "Everybody out of that rack!" John says, "Well, I just want to sleep 15 more minutes." Oh, yeah, uh-huh. John learned a great reality. He learned he traded something. When it comes to the Marine Corps, no trade-backs. You are in, man. Now, in his case, it was good; it made him a better man than he was, a good young man, great discipline. But he chose.

We think that, I am telling you, if you are a young person here, listen to your parents because I will tell you what, parents have been around. I like to be around older men and older women because they have been places, seen things that I have not seen. You take somebody that has been saved 50, 60, 70, or 80 years. If they have been paying attention just half that time, they have

learned some things about life that you and I do not. You know what they learn? I will tell you what they have got down: they know that life is choices. By the time you are 60 years old, you come to that conclusion. The problem is, you cannot do much about it at that point. They also learned it; they look back and see what they have traded for. You know what else they know at this point in their life? They have come to the conclusion in life what will work and what will not work. That is something we do not have.

I mean, I grew up in the 1950s. The big thing was in the 1950s for all the moms, Dr. Spock's book. Dr. Spock told you how to raise your kids, not the one with the pointed ears, the other one. Dr. Spock wrote the great books, and everybody was gravitating to Dr. Spock. Everybody wanted to read Dr. Spock. It was not until what, 30 years later, that Dr. Spock's own boy killed himself. Now, somebody going through that would see the fallacy of that and say, "You know what, I am going to tell you something. I will give you another little jewel in life: if it does not work for Dr. Spock, it probably will not work for you." But you have to go through that.

I remember back in the 70s and 80s, and some of you know this, remember Dr. Marshall Saver, the great psychologist on KMBC? I loved to listen to him. He was anti-God. He was anti-Bible. He was against every Christian who ever walked on the face of this planet. He ridiculed God, ridiculed the belief in the Bible, and yet he was always giving people advice, and he had a following that was unbelievable in his town, right up till the day when he blew his brains out. Then everybody was going on the radio saying, "How could he deceive me? How could he tell me all these things, but it really was not working for him?" You see, an older person lives through those things, sees the trade-off, sees the choices, and they understand what works and what does not work. It is as simple as that.

The Bible makes the reference to a wise man and a foolish man, a virtuous woman and a whorish woman, a man who builds his house on a rock and a man who builds his house on the sand. That is where you are at. Life is so simple. The world wants to make it complicated so you do not find out how simple it is. Science says, "Well, you go to your coach, and they have this big deal now going between evolution and intelligent design." Everybody acts like that is new. Let me tell you something, when I went to school back in the sixth and seventh and eighth grade, we had science classes. Three years after I left the eighth grade, those science books were out of date, and they had to write new science books. In fact, if you go over to the Library of London, there are 10 miles of scientific books that are obsolete because they found out what they taught you back there really was not the way that it was. It always changes.

You want to talk about diets? You take the Atkins diets, and now they say it is going to kill you, but then everything kills you today. There was a time in this world when I was growing up when it went like this: God, country, motherhood, Mom's apple pie. That is what we fought for in Vietnam. That is what we fought for in World War II, in Korea. Now today, God is thrown out, the country is in disarray, mothers are aborting their babies up one side and down the other, and I just read yesterday where the Surgeon General said apple pie causes cancer. Nothing is the same.

Now, somebody that has been around for a while, I love to watch the medicine. Have you ever watched the little medicine things that they give you? When should you pay \$250 for a diet pill?

That is the big one. The answer is when you are so stupid you think that that pill is going to help you lose weight. You are laughing, but if they put the little things on there, the money they are making money. You know why? Because nobody wants to go down to the gym and ride the bike, run up and down, or pick up the weights, or do this or do that, or put duct tape on your mouth. We want to take a pill, eat as much as we want, and be like this. "Boy, your old girdle is pulling my back today, honey." I needed it for that illustration.

