

## I. Introduction to the Seven Things That Changed

We have talked about the seven mysteries, we talked about the seven baptisms, and some of those seven series are obviously dealing with practical things. Paul talks about the seven things that God's people are not to be ignorant of. I do not think we went through that yet. What we have been looking at was the seven things that changed in you the day you got saved.

The number seven in your Bible is the number of perfection. When God does everything, He does it by sevens. If you would come through the Old Testament, just the Old Testament by itself, you will find in Genesis 2 that God told you there was something special about the seventh day. The Bible says that He set that day apart from the other six. He sanctified it, which means set apart. He made it holy.

After He said that in Genesis 2, over 800-900 times through the rest of the Old Testament, He shows you how He uses the number seven for different things. There are a lot of things in the Bible you do not know for sure. Much of the Bible you have to look at, and much of it you do know for sure, but without a doubt, the one thing that you absolutely know is that when God does something, He does it by sevens. We see it all the way through.

It is no wonder that if you and I want to learn the Bible, we have got to follow that same perfect pattern. That pattern is not taught in theological classes. It is not taught in Bible college. It is not taught in seminaries, but it ought to be taught in local churches because that is God's plan for teaching you how to be whatever God has called you to be.

Next week, we will be back in that seven series. I am not sure which one we are going to do, but we are going to be back in that. We finish it up today. Today, as I said, we are going to finish our study on the seven things that changed inwardly the day you got saved. These things in time change you outwardly.

Remember, I talked about the fact that when a man or a woman gets saved, their purpose changes, their passion changes, their perspective changes, and of course, their patience changes. All of these things are the spiritual things that outwardly change once you understand what changes about you the day you got saved.

Just real quick to review, remember we talked about the fact that 2 Corinthians 5:17 is where we started. We talked about the fact that you now are a new creature in Christ Jesus.

*2 Corinthians 5:17*

*Therefore if any man be in Christ, he is a new creature: old things are passed away; behold, all things are become new.*

We talked about how that now that you are saved, you really do not have an excuse anymore for not being what God wanted you to be. We talked about the fact that the day you got saved, all things become new. We cannot look back and blame what we are or what we become because of

our upbringing, because of whatever bad things or terrible things or tragedies that happened to us in life. We now understand that though that obviously had an impact on your life and obviously persuaded you in the way you went in life, the moment you trust Christ, those things are gone.

You now have the ability to be everything that God wants you to be, but just like everything in life, life is about choices. Now you have to choose to be that new creature in Christ Jesus, or at least apply those things that you are a new creature, but apply those things that God has given you.

Then we looked at the second thing in Matthew 22:37, where it says, "Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all your heart, with all your mind and all of your soul."

*Matthew 22:37*

*Jesus said unto him, Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind.*

We looked at the fact that the day you got saved, you now have the ability to love God, and God now has the ability to love you. We talked about that great principle about how we think that God hates the sin but loves the sinner, and how that is not true. The Bible teaches that God loves people through His Son and through the blood of His Son. We went through that.

Then we talked about the fact that in Ephesians 2:18-19, your citizenship changed. We focused on the aspect that now that you are saved, you are in this world, but you are no longer of this world. We laid that concept out.

Then we talked about Philippians 3:20, which laid out the fact that now your conversation has changed. It is up in heaven.

*Philippians 3:20*

*For our conversation is in heaven; from whence also we look for the Saviour, the Lord Jesus Christ:*

We laid out how that conversation means lifestyle and took that principle as a man thinks in his heart, so is he. We are what we do and all of that. We looked at that one.

Then we got into a deep one, Ephesians 2:6, which talked about being seated in Christ Jesus.

*Ephesians 2:6*

*And hath raised us up together, and made us sit together in heavenly places in Christ Jesus:*

We laid out some great spiritual truths that should have defined some things for you in the process of your growth now about how you as a Christian and I as a Christian are seated in heavenly places and what the ramifications of that are.

Then last week, we got into Colossians 3:1-2, and we talked about your affections. We talked about setting your affections on things above and not on the things of this world.

*Colossians 3:1-2*

*If ye then be risen with Christ, seek those things which are above, where Christ sitteth on the right hand of God. Set your affection on things above, not on things on the earth.*

We laid that one all out. Now today, we come back full circle. We go back to the chapter where we started, 2 Corinthians 5. Our first time we studied it was in verse 17, but now we are going to drop down just a couple more verses to verse 20. We are going to see how this thing comes full circle in your life about the seven spiritual things that changed about you the day you got saved.

## II. Prayer

Father, we thank and praise You for the Lord Jesus. We love You. Thank You, Lord, for all the things that You do for us. Thank You for all the things that You have given us. We pray now, Father, that You will bless us today as we come to Your word. We love You. We thank You, Father, for everything that You have done for us and all that You have given us.

Thank You for the good people here. We thank You for their desire to learn Your word. We thank You for their unselfish acts, Lord, of taking care of people and helping people and rallying to people's needs. We thank You, Father, for the spiritual growth that we see in their lives, that how they begin to understand the great concepts of serving God. Lord, I thank You for them, every one of them, Lord.

We thank You for all the new people You continue to bring in, Lord, and truly, they are the people that we really want in this church, that really want to have a desire to learn and to love You. We just thank You for all that You have done for us, Lord. We could stand here all morning and we could talk about how good You are, and we would never scratch the surface of the goodness of God in our lives.

But Lord, as we go to Your word today, let us be mindful of how good You are to us. May we open up our hearts and look at these great truths and apply them to our lives. May we think about them throughout the day, throughout the next week. Lord, in everything that we do, endeavor to do, may the word of God be the foundation and the baseline for what we have in our lives. We will thank You and praise You in Jesus' name, for His sake we ask it. Amen.

## III. The Job of an Ambassador

Today we are going to be, as I said, in 2 Corinthians 5:20, and we are going to put it all together. Here is what it says:

*2 Corinthians 5:20*

*Now then we are ambassadors for Christ, as though God did beseech you by us, we pray you in Christ's stead, be ye reconciled to God.*

Today I want to talk to you about the job that God has called us to do, and I want to define that and put it into some parameters for you so that you have a better understanding. The job that God has called you and I to do is to be an ambassador.