When you watch them on television, watch this: high blood pressure, take this; high cholesterol. "My cholesterol was 16,000, and I took this pill for one week, and now I am down to 100." Somebody else says, "I have diabetes, and my diabetes was out of control, and I order my diabetes stuff from this place where I get this, or I take this pill or this." Everything you have got. Then when you are laying it all out, down across the bottom comes a little fast fine print. You are saying, "Well, I have high blood pressure, my cholesterol is high." "Well, take this, take this, take that." I do not know them all; I am not going to start naming them because some of them I would be embarrassed about because I cannot keep all the names straight. But it comes down through here, and it finally across the bottom it says, "Results are not typical. Taking these pills may cause diarrhea, nausea, headaches, muscle pain." Somebody says, "Wow, life is a trade-off. It is a trade-off." I saw one the other day; it said coming across the bottom, "Results are not typical. This drug will probably kill you." We do not care; we want what is new.

We live in a system where we want to do away with capital punishment and taking a life because we say life is the highest value. We want to do away with capital punishment. We want to quit killing the convicted murderers, the convicted rapists, the convicted child molesters because we say it is cruel and inhuman. But we will walk in there and pull the plug on Terry Schiavo and then go to McDonald's like we just did nothing. You know why? It is all upside down. Now, somebody that has been around for a while, you have seen those things. You have seen how it works. You are not impressed with this society. You know why? Because you have a book. You have a more sure word of prophecy that never changes, has all the answers of life in it. When you look at this thing and you study it and you put it all down, let me tell you something, you know that the Bible said in Isaiah chapter 5 that there was going to be a day when everybody called evil good and good evil. You know in Micah chapter 2 there was a day coming when the spirit of falsehood was going to so overtake this nation that the men were going to stand up in a pulpit and preach sin, and everybody was going to say, "Amen! Isn't he great?" You know from Isaiah chapter 59 that the Bible says that truth has fallen in the streets. You will know from Amos chapter 8 that this old world is a famine, not a famine of the bread and water, but a famine of the hearing of the words of God. Nobody has an absolute standard today.

So I am telling you, just like your parents have been around long enough, 50, 60 years, 40, 50 years, to see life and stand back, and you have only been in it 10, 12, 15, 18 years, and you think you know all of life. That is a terrible mistake that is going to lead to bad choices, and bad choices are going to lead to bad trades and investments. In a church, somebody with that kind of mindset is invaluable.

I like George Bush. I am not a Republican or a Democrat; I am a Bible-believing Christian. I think they are both crooks, but I like him about something. I have nothing against him. I just

know that there is no perfect political system. When I go vote, I write Jesus's name down, put a big X on it. Now, I know he will not get voted in, but it does not matter. When he comes back, he is going to take it by force, so it is okay. But I appreciate George Bush trying to figure out social security. Now, you young people, he knows that social security is not going to make it. Of course, they were saying that when I was a young man, which was just last week, but that is okay. We have heard that for years, and obviously, it has got problems. But let me tell you something, and I appreciate the fact that he wants to say, "Hey, you take your money from social security and invest it, put it in an investment and let it invest." I mean, who would not have, 30 years ago, if we could have got the money we pay in IRS and put it in some accounts someplace, who would not have done that? But the problem is today, nobody is thinking about this.

Let me ask you a question: our society of young people, for the most part, is so undisciplined. Does your kid save any money right now? Mine did not. I had to stay on them all the time: "Save some money, save some money." It was like every time they got money, it was an automatic draw to the mall. I had to teach them, "Save some money." Now, you take the average young person today in their 20s or 30s and say, "You do not have to pay Social Security anymore. We are going to give you that money, and you invest it." You know what is going to happen? Here is what human nature is going to do: "Well, I am 20 years old. I do not have to worry about that. What could I buy with that extra money? I will worry about this when I am 30. I will give myself 10 years of enjoying this money, then I will take it seriously." When you get to 30, you say, "I will wait to 40." When you get to 40, you say, "I will wait to 50." When you get to 50, you say, "I will wait to 60." When you get to 60, you say, "I have not got anything." You know why? Because you traded something for that. Life choices are a trade-off. Our young people in this society are so undisciplined, so unstructured, so out for everything in the world because of everything our society does. You are told that you have got to have money; money makes the world go around, and you cannot be successful without money. Then you say, "I am not going to take this; I am going to give it to you." If you do that, let me tell you something, by the time, if Jesus does not come, some of you young kids get to 65, everybody is going to be on welfare in this country, going to be flat broke, because you have not done what you are supposed to do with it. That is just human nature in an undisciplined society.

An elder man or an elder woman, they have been around long enough. They understand what Jeremiah chapter 6, verse 16 says, where he says:

Jeremiah 6:16

Thus saith the LORD, Stand ye in the ways, and see, and ask for the old paths, where is the good way, and walk therein, and ye shall find rest for your souls.

The old paths, the old way, the old book, the old things that are true that never change, and in a world that fluctuates like a wave at Chiefs stadium all the time, is stable and straight. You get somebody in your church that way. Let me tell you something, young people, you get a mom and dad like that, that live their life based on the principles and have some stability in life, you better listen to them. Oh, you may not like it. I did not like it. John did not like it; he wound up in the Marine Corps. You want to go in the Marines? I am telling you, God gives your parents for a

reason, and God gives elder men and elder women into a church for a reason. The elder man and the elder woman will teach you a lot about life in the Bible. They will teach you about things that they have been through that you have not been through. They will lay out concepts in the Word of God that you and I have. They will have seen things that everybody says are great, but have failed, and they know they have failed, and they will try to tell you, "Do not do that because I will tell you where that thing is going to wind up." Now you have two choices: "You do not know what you are talking about. I want to do it because everybody else is doing it." You made your choice, and down the line, you trade off what you would have had. It is as simple as that.

VII. The Aged: Prisoners of Christ and Patterns of Good Works

For just a moment, and these go hand in hand, I want to talk about the aged. Philemon chapter 1, verse 9 says:

Philemon 1:9

Yet for love's sake I rather beseech thee, being such an one as Paul the aged, and now also a prisoner of Jesus Christ.

Oh, this one is a good one. They go hand in hand. Titus chapter 2, verses 1 through 5 says this:

Titus 2:1-5

But speak thou the things which become sound doctrine:

That the aged men be sober, grave, temperate, sound in faith, in charity, in patience.

The aged women likewise, that they be in behaviour as becometh holiness, not false accusers, not given to much wine, teachers of good things;

That they may teach the young women to be sober, to love their husbands, to love their children,

To be discreet, chaste, keepers at home, good, obedient to their own husbands, that the word of God be not blasphemed.

It says, "In all things showing thyself a pattern of good works, in doctrine, showing uncorruptness, gravity, and sincerity. Sound speech that cannot be condemned, that he that is of the contrary part may be ashamed, having no evil thing to say of you." Wow, what a great passage.

Let us just touch on some of these things here. I think the greatest concept is found in Philemon chapter 1, verse 9, where Paul himself says that he is one of the aged. Paul is not a pastor. Paul was an elder. He was never a pastor. Peter was never a pastor; he is an elder. When you look at this, you find down through here that Paul says that he is one of the aged, and then he calls himself a prisoner. I think those two terms are so incredible in what they speak of. Because when you get to this point in your life, you realize that as 1 Corinthians chapter 6, verse 19 says, and what we are all about today at Easter, he says:

1 Corinthians 6:19-20

What? know ye not that your body is the temple of the Holy Ghost which is in you, which ye have of God, and ye are not your own?

For ye are bought with a price: therefore glorify God in your body, and in your spirit, which are God's.

He says, "You are not your own; you are bought with a price." When Paul makes a reference to the fact that he is an aged, and then he says he is a prisoner of Jesus Christ, he is showing me that he has come to the point that he absolutely understands that as a New Testament Christian, we do not have any rights. When you got saved, you gave up the right to do what you want to do, and now you take up His cross and bear it, and you do what God wants you to do. There is nobody that understands that better than somebody that has been through this process of spiritual growth that sees what the world has to offer. That sees, like we talked about a couple of weeks ago, that everything in life is nothing more than a bag with holes. You stick all you can do in that bag as you walk through life, and when you get down to the end of your life, you say, "Look what I got," you find out it had holes, and all that stuff fell out. There is nothing that lasts; nothing is eternal in the sense of God.