I hope you have been putting these in your Bible as we have come through. I hope you have been studying them and learning them and applying them to your life with all else that you have going on. But I want you to see today how, if you have not seen this already, how each one of these match up in a different way.

First of all, we have 2 Corinthians 5:17, which says that we are a new creature in Christ Jesus the day we get saved. That one stands alone.

Then the next thing I want you to see is two of these that fit together. When it comes to the Bible, you need to understand that the Bible breaks down two ways: the Bible breaks down in a physical way and a spiritual way. Your Bible by itself follows that breakdown. You have a physical part of your Bible, which is the Old Testament. You have a spiritual part of your Bible, which is the New Testament.

Everything in the Old Testament is physical. They are a physical nation. They fight physical battles. They use physical swords, bows and arrows, slingshots. They have a physical enemy, which is another physical country. The whole concept is built around one physical place over there called Jerusalem.

In the New Testament, the Bible says in Ephesians 6 that our warfare, we do not wrestle against flesh and blood. Our warfare, our battle, our concept is spiritual, not physical. We do not fight other nations like we did in the Old Testament. Our battles are all spiritual battles, and our warfare is a spiritual warfare.

You take that one basic concept, and it breaks down to everything in your life. Your life is about two things: it is about the physical side of it and the spiritual side of it. We called it "standing in state" a couple of weeks ago when we talked about it. We talked about how what you do for God is totally dependent on what you become for God. What you do for God is physical, but what you become for God is spiritual.

When a man or a woman, it is just as simple. The Christian life is just as simple. When you begin as a man or a woman to take the principles of God and put them into your life, let those principles begin to dictate how you think, what you do, where you go, who you go with, and all of those areas. It produces the physical side of it, which makes sure you do what God wants you to do.

That is a very key point because once you see the Bible says that we are new creatures in Christ Jesus, and you begin to look at these other six, they match up.

1. We have Matthew 22:37 that says we are to love God with all of our heart, with all of our mind, and all of our soul. You see, that is spiritual. Now the counter side of that will be physical. Colossians 3:1-2 says, "Set your affections on things above." I told you that time

that when you love God with all your heart, mind, and soul, that is inward. But the outward manifestation of your inward love is your affection for God. One is spiritual, one is physical.

2. The next one is in Ephesians 2:6 and Philippians 3:20. Ephesians 2:6 says that you are seated in heavenly places. You see, that is spiritual. But your conversation, that is physical. In other words, what you say and the lifestyle you live on this earth physically is dependent on your understanding where you are seated in heavenly places.
3. Then the last two, Ephesians 2:18, where we are at today, and 2 Corinthians 5:20. Ephesians 2:18 talks about your citizenship. You see, that is spiritual. Then today we are going to talk about you being an ambassador. That is your physical. That is the job that God has called you to do. Because you take yourselves and I take myself and build myself inwardly spiritually, then God has the ability to take me outwardly and do what God wants to do in my life. We are going to talk about that today. You are going to see that great principle in each case that one is spiritual, one is physical.

The last one brings us right back to where we started in the book of Ephesians. Now we are going to end on what our job is. We talked about basically in John 14:12 that our job is to finish what Christ has started.

*John 14:12*

*Verily, verily, I say unto you, He that believeth on me, the works that I do shall he do also; and greater works than these shall he do; because I go unto my Father.*

We know that He was on this earth for 33 years. During that period of time, He gave us everything that we needed to see and understand how we should conduct ourselves. He went back to heaven. He told His disciples that greater things will you do than I have done. That does not mean that you and I are going to be greater than Christ. But what it does mean is that He limited His time on earth to 33 years. He really limited His time on earth to a public ministry of three years. In that three years, He never went outside of Jerusalem. He never probably went more than a 30-mile circumference all of His life. He never impacted China. He never impacted Thailand. He never impacted the American Indians in North America or the tribes in Africa or the Aborigines in Australia. He never impacted them. His ministry was very localized. Truthfully, His life was 33 years, but His ministry was only three years. At the end of that three years, He died and went back to heaven.

You know what He said? He said to you and me, "Greater things will you do than I would do," because He expected you and I to pick up where He left off. There is a whole story, theologically through the Bible, of that, which we do not have time to get into this morning. But He has called you and I to finish what He has started.

When it comes to 2 Corinthians 5:20, there are three things I want you to see in this verse.

4. First of all, the Bible says that we are to be an ambassador. We are going to talk about that in a moment.

5. The second thing, He says, "We beseech you." That lines up with Romans 12:1-2, where it says, "I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that ye present your bodies a living sacrifice." So in this verse here that we are looking at today, He is beseeching us.
6. Then I want you to see the third thing He says, "in Christ's stead." You know what He is saying? Let me break it down for you. He is beseeching you and I to be an ambassador in Christ's stead. You know what "in Christ's stead" means? It means instead of Christ. This verse says it all, exactly what our job is.

I know that, and I know this is true, and I know most of you know this is true. I know that everybody in here, God has a different job for them. We are going to talk about some of that a little bit later on, but overall, our job is the same, and that is to be an ambassador. That is what we are going to focus on today.

## IV. God's Will Versus God's Plan

I think it is discipleship lesson number six, I believe. Do not hold me to that. I think that is what it is. But in discipleship lesson number six, we deal with a very misunderstood area in Christianity today. The discipleship lessons are 10 lessons that really help you begin to understand how the basics of the Bible work so that you can really build upon that. If you are here this morning and you want to be discipled by somebody, all you have to do is come and see me. If you are a lady, I will put one of our ladies with you. If you are a guy, I will put one of our guys with you. If you have somebody that you know you would like to disciple you that was qualified to do it, I do not care. But what I want to do for you is the discipleship is designed to help you get the basics down in your life.

Around here, we do a lot of things in the Bible. We talk about a lot of things that are deep in the Bible. Though I am never not aware of my audience and always try to break it down so everybody can grasp the concepts, let us face it, there will be some things that you just maybe will not get. That is why I have Thursday night the way that I do, so that you can swing around and ask the question. But it is very important to me that I bring you through in a stage progression of your spiritual growth. I look at discipleship as stage one.