Now, the Lord says over there in Titus chapter 2, he says, "sound doctrine." This is for men and women, the aged, and they go hand in hand. "Sound doctrine, men sound in the faith, aged women, teachers of good things, how to love their husbands, love their children, discreet, chaste, keepers at home, obedient to the husband." You see, a role model. I think the key is in verse 7 when it says, "In all things showing thyself a pattern of good work." There are the ensamples of 1 Peter chapter 5. Leadership, leadership in a Christian's life as they get older, is not about what you know. It is not just about how much you have learned; it is about how much you know and how much you have learned have changed the way you are, that you look at things the way God sees it and cease to look at it from the way that everybody else sees it. When an elder gets to that point or the aged, and he now takes oversight with the pastor, he or she has to see the flock of God the same way the pastor does and step out of the picture of yourself. It has to be that way. To be an overseer, to take oversight, you have to understand that you are a prisoner, that you have no rights, you have nothing to get upset about, you have nothing here. You have to just do what God wants you to do, just like Christ did it.

VIII. Time Proves All Things: Trusting God's Vindication

"Sound speech that cannot be condemned," I like this. "Sound speech that cannot be condemned," he says, "that he that is of the contrary part may be ashamed, having no evil thing to say about you." You know, that is an interesting concept, having no evil thing to say about you. The great concept of the elder and aged, or that he has learned, is one great thing, or another great thing among all the other great things I have told you that you have got to know at this point. You know what he has learned? He learned that time proves all things. We get in a hurry. We want something right now. One of the greatest virtues of the Christian life as you grow

through it is patience. The elder and aged man has come to the point where, in this great concept, he understands that time proves all things.

Now he says down here in verse 8, he says, "Sound speech that cannot be condemned, that he that is of the contrary part may be ashamed, having no evil thing to say about you." You know what? In a practical sense, that is not really true because it was not true in Paul's life. There were all kinds of people that said evil things about him, including the church at Corinth. I do not know the time in his life, and it was not somebody that had something against Paul because they were jealous of him. They did not like the power that God had put in his life. They did not like the job that God gave him. They thought that God made a mistake because he has got to give them the job. So they go around badmouthing Paul, trying to destroy Paul in some places, trying to kill Paul, and certainly trying to discredit him in every way that they could. So this verse at face value does not mean that you will not get clobbered, because Paul did; you will. Every child of God that takes a stand for God at some point in life, you think the devil is going to give you a free ride? But you know what he is saying? He said, "Do not waste your time justifying yourself. Learn the great truth that time proves all things. Do not waste the time trying to justify yourself. Let your life, let your ministry, let your family speak for you." The greatest proof you have that you are doing what God wants you to do is the blessings of God in your life, how God has blessed your family, how God has taken you to the point where no matter what anybody says about you, you just keep going on, and God just keeps dumping more into your life.

You look back, I do not know how many people I have told. They said, "Bob, I do not agree with you on this," or "I do not like the way you do this," or "I do not like you personally," and this or that. You know what I answered him? I will say, "You know what, brother? It is no big deal. I am not going to convince you. You are not going to convince me. I will tell you what, let us meet 20 years from now and look at your life then, look at my life then. That will be the answer." When nothing else tells, time tells. That is what he is saying. He says, "Do not waste time justifying yourself. You have a job to do. Get out there and go to work." I have met all kinds of people that said, "Well, I am a great investor, and I know how to invest all kinds of money. I am not going to invest this and that." But at age 65, you look at, "What do you have?" You have somebody that thought they did but did not. You let your choices and your trade-offs and your investments of your life speak for you. You let God take your life, take your ministry, and they may not like you, they may hate you, they may lie about you, they may do everything in the world against you, but you know what, they cannot deny, they cannot deny. "Well, I do not like him, but how do you explain that?" Because there are some things that the Bible says, that is the way they go when you do what is right. When you do what is right, that is the way they go. When the people that do not like you, do not like you for some other reason, you know what, they may deny you, but they cannot deny what God is doing in your life. That is what he is saying. He says, "Those that are contrary may be ashamed because they have no evil thing to say." In reality, they will. But the bottom line is, when you compare what God has done in your life to what God has done in their life, there is no comparison. You see, folks, your life today, good or bad, is based on the choices you made and the trade-offs you make when you make those choices. Either way, my friend, it is apparent, and God takes care of those things.