In lesson six, we talk about a great concept. That great concept is the difference between God's plan and God's will. Let me define it for you very quickly here and kind of bring you up to speed. I do not know how many times I have heard even a preacher say this, but many times you will hear, I have heard missionaries say it. I hear young Christians say it. Immediately it always puts a red flag up because, and I know my wife and I were talking this morning how we use words sometimes and really do not think about the way we use them, but we just use them in a sense of using them. You do not want to be too critical of that. So I am not being critical, but I am just saying behind everything we say, there ought to be a doctrinal purpose.

Let me just say this, if there is any vocation we have, if there is any vocation that we have that you would need to be exact in what you say, it is in the ministry. If you go to a doctor and you have a broken foot, and he looks at it and he calls the wrong bone broken than the other bone, it is not really a big deal. A bone is broken, you know it, whether it is your fibula or your tibia is

really not, I do not even know if they are in your foot, but I love that kind of talk. Anyway, it does not make any difference. You have got a broken foot, you cannot walk on it. But in the ministry, you can say something wrong, you can send somebody to hell. So you have got to be somewhat exact in all what you are saying.

I hear people get up all the time, and I heard a guy say one time, "Oh no, God's will for my life when I was a little child was to be a missionary." I heard a guy say one time, "God's will for my life is so clear to me. God has called me to do this," or "God called me to do that." Now I understand there has to be a little latitude in what people say, but they can get confusing sometimes.

Let me say this to you. God's will, now we have a hundred people here today, God's will in your life is the same for everybody in this room. Now God's plan for your life will be different than everybody in this room. But because we do not understand the difference between God's will and God's plan, many times we get ourselves into a bad situation where it affects us in our spiritual growth.

God's will for your life and God's will for my life are one and the same. That will is that you and I become more like Jesus Christ every day. You see, that is inward. That is God's will for my life. God's will for my life and God's will for your life is one and the same. God's will for you is once you get saved, God wants you every day of your life to become more like Jesus Christ. In that, it is the same.

Now God's plan for your life is something different. Some of you have abilities that others do not have. Some of you can do things or you have a way about you that God is going to use you, somebody else. We all have strengths and weaknesses. A church is a lot like a husband and wife relationship in marriage. A husband has strengths and weaknesses, a wife has strengths and weaknesses. The deal is to get together under the banner of Christ through the word of God and let God use you as a team and let the strengths and the weaknesses bear everybody out. That is what it is supposed to be.

A church is the same way, and I do not ever want to be the only leader in this church. My goal is to take you through a staged process, and there will be some of you that move down the line. You have been around a while and you know, and so then you fine-tune you. Others will come up behind that, and in your time and your day, you will get fine-tuned, and you are always trying to raise up men and women, if you are of the right kind of church, that grow to the place that they can really, really, really become productive. We do not need one pastor here. We need a hundred pastors here. We need a hundred people that can do everything I can do and do it better in many ways.

I have weaknesses. I have shortcomings. There are things, and I have told you this before, I do not pretend to have all the answers to everything, and I certainly do not pretend to be a perfect pastor or a perfect person. I have strengths and I have weaknesses, and when I have something that I recognize as my weakness, if it is your strength, you are going to get to do it for me. It is as simple as that. I am not a brain-dead man. I know how to use the things that God has given you around you.

So God's will for your life basically is internal. You become more like Christ in everything you do every day. God's plan for your life is whatever God has called you to do outwardly will only be realized as you build what God wants you to build inwardly. You cannot have one without the other. So when I hear somebody talking about God's will for their life and then they explain God's plan for their life, I am a little worried because I am thinking that maybe they do not understand the difference, and that is a crucial teaching in the Bible.

I will tell you where that leads. It leads all the time to the fact that you will put the emphasis on what you do for God instead of putting the emphasis on what you are for God. It is not about what you do for God. It is about what you are for God. We have got enough Christians that do things for God but do not everbeanything for God. I do not want this church to be a workforGod. I want this church to be a work that isofGod. That is the difference. I do not want you just to do something without being something first because that is a disaster.

Most churches do not even care about that. Most churches, the pastor has got so much going on, and all he wants to do with his own private agenda is he wants to grab you, put you to work someplace, and he does not care whether you do it or not out of understanding or just good old-fashioned obligation. He does not care as long as you will do it. He does not want to take the time to build you internally first before he gets you to do something externally, and that will not work. That ends in disaster.

## V. The Misconception of Spiritual Gifts

Adding to that mess of not understanding God's will and God's plan, and remember when we came through the book of Exodus this last time, I showed you that. Remember, I showed you the first 18 chapters all deal with what is inwardly, and then the last of the book all deal with outwardly. That is taught throughout the Bible.

Now on top of that mess, adding to the mess, which will even confuse the mess even more, is the misconception of spiritual gifts. I do not know of anything in this Christian world that people are more screwed up on than the concept of spiritual gifts. I just do not. I get it in the mail all the time. I hear Christians talk about it all the time, and I feel sorry for them all the time, but what are you going to do?

You hear the old teachings that, "Well, you know, you have a main spiritual gift, and then maybe you will have secondary gifts, but you are to find out what your main spiritual gift is." Now preachers like that because they will tell you that your main gift is giving. That is not a gift, but that is not true. I see all these guys make literally millions and millions and millions of dollars a year going around the churches putting on spiritual gift seminars that graph out and chart out your spiritual gift flow ratio. They pass these little tests, and maybe some of you have taken them, I do not know. They give a little test, and you answer these questions, and then at the end, you tally it up or add it up or whatever you do with it, and it tells you basically what your tending spiritual gifts are.

I have seen them do the same thing with personalities. I have seen them give names to different types of personalities, and then you take the test, and it tells you what kind of a manic depression

you really are. It shows you what your personality is like and all that stuff. Everything about it is nothing more than humanistic Freudian psychology with a little Bible verses dabbed in, and it confuses God's people.

Now I am not going to get into it the way I would like to today because it is not my message, but it would be a great Thursday night question sometime if you want to ask it. But I want to talk to you about spiritual gifts in relationship to where we are going about being an ambassador. You have got to know this.

Here is the first mistake they make: spiritual gifts fall into three categories, and if you do not see these categories, you are not going anywhere.