IX. The Legacy and Perspective of the Aged

Lastly, and I am done. The aged men and women bring something to a church that I think is so desperately needed today. I look at the church, and I have been in the ministry over 30 years, and I look at this thing, and I see it eroded, degraded. I see people just totally out of whack. I see people that have got, they just want to castigate everybody in the world, and yet their own lives are upside down. Yet they are so proud and so polished and so ungodly in all that they get. The hypocrisy in the world today is unprecedented. I will tell you, the last thing we need in this church, or what we need in this church, is what every church needs, and that is some aged men and some aged women, some elder men and some elder women that have seen life for a while because you know what they do? They bring and keep a right perspective in your church. They form a bridge from the great days when God was doing great things through the days when the lukewarm church today is so amalgamated with the world and so different. They keep us focused on the true riches that the Lord talks about in Revelation chapter 3.

I love it, and she is just beginning to do it. But as time goes on and she gets a little older, I love when little Maddie sits down with me. We were down, I had to take Jamie and her down to the lawyer's office this week to sign some papers, and I had Maddie while she was up there, and we went down to the end of the hall, and there was this great big, we were on the 29th floor of a building. You could overlook the whole city of Kansas City, and we were sitting up there in this big window. I mean, this window was just huge and panoramic. It must have been 20 by 20, and we are sitting up there on the couch, and she was asking, "Grandpa, what is that?" And I tried to tell her, and I said, "Well, that is a railroad track," and she says, "Is that new?" I said, "No, honey, that has been there." She says, "What is that?" "That is the airport, downtown airport." She said, "Do they still fly?" And I tried to explain to her how that they used to be. You try to explain, "Well, this used to be the main airport." I did not, you just cannot go there yet, but she wanted to know about things that used to be, and I cannot wait. She crawls up on Grandpa's lap, and she says, "Grandpa, we go to church on Sunday, and I hear you preach, and I hear this, and I hear you Thursday night. Grandpa, tell me what it used to be like back in the old days. Tell me what it used to be like."

I have a great example. Last Sunday night, we went down to the City Union Mission, and I will tell you what, I just want to tell you something, I appreciate the men that are down there. I cannot think, I stand down there, and I will tell you what, guys, you younger guys, guys who have younger kids, I will tell you what, train your kids up to go down and minister with you down there. I cannot think of a greater thing in this world than to have the dads and sons, dads and daughters being down there together and letting God use you together, letting you see those things. Incredible.

When you go down there, you just see the old City Union Mission. You see a place that is there where homeless people can go, that they get a shower, get a bed, get some food, and then somebody preaches to them. When I see it, I see the old Brown Street Mission on 9th and Walnut in Canton, Ohio, where I first preached my first message 35 years ago. When I see it, I see that old Brown Street Mission, and I see an old boy by the name of Phil Ward. I see an old man by the name of Tommy Thomas. There I was as a young Christian down there not knowing

anything, and I went into that mission the first night, and I went over there, and I would go over sometime during the week, and I would sit down with old Phil Ward, and he would tell me the stories of how he was a gangster in the 20s. He was a bootlegger, and he had a praying mama that prayed for him and wanted him to go to church, and he never did. He made the choice of getting into prohibition in the bootleg industry. One night down there in Chicago, someplace down there, somebody's gang shot up somebody's gang, and old Phil Ward got about nine .45 caliber Thompson machine gun bullets in his belly. He laid on the street, and it was pouring down rain in Chicago, and as he laid down there, his life was coming in and out. God had a meeting with him. Old Phil Ward remembered the things that his mama said. You see, sometimes, kids, we do not pay attention to them when they tell us, but you get in a situation where God gets your attention, you will remember. Old Phil Ward told God, "You know what, God, if you will just let me live," he says, "I will give my life to you. I will do what my mama wanted me to do." And God let him live, and you know what? He got involved and became the superintendent of Brown Street Ministry and Mission there, and I will tell you what, for 30, 40, 50 years in Canton, Ohio, he won people to Christ, and that mission stood as a lighthouse to the people that never heard the word Christ preached.