7. First of all, you had some spiritual gifts that were only given to the apostles. That would be tongues, healing, and all of the sign gifts. Not everybody got those; only the apostles got those.
8. Then you had some gifts that were given to the church, but they are offices: pastors, deacons. They are offices. They are gifts, spiritual gifts that are given to the church, but they are within a confined office held in the church.
9. Then you have your third section of spiritual gifts that have to do with the things that God gives you to do the job that God has called you to do as far as God's plan for your life.

In understanding spiritual gifts, not only do you have to understand the three types of spiritual gifts, but you have to understand that there are two formats of spiritual gifts. Galatians 5 talks about the fruit of the Spirit. 1 Corinthians 12 talks about the gifts of the Spirit. Here it comes: one is spiritual, one is physical. One is inward, one is outward. One deals with character, that is the inward, that is spiritual. And one deals with power, that is the physical, that is the outward.

## VI. The Absolute Principle: Character Before Power

Let me just say this: you cannot have the power of God in your life until you first have the character of God in your life. That is very important. In fact, I do not always tell you this, and some of you will get to the level as you grow up that I will lift you out and say, "Hey, you know what? You really have the expertise to be somebody to really work on a counseling level in people's lives. You have got all of the things that you need to have." At some point, I will bring you through and I will lay out for you what I call the absolute principle truth of the word of God.

Let me explain that. Everything in the Bible is true, but there are some things in the Bible, even though it is truth, there are exceptions to it. I will give you an example. Hebrews 9:27 says this:

*Hebrews 9:27*

*And as it is appointed unto men once to die, but after this the judgment:*

Now that is a truth, absolute truth, but there is an exception to it. What is the exception? Who can tell me? Raise your hand. Who can tell me? Okay, open your Bible. It is basic Bible 101. Go all the way back to the beginning. The Bible says in... Enoch. Okay, that is good, but that is absolutely true. That is not what I am looking for, but that is good. I did not think of that. The

only reason I am not accepting it is because I did not think of it first. That is good. You are right, he is an exception to that. What is the other exception? That is right, the rapture.

It is an absolute truth: it is appointed unto man once to die, and after this the judgment. Absolute truth, but you see there is an exception to that truth. That exception is if you are sitting here this morning and you do not die of a heart attack in the next 20 years, or you do not get killed, shot by somebody, or whatever, you are probably not going to see death. There is an exception to that truth. That is what I am talking about.

But there are some truths in the Bible there is no exception to. There is absolutely some truth in the Bible that there is absolutely no exception to. When you see it, it tells you what you are dealing with, bar none. This is very important in counseling, very important in counseling because in time I will give you the... I have probably 30 of them that I use all day long, and I add to them as God shows me. I am sure it is exhausting. The more you learn about life and the more you learn about the Bible, the more you are going to learn that there are absolute truths in life.

I do not worry about the personality charts or the spiritual gift flows. Let me tell you something, there is absolute truth in the Bible that in any given situation as a counselor or as a Christian you find yourself in, you do not have to wonder not only what you have got to do but what you are dealing with.

Now I will give you an example. I am a baby boomer. Let me... and I know some of you do not know what that means. It means in the simplest form, it means that in August, I believe it was August 8, 1945, the Americans dropped the atom bomb, and it went boom. Then all their soldiers came home from the war and had been gone from their wives and their families for five or six years, and then the population went boom. I am a product of World War II after the fact. When all these soldiers came home, the population just exploded because they had been away from their wives and they had not had any children, and many people had been killed and displaced and all of that until after World War II, the population just exploded, and it is called the baby boom.

Every generation has its stuff. When I was growing up, we did not play baseball. There was no football on television. I think they played football back then, but it was very rare that it was on TV. I am talking about when I was not when I was a teenager, I am talking about when I was a kid, eight or nine, ten years old. There was not the baseball was the big deal. Soccer was unheard of, unheard of. Growing up in my area, everything was about World War II. There was not a kid on a block whose dad, whose big brother, or an uncle was not in World War II. We are all moved by things like that, and it kind of shapes our will and our destiny in life.

So when I grew up, nine, ten, eleven, twelve, we did not grow up playing ball. We did not grow up playing basketball. We grew up playing army. That was the deal. We had real stuff. It was none of this, "Put a red barrel on it so you know it is not a real gun." Oh no, no, no, no. It was not one of these plastic helmets that you put on, you know, you look like you have been attacked by a turtle. It does not even fit. No, no, no. In our basements, we had real helmets, real packs, real canteens, real cartridge belts. I mean, we had all the real stuff, and we would divide up into

groups and we would play army. We did not play cowboys and Indians, which was popular after Custer, but in my day and age, no, no, it was playing army.

I remember this guy who lived down the end of the block, and my mom and dad got me a machine gun for Christmas. I mean, a big model of a big 50 caliber machine gun. It was on a tripod and everything. That sucker, you put batteries in it, and it sounded like a real machine gun. Now this guy was in World War II, and his favorite thing on a Saturday afternoon was to get all the kids to come up, and he would get on his back porch with that machine gun, sit down there, and he would put us out about 50 yards, and he would make us run toward him and fire that machine gun, and we would have to die in the most grotesque, spinning around way, and he would just laugh, and that was the best. He was reliving what he did in World War II.

I remember to this day, and I will tell you, I can always die the best. You see it in the movies, the way they die is everything. Some guy is running, you shoot him, he spins around, and he is shooting into the ground as he goes down. That is kind of, and we can all die, and he loved it. That really, because I grew up in that era, I really liked history, and military history has always been my deal. Then I get into the Bible, and I get into all history.

I said all that to say this: because I was growing up, when I started to study the history of armies and the history of war and the history of all that stuff, two of my best friends were lieutenant colonels that taught military history up at Leavenworth. We got together on a regular basis, and when I was a younger cat, I started collecting World War II stuff, and I was just fascinated by it. I was fascinated because not so much the stuff, but just what it represented. Truly that generation was our greatest generation, and I would hear these guys tell stories, and it would move me. It would move me. I mean, to this day, I have got pictures, and maybe they are not up, they do not have the room for, but I have got pictures of some of the greatest military heroes. I have got a picture of Audie Murphy with his collar tab and his patch with the 3rd Infantry Division signed by him.