I think of old Tommy Thomas. I did not know much about Tommy Thomas. I know this about Tommy Thomas: he was the guy that was with Phil there in that mission. Here I was, a 19, 20-year-old guy just out of his home for leave on the army, and I went to church that morning, and I went into the young people's department, and I sat way in the back because I did not want to get up there with those crazy Baptists who were going to be all shouting and screaming. I sat way in the back. Old Tommy Thomas got up there to preach that morning, and he is up there, big old guy, about 80 years old, rough voice. He got up there and flapped his Bible down. He said, "I want to preach today about the second coming of the Lord Jesus Christ, and I want to ask you a question," just like that. He says, "Are you ready to meet the Lord?" And when he did, he stepped back and grabbed his chest. He said one more time, "Are you ready?" As he fell, hit the ground. And one more time, he raised that finger out and got with every ounce of strength he had the words, "Are you ready?" And he died of a heart attack in the pulpit. Everybody went ballistic. They had a great service that morning. People got saved by the bucket load. The guy came up after he took his body out, and he preached, and I do not remember what he preached. I do not remember what he preached. I sat back there, and I am telling you this, the only thing I got out of that morning was what old Tommy Thomas said. As far as I believe, standing here this morning, the last thing he said, when he pointed that bony finger down, he was pointing to me, and he said, "Are you ready?" And I knew Bob Alexander was not ready. It was about three months after that, I gave my life to the Lord Jesus Christ, and the rest is history.

When I see the City Union Mission, I see old Mel Trotter. I do not just see the Brown Street Mission. I see where the Brown Street Mission started. I go all the way back to 1850 in Chicago, Illinois, with the Pacific Garden Mission down there in Chicago. And there for about 1840 to 1897, on up into the 40s, it was the place where they preached Christ, and their motto was "No creed but Christ and no love and love." Old Mel Trotter. Old Mel Trotter came to the place where he stumbled into that mission in 1897, drunk. He was an alcoholic. His wife was, he treated his wife and family terribly. In fact, just about six weeks before, he told the story that he was in such

a desolate condition that a little baby girl died, and he was out drunk someplace. He stumbled into the funeral home, and she was laying in that little casket with all the friends around. While they were over here, Mel Trotter stole the baby shoes off that baby's corpse and sold them so he could get another bottle of booze. That is Mel Trotter. That is Mel Trotter. That night in 1897, he stumbled into the Pacific Garden Mission, and he found Christ as his own personal Savior, and he lived and did not die until 1940. From that time to 1940, he started over a hundred missions in this country. Missions that were formed. I am telling you, the Brown Street Mission was formed because of him.

You look down at the City Union Mission, you just see a bunch of stuff over there, a bunch of old homeless people. Let me tell you something. Over in that wall where you come in, there is a picture. In that picture is a man named Morris Vandenberg. I first met Morris Vandenberg in 1977. I think he is dead now. Morris Vandenberg told me the story of how the City Union Mission got started. Billy Sunday had come to town, and it was a great revival in Kansas City. He had preached down there, and there was a woman, there was a woman that ran the biggest house of ill repute in Kansas City. She was the Madam of Madams. Somehow, some way, some form, she came to hear Billy Sunday preach that night, and she came to a saving knowledge of Jesus Christ. Mel Trotter always followed; Billy Sunday had Mel Trotter following up to disciple the people and minister to the people. It was through her conversion here in this town that overnight she turned that whorehouse into a mission and started with her girls, and it blossomed into what is now called the City Union Mission, all because of the saving grace of God through Calvary's resurrection on Calvary's cross. Old Mel Trotter came to town, and they built that mission. I remember going down to the camp down there, and Morris Vandenberg taking me into this place where we have all been to camp many times, and there in that one building with a big old mirror, with a big ornate oak frame around it, with a big old, looked like a bar, and he says, "That is the original mirror and bar out of that house of ill repute." Wow, what a story.

To most people, it is just a mission for homeless people. When you look back and you see the history of it, it goes back because it is a line and a link of great men who serve a great God who won people to Christ up one side and down the other. The elders and the aged, as far as I am concerned, they are the national treasure of any church. They are the people who know what it means to know God when God was doing something. They walk with God for 70, 80, 60, 40 years. They know what works and they know what does not. They help us remember what we all forget, and that is the cost that it takes to build a work for God. We walk into the City Union Mission, we see tables, chairs, people, food being passed. Nobody stops and thinks all the way back to the 20s, the price that was paid to start it.

You see, 30, 40, 50 years from now, if Jesus does not come, and this church goes on, we raise up a young man someplace here, maybe sitting here right now, that someday will be the pastor of this church. Who in that day will tell the young people that come on through our Sunday school classes the price that it paid to build this church? Oh, by then, we will probably be in a big building someplace, and it will be grand and it will be wonderful. But will they ever remember where it started? And the price and the sacrifice that moms and dads made.

I remember last fall when we were down in Joplin. I do not remember anything out of that night except this, and I will never forget this if I lived to be a thousand years old. We were sitting around that campfire, and everybody was giving their testimony. You have your standard goofball testimonies where people just get up and rattle on, and God bless them, but they just say stupid things that do not mean anything. You get one or two that really get up, and you can tell God has changed their life. Most of it is, he just rattles on about whatever. But there was this old boy, and he must have been 70 or 85 years old. He stepped forward up by that fire. This little retreat was being hosted by the Forest Park Baptist Church, which is a leading church in that city. He got up and he told the story how that in 1912, an evangelist had come to town, and he had scheduled three weeks of revival meetings. He began to preach in Joplin, Missouri. At the end of three weeks, the crowd said, "Keep on going." At the end of nine weeks, "Keep on going." For the next six months, that evangelist stayed and preached every night. When he was done, that church was formed by the men and women that had come to Christ during that great revival meeting in 1912 in Joplin, Missouri. That church stands down there today because of something God did in 1912. You know what? There are people who go to that church this Sunday. There are people who go to that church every time the doors open. They look around and they see how beautiful it is. They hear the great messages. They hear the great music. There is not one of them that even stops to consider what it costs for them to have that. That is what is missing in God's people's lives.

It starts with the cost of your salvation. We are here to give God our homage today. We will be back at Christmas. We flip God a quarter and say, "Here, thanks for saving me. See you at Christmas. See you next Easter." We have forgotten the price tag that was paid on Calvary's cross by the blood of His Son that you and I might have salvation. Then it goes through your family's lives. It goes through the church's lives. You look back and you see where you started and now where you are at and what God has done. In 50 years from now, you look back and you see the hand of God and the grace of God. It is the men and women today that can look back and see the hand of God, the legacy of God. We leave our children in our wills, our money, our cars, our houses, and all of our earthly possessions. But do we ever leave them a legacy of what God has done in our lives? It is no wonder Proverbs chapter 17, verse 6 says:

Proverbs 17:6

Children's children are the crown of old men; and the glory of children are their fathers.