I have got a picture of George Gay. Most people do not even know who George Gay was. George Gay was the only survivor of Torpedo Squadron Number Eight in the Battle of Midway. When they attacked the Japanese fleet, the torpedo planes were very fat, very slow, and very ugly, and non-defensive. They needed a fighter cover to defend them, and they found the Jap fleet, but they had no fighter cover because they got lost in the clouds. You know what they decided to do? They decided to attack anyway. Not one, not one devastator got a torpedo into those planes. They all got killed, all got wiped out except George Gay. George Gay was in the water for two days before they fished him out. In 1942, in Life Magazine, there is a picture of George Gay standing there pointing at the Battle of Midway. You know what? I had a guy that painted artwork. He painted George Gay for me.

That was that kind of, I think in a lot of ways, that shaped and formed my mental attitude about the ministry because here is a guy who the odds were absolutely against him. He was the last plane. In other words, he watched 22 devastators go down in the drink before he decided to make his torpedo run. He was the last guy left. He was flying the plane. He could have just as easily said, "No way, Jose," and headed back and said, "You know what? I had engine trouble," or "I

came back to report." The character of George Gay is the character that I want to have in my life. He bore down on the target by himself, got shot out of the sky, his tail gunner got killed. He laid in the water for two days before they picked him out, and he was the only survivor. But it is that kind of courage and character that made those guys great.

Audie Murphy was another one. Audie Murphy was some little guy that when he had to lie about his age, the paratroopers turned him down, the Marines turned him down, and finally got it in the Army. He was five foot nothing, he weighed a hundred and nothing, and he looks, if you see his picture, he looks like he is about 15 or 16 years old. They put him in the infantry. He found his way over into Germany, and he rose up through the ranks to sergeant, and then finally to lieutenant. Finally, on one day in 1944, out there in France someplace, they had a supporter, his company supported by a tank, and they got bushwhacked, and artillery started coming in, and on the front coming across, there were I do not know how many Panzer tanks with 300, 400 infantry. He sent his men back. You know what he did? He got on the field phone, stayed on that thing, got up on that tank, and called in artillery on top of that. The Germans saw where he was. They began to attack him, and he stood on there with one hand on the phone and one hand on the machine gun, mowing them down as they came in. It was the most unbelievable thing. If you ever saw the movie, it is on sometimes, it is called "To Hell and Back." He wrote a book called "To Hell and Back," and of course, he got the Congressional Medal of Honor for it, one of the greatest decorated soldiers in World War II. But incredible guy, incredible guy. He got killed in an airplane crash. In fact, on our honeymoon, we went to Washington D.C. We went down right off from the Unknown Soldier's, Audie Murphy's grave. I have got a picture of it. I wanted, he, it meant so much to me, that kind of courage.

All that kind of courage, and it is guys like that that really shaped my concept about life. So when I got growing up, I started collecting this stuff, and I got a pretty good collection going. Most of it I got from guys who brought it back, did not want. I will never forget the first German helmet I ever got. I was over the guy's house back in Ohio, and over the guy's house, and I was a senior in high school, and he took me down the stairs. We were doing something down there, a bunch of us guys, and there on the wall was all the stuff that he bought back from World War II. Oh man, I was in hog heaven. Everybody else was over here. I am just looking at that stuff, asking him all about it. Out of the clear blue sky, he had like three German helmets. He had a bunch of bayonets. He had a Mauser. He had all kinds of stuff. Out of the clear blue sky, I do not know what, he looked at me and he said, "Would you like one of those helmets?" I could not believe he said that to me. I said, "Hey, I am the guy." Remember when "Combat!" was on? Remember that? Rick Jason? Remember "Gallant Men"? I am a little guy that used to write Rick Jason fan mail and say, "Would you send me one of your helmets?" Never heard a thing from it. I do not watch it anymore.

Anyway, I remember holding that helmet in my hand, and I looked inside it. It was named to a guy, Semirag was his name, if I remember right. I remember looking at it and holding it and thinking, "This was really in a war." I will never forget. Then somebody gave me an American test, a Japanese helmet, all this stuff. As I grew and I got collected, I got to learn a bit about it, and there was one helmet, this is four or five years later, one helmet I did not have, and I really

wanted this helmet. It was really rare. There were not that many made of them to begin with, and once you get into World War II artifacts, you realize it is a whole, it is like antiques, it is a whole world unto itself. There are all kinds of people that collect it. They have whole military shows where you go, and there are 500 tables of junk from World War II.

I will tell you what, I looked for this helmet, looked for this helmet, looked for this helmet, and finally I found a guy who said he had one. Now it was not cheap. He wanted \$1,500 for it, and I am thinking to myself, "Wow, that is more money." But I saved my money. I sold stuff, and I finally got my money to get it. I will never forget, I met this guy at a gun show or a military show. We had been corresponding on the phone and through the mail, and I had my \$1,500. I looked at that helmet. Oh, it was everything that I wanted, and I gave him that \$1,500, and I held that helmet, and I could not wait to show my buddies.

Now I knew about collecting helmets, and I had known that in World War II stuff, like anything else, once there is a buck to be made, people start to fake it. I knew that, but I wanted this helmet so bad. So I had this helmet, and I will never forget this, I wake up in nights in cold sweats, this dream sometimes. I remember running over to my best friend who was a collector and saying, "Hey Bill, look what I just got." The moment he picked it up, I saw in his face that it was not real. You know what? I got a little upset. I wanted this helmet to be real. I wanted it to be real. I needed this helmet. I wanted it to be real. "How dare you tell me it is not real?"

He looked at it, turned it over, and he said, "Bob," he says, "who did you get this from?" I told him. He said, "Bob, take it back and get your money back." I said, "Bill, you know how long I waited?" He said, "Bob, I do not care how long you waited for it, it is not any good." I said, "What do you mean?" He said, "Look, you know this German's dated everything. Chin straps on the helmets are dated. Liner bands are dated. In the top of the helmet, there is a dome stamp, it is dated. They dated every day." He pulled it back, and he says, "Now you know this helmet was made from 1935 to 1939, right?" I said, "Right, yeah, yeah, that is what it is." He pulled the liner band back and said, "Liner band dated 1945."