Why? Because of what they leave them. There is somebody in a spiritual sense that is not just children of a father spiritually, but children, children, children, down the generation line, talking about remembering what somebody did, how somebody won mom and dad to Christ and how I got saved. How somebody did this or somebody in the church did that or gave this, and we did not have nothing. Look what we have got now, and they do not forget where they have come from. But I am going to tell you, it starts in your life and my life personally of understanding the price that was paid on Calvary's cross, and how, in dear God's name, how are we ever, ever going to ever look to our families, ever look to the future, ever look to our churches to see what God is doing when we cannot even look in our own lives and look back and have an everyday appreciation and a walk with God in the relationship with God because of the price tag that was

paid on Calvary's cross? I am talking about the day that the heavens were black. I am talking about the day when His Son says, "My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?" And God turned His back on His Son for you and for me. Understanding that legacy that God has left me, me passing it on to my children, to my family, to the people that God has given me to pastor as a job, as a pastor, the oversight, helping you never forget where it all started, where it is all going, and where we are at.

It is easy to get the scurries in life because from the world's standpoint, life looks complicated, but life is no more complicated than Christianity. You know what it is? Life choices. When you make a choice, you trade something for that choice. It is as simple as that. At the end of your life, you will look back, and you will have made a lot of good choices or a lot of bad choices. Yes, you will bear the responsibility in both cases. But the bottom line is, when you get to that point and you say, "Why do I not have this? Why is my family gone? Why have I lost my kids? Why have I lost my wife? Why have I lost my job? Why have I lost this? Why have I lost that? Why do I not have any better relationship with God than I have? What is wrong?" The answer is simple. It is not complicated. You do not have to go see a shrink and pay \$200 an hour to do it. I will tell you, life is choices. You chose, and you traded. It is as simple as that. The Bible tells you how to make good choices, how to make smart trades, how to make good investments. That is my job. I would love for no other reason than to take men and women, moms and dads, young couples, singles, whoever, and show you how to take the right choices from the Word of God. That is what I want to train you to do. Showing people from that open Bible how to make the right things, the right choices, how to listen to the people who know more about it than you and I know about it. To leave a legacy within this church, within your family, that they do not know if you just get your car.

X. The Ultimate Perspective: Soul Over Circumstance

We will just close with this, and I am done. Last couple of weeks, this country has just been upside down with this Terry Schiavo thing. I feel terrible for her parents. I really do. I have seen every kind of Christian on every kind of radio program, television program. I have seen little boys and girls put handcuffs on, putting in car cruisers by the police because they tried to cross the line to give her some water. I have seen a woman from Missouri get arrested because she tried to break the line to take a bottle of water into her. By Fox News, NBC, ABC, everybody in the world. Every Christian, every conservative Christian, everybody in the world is carrying the banners for Terry, not to pull the plug, to put it back in, to save her life. "Do not let her die," and so on. You know what? For me, it is a non-issue. If you know the Bible and you have a book, you can go to four places in that Bible, and there is no debate. You know exactly what the Bible says on that kind of stuff. That is not the issue for me.

I looked at this thing, and I stepped back, and I scratched my head. I watched Christian pastors from Christian people, from this to that, some of the greatest names in Christianity, standing up for defense to save her life. I have not heard one of them. I have not heard a one of them. I have not heard a one of them even expressed concern on where her soul is going when she dies. My dear friend, that is where we are at today. What good is getting a bottle of water to her if she does

not know Christ as her own personal Savior and she dies and spends an eternity in hell? But that is where we are at today. We have lost our perspective. We are upside down.

Someday, your family is going to go through some situation, some circumstance. Your daughter, your son are going to go through some tragedy. Your wife, somebody in your family, something is going to go down bad. You know what? I cannot get past this. Everybody in this world thinks that everything bad cannot be of God. Did they just rip the book of Job out of the Bible? I do not understand it. When something bad comes, nobody is running to the Bible. I have not heard one guy say, "Well, the Bible says," and lay it out book, chapter, and verse. It is what this secular world wants to do. It puts all the emphasis on human life, which I am all for. But do not give her water without giving her the living water. Do not bust the line to get arrested for giving her a bottle of drinking water, which she cannot even have, when nobody is concerned about the fact that no one has even brought it up about the fact that what happens if she slips out into eternity without Christ? I do not know if she is saved or not. I am just telling you, we have lost our perspective. That is what the aged and the elders do. That is why we have to train men and women. I will take them in wherever they come, wherever they are at, and we start building from there.

Let us pray. Father.