Now you know what I am thinking? I want to believe this helmet is so real. I am justifying my mind, "Well, you know what? The helmet probably got damaged, and they put another liner in it, and you know what? He did not like the liner he had, and this one was more comfortable because all you have to do is pop two rivets out and put the liner in." Now it did not matter that the helmet was in pristine condition, and it obviously you do not wear a liner well, wear out a helmet. I had lost my perspective reality. You know why? Because I wanted that helmet to be real. He showed me about five or six, seven, eight points that showed me that that helmet was bad, that if this is a real thing, these things are not here. This is what should be here.

I remember as I took it around, you know what I thought when I left him? I thought, "You know what? Now up to this point, he was the king of military stuff in my mind. Now that I found out, now that I do not want to deal with reality, I have got a bad helmet, you know what I do? He does not know anything anymore." So I am going to go to somebody. I was looking for somebody to tell me that helmet is good. I took it to five guys. They all said the same thing. Then when I finally came to the place that I tried to find the guy, I could not find him that I bought it

from. I called him, did not answer his phone. Wrote him, no answer. Because I wanted that helmet to be real, I ignored what I knew. There were eight or nine or ten absolute principles about collecting this particular style of helmet that if it is not there, it is not real, no matter how I wanted to believe it, no matter how I got angry with the guy that was telling me. I wanted to believe it because I needed this helmet. I waited for this helmet all my life. I wound up getting burned for \$1,500.

Now that was one of the greatest lessons I ever learned, and I had at that time in my mind, that was probably 10 years before I ever got into the ministry. But that was one of the greatest principles I ever learned because I never forgot that illustration. Once I got into the ministry, I found out that there were principles in the word of God about people. When you deal with people, and the ministry is dealing with people, because people will portray to you sometimes one thing when in actuality it is something else, and you can get saved easily in that if you do not have the absolute things that says this is a real Christian. If you do not have the absolute principles that shows you what the genuine article is, they fake Christianity just like they fake helmets.

I found people who wanted to believe so desperately that this was the right way to go when actually it was wrong all the time, and they ignored what they knew, and they got mad at the bad guy who was the expert that says, "It is fake, it is fake, it is fake." There are absolute principles in the word of God that tell you you cannot fake true spirituality. You cannot. You cannot fake true spirituality. You cannot say, "I am enjoying my relationship with God. I am really doing good. I love God. I am doing this. I am doing that." I do not care who you are, you cannot say that and not have the consistency of what a real bonafide Spirit-filled ambassador of Christ you are supposed to have. You cannot.

You can believe it is a genuine article all you want. My whole life and my whole ministry has been dealing with parents who want to believe that their child is so perfect that when you try to tell them the obvious signs that they are not perfect, they simply will not believe you. Somebody says, "Well, Bob, in the ministry, what do you do with people like that?" I ask them if they want to buy a helmet. There is nothing you can do.

But for you who are growing, for you who will become what God wants you to be, for you who down the line your life will be mixed in with men and women of all walks of life with all different backgrounds, and you are faced with decision-making process in your life with their life in the aspect of ministry, in time you must not learn these things, you must operate by these things, or you are going to buy the fake helmet. It is as simple as that.

You cannot have the power of God until you have the character of God. Somebody that says they do without the character is the wrong deal. It is absolute. It does not, there is no exception to it. There is no variance to it. You cannot have the power of God in your life without having the character of God. The gifts of the Spirit are dependent on the fruit of the Spirit. One is physical, one is spiritual. God has called you and I. One deals with character, that is spiritually inside. The other deals with power, that is the physical on the outside.

You get somebody that tells you they are living for God and they are doing God's business and all this stuff, and you do not see the character of God in their life, do not even think about buying it. I learned more from that one experience in my life that at the time I had no idea that God was going to call me into the ministry, put me in intimate lives with people, and have to make me make value judgments on how much I spend on my time.

There is always a way to deal with whatever problem we have to deal with, and I have told you this before, this is another absolute principle. The only way you can fix a problem if you are the problem, you are the one that has to fix it. You cannot want somebody to do what is right more than they do. If you do, you wind up buying a helmet. When you do not see the character lining up with the power, you know what you have got? I do not care how good it looks. I do not care. I do not listen to what you say. Again, put your pencil down, look at me. I do not listen to what you say. I watch what you do. It is not about what you tell me. People have told me everything I ever wanted to hear. The guy that sold me that helmet, he told me there was a pedigree on that that was back to Adolf Hitler himself. Now he did not, but he laid that thing out. "Oh, I got this from a vet. Oh no, this old boy was over there in France, and he fought in Africa, and this is there. I have got this and I have got this with him, and I have got a Luger from him, and I have got this, all this kind of stuff." I was just, "Oh man, this is it. This is real. I got it. I got it. I got it." Because I wanted to believe it so desperately, I did not follow the absolute guidelines that showed me what is fake. Therefore, at the end of the day, I got burned, and therefore, at the end of the day, you get burned. It is just that simple.

You cannot have the power of God until you have the character of God. God has called you and I to do a job. That job is an ambassador. When you build God's character in your life, then you have God's power in your life to do the job. In the concept of spiritual gifts, it is not about the gift that you have or you do not have. It is about the job that God has called you to do. God will equip you to do whatever He has called you to do with whatever gifts you need. But it is not about focusing on the gift and then building your ministry around the gift. It is about understanding your job and then letting God build what you need into your life to do the job. The more you work on what is spiritual, then the higher you go with the power of God in your life, and the more God gives you everything you need.

I have never understood how a man can say, "Well, you have this gift, but you do not have that gift," when the Bible says that I am to grow up into Jesus Christ. What good does it tell me to tell you every day you ought to be closer to Jesus Christ? What does that mean if you just have one gift or two gifts and you do not have the rest of them? Then you see what a waste of time everything else is. Here is the bottom line: when you work at being what God wants you to be, God will reveal what He wants you to do. He will give you whatever gift you need to get the job done. You know why? Because you are complete in Him. You have got everything right now that He has got. You are a joint heir with Jesus Christ. Everything that God is, you are. You just do not realize it yet. But as you grow, as God gives you tasks to do, as you grow in your job, God will give you the power to do the job, whatever that may be. But it all goes back that you do not, and it is absolute folks, you cannot have the power of God until you have the character of God. You cannot.

Whatever God has called you and I to do, that is His plan. It is under the guidelines, the concept, the umbrella, so to speak, of one word: being an ambassador.

## VII. The Ambassador's Role Defined

Let us talk about that for a moment. I am going to define an ambassador for you. It is easy. In the United States government, in our bureaucracy, we have a section called the diplomatic corps. The diplomatic corps is a place where they train men and women to be ambassadors. If you do not know this already, I am sure most of you probably do, if not all of you, is that our country has an ambassador seated in every country on planet Earth with which we have negotiations, diplomatic relationships. Every country around there has a diplomat to our country, as all countries do, and you have what they call consulates. In Washington D.C., you will find a consulate for every country that we have diplomatic relationship with, and they have an ambassador from that country that is in our country in that consulate. We have consulates at all these other countries that we have diplomatic relationship with.

Most people, it is a very unassuming job. Most people do not ever know it. The one that we know most about is one that has been in the news the last couple of years. There is a guy by the name of John Bolton. John Bolton is our ambassador to the United Nations. You see, you have an ambassador to the United Nations. We have an ambassador to the Vatican. The Vatican back in the 30s declared itself to be a sovereign country, so we have an ambassador from the United States. Now that is the ambassador to the Vatican because they are a country. They are represented in the United Nations. There is an ambassador to the United Nations.

Remember all the big fluff about the liberals did not like John Bolton, and they did not want him going there because John Bolton was kind of a nasty guy that did not take anything from anybody. Well, that is the kind of guy you need in the United Nations because the United Nations is the job of an ambassador. He has one job. The only job of an ambassador is to represent and protect the interest of their government with the governments they are sent to. That is his only job.

Now this church is God's consulate. Even though you are seated in heavenly places, even though you are a new creature in Christ Jesus, the Bible says that your job is that you are to be an ambassador. The only job you and I have is to represent and to protect the interest of our heavenly government with the world and the government that we are sent to.

I do not know if you ever read this book. This is great. Everybody I read it, it is called "Thirteen Days in October," and it is a book about the Cuban Missile Crisis. Most of you were not even alive during the Cuban Missile Crisis. I was 12 years old. I think it was in 1962. I was 12 years old. You look at it on the news, they always have a lot of things going about it from time to time, but nothing you see on TV will prepare you for being a 12-year-old boy living through the Cuban Missile Crisis.

We were in the middle of the Cold War. We had one World War II. Immediately the Russians barked it out. They blockaded Berlin, and they began the Cold War. So all of you had one desire: they wanted to take over the world. America had one desire: she wanted to preserve democracy.

So the world was split right down the middle, and it was a time where three quarters of the world was going communism. We were very, very fair. We had the bomb, they had the bomb, and it was very volatile.

I remember that what happened in the Cuban Missile Crisis was this: Russia wanted the upper hand, and Russia was lying to us, which all nations lie to each other, but she was lying to us saying, "Oh, we are not putting missiles in Cuba. We are not. We are going to stay with our agreement." What she was doing was secretly loading ICBM missiles on freighters disguised as tool parts and sending them down to Cuba, and then sending in Cuban or Russian technicians to set them up and man them.

Here we are. It is one thing to have Russia over here 4,500 miles with ballistic missiles, which we have. It is something else to have them down in Cuba, which is 90 miles off the coast of the United States. They can hit Washington in 13 minutes. 13 minutes. What can you not do in 13 minutes? You cannot get out of the house in 13 minutes. Cannot get out of the neighborhood when you have got a bomb that is going to blow off and going to kill about 500 square miles of people. You are dead.

America said, "That is not going to happen." So America confronted Russia, and I remember I was 12 years old at the time. I heard my mom and dad. I knew they were worried. You know how I knew they were? They quit fighting each other in my house. When my mom and dad quit fighting, something bad was happening because I guess they were gearing up to fight the Russians. I do not know. But I knew something was wrong. My mom was worried, my dad was worried. They were watching the news, reading the paper, and I am just a little guy. So as a little guy, you get your vibe from your parents. When your parents are sandbagging the front yard and putting in pill boxes, you know, you kind of, you know that little departure from the gardening we had going on last week.

I remember Life and Look Magazine. I do not think even Life and Look Magazine are around anymore, but Life and Look Magazine were big things back then. I remember they had a big picture of a big mushroom cloud, atomic thing, and it just scared little guys like me. It was bad. I remember in there it talked about the fact that you turn around the page, and it showed all these terribly deformed people from Hiroshima, from the bomb blast. It was terrible. For a little guy like me, 12 years old, I have got all my army equipment stacked in the corner. I am ready to go if I have to, but I am scared. It is one thing to fight them coming over the north wall, but it is something else when a big mushroom comes up, and you are all just fried.

I remember reading through that Life Magazine, and there it was: "How to Survive a Nuclear Blast." I did not read very well at 12, but I wanted to know this, so I studied it. They told me in that magazine that for \$3,000, you could build a bomb shelter in your backyard. You remember this? That you would absolutely be guaranteed to survive a nuclear utility. Where to put the water, where to put the food, how to vent it, how to do it, plans and everything. Then they had one for \$2,000 that you had an 85% to 75% survival ratio. It was not quite as elaborate, but it would get the job done. Then they had one for somebody that was limited with funds, \$1,500 or \$1,000, whatever it was, but you only had a 30%. For you who had no money at all, that is my

category, "Go to the southwest corner of your basement." Now I have never understood to this day why the southwest corner of the basement. I do not know, but you did not want to be trapped in the southwest corner of our basement.

As a little guy, I am down there looking at the basement. My mom said, "What are you doing?" "Oh, I am just looking at the basement. Which way is south?" I am just, I am scared to death. I have got all my stuff down there. I was thinking about taking food for the dog. We had a little brown chihuahua then, called Chichi or something like that. Later got a job working for Taco Bell.

I remember that the night this all went down, we had open house at school. I was in the sixth grade, and we went there, and everybody was sure, everybody was talking about it. Everybody was... the only good thing about it is it got the teacher off my grade. Anyway, everybody was talking about it, and I remember that night going home thinking, "We are going to die tomorrow. We are all going to die tomorrow."

In retrospect, no one has died. There was no war. It is because of the ambassador to the United Nations. You know the ambassador to the United Nations in 1962, his name was Adlai Stevenson. Now Adlai Stevenson was kind of a meek guy, kind of like a grandfather type, and he was our ambassador to the United Nations. The United Nations back then is much like the United Nations today: very weak, very political, they are all about money, and very corrupt. Even in that, it started in 1945. Truman put it into effect with all the other nations at the end of World War II, but by 1960, it was corrupt.

I remember that they were going to confront the Russians. Everybody in the United Nations was playing footsie. Everybody had lined up just like they do today, nothing has changed. The Russians were denying it. We had flew U2s over there. We had photographs of the whole nine yards. We had them on the ship. We had them on the ground. We had them being ready. We had everything we needed. The Russians, as always, "No, no, no, no, no, no, no, we are not doing nothing."

Adlai Stevenson had to bring his case before the United Nations, and this is what broke their back. He is standing down there and going up there, and it is his turn to speak. All the other nations gave their blasé stuff that all United Nations say. Everybody just taking sides. Adlai Stevenson got up, and he walked, and everybody was afraid that Adlai was not up to the task because he is just kind of a grandfather meek guy that never raises his voice, and they all thought, in fact, there were plans to pull him out and put somebody else in, but Kennedy at the last minute said, "Let us go with who we got."

So Adlai Stevenson comes up there, and you have to imagine this thing that you are all the delegates, and the Russians are over here, and the United States is over here, and he starts to question this Russian. He asked this Russian about their intentions, "Are you not putting Soviet-built ballistic nuclear rockets in Cuba?" The Russians would just, you have got a translator in here, and he was just jibber-jabber, typical stuff they all do. Finally, Adlai had it, and all the other nations were kind of saying, "Look, America is picking on this Russia is in here. Then I would do it."

You know what Adlai did? Suddenly he called for his aide, and they brought out all of these pictures taken from U2 spy satellites over Cuba and on these ships. Adlai systematically went down and identified where it was, the Russian ship, the type of weapon, right down the line. You could hear the gasp in the United Nations. Right down the line, pointed it out, pointed it out, pointed it out, pointed it out. Then he looked at the Russian ambassador. He says, "Now, Mr. Ambassador, are you putting Soviet-built nuclear weapons in Cuba?" The old Russian, he just went, same old song and dance.

Adlai Stevenson walks back, and he says, and everybody just gets silent. As you see him walk back and forth, the Russian silent, just silent, just absolute silence. Just walked back and forth. Finally, he got about midway, and he turned around, "Mr. Ambassador," he says, "I am willing to wait here for your answer till hell freezes over." The whole United Nations just broke out in applause. The Russian was trapped. You know what happened the next day? Ships turned around and went back, dismantling rockets, took them back.

You know what an ambassador's job is? It is just like that. As a Christian ambassador, your job is to stand in Christ's place, in His stead, in this world and represent Christ's concepts, principles to a foreign world. Your job and my job is to stand in the place of Christ and declare to a world what His truths are in the face of the opposition, like the Russians who want to blow it off and say it is not. That is your job and that is my job.

Have you ever been in a situation where somebody has slandered you? Have you ever known a situation where somebody has out and out lied about you or a half-truth? Have you ever been in a situation where somebody has tried to defame your character? You know, it is in a group situation someplace, and somebody does not like you, so they say something, and you hear about it later, and it is bad. They take a half-truth or they lie, and it is very obvious that what they want to do is paint you in a bad light.

When you get into the ministry, it happens all the time. You get painted in a bad light because they do not like what you teach. They do not like what you are. They do not like who you represent. We get into those situations, and every one of us feels this way when you hear about it. Everybody, everybody, everybody wants an Adlai Stevenson in their life. Everybody wants somebody in that little crowd to stand up and say, "You know what? That is not true. You know what? You are lying. You know what? I know her. I know him. That is not true, and I want to take you to task on it this morning. You are lying." Boy, would not that be the greatest thing in the world?

Usually, everybody just folds up right along with it. But I am telling you what, if you have ever been in a place where you have been mistreated behind your back, everybody that ever gets there would say in their heart, "I wish somebody would stand up for me when I cannot stand up for myself and do and say what the truth is." Who would not want that? That is exactly the situation we find ourselves in as Christ's ambassador. If there is anybody that has been lied about, if there is anybody that half-truths are spread about, if there is anybody that is no truth, misrepresented, slandered, twisted what he said, private agenda, my line is quoted and assassinated his character,

it is the person of the Lord Jesus Christ. You and I as an ambassador have one job: that is to set the record straight.

## VIII. Paul: The Model Ambassador

I have a friend of mine who has probably taught me more in the Bible. Most of you know his name, Peter S. Ruckman. If you go on the website and just type Peter Ruckman, you are going to get 5,000 things come up on him. This man is the most hated man in the world. There is no question about it. You will find more stuff about him that is absolutely horrendous. Peter Ruckman, as far as I am concerned, based on 30 years of knowing him, without a doubt, is the greatest champion of the King James Bible on the face of planet Earth. I might just say you would not have your King James Bible in your lap this morning if it was not for this man and about two others. Now you may not know that, but I am informing you this morning, this man has paid the price for you to have a Bible.

I do not have time to get into it, but boy, you get on the internet, and I think you will find every filthy, abominable thing said about this guy by so many people. I am not talking about the world. I was preaching one time, 20 years ago, 25 years ago, I was preaching in a Bible conference where there were four or five guys preaching. I was like the third one. First two guys get up, and because they were with all their fellowship buddies, and all they were in a big scenario when they wanted to be big guys, they all took a cheap shot at it. They said some things that were not true. Now I am not saying he is perfect, and he is as quirky as can be, but I know what is and I know what is not. I listened to these guys for two messages get up and just assassinate his character. I listened to him lie. I listened to him do a half-truth. It was very obvious, one, they either did not know this guy, or two, they did and they were purposely doing it.

When I got up to preach, I am going to tell you something, I was so mad that I decided, "Forget this sermon, I am setting the record straight because this is my father in the Lord, and this guy was attacked viciously without any provocation whatsoever." Brother, when I got up, I called in front of 2,000 people, I called those two men out, and I set the record straight, and I said, "You do not know the man. I will take you to the man, and I will sit down with you, and I will detail out the detail that you do not have. If you do not have the details and you do not know about his life for sure, then you want to shut your mouth. If you do have the details and you are offended by it, you need to shut your mouth and go to him." You know why? I was not going to let anybody tear him down after what he had done for me, giving me that book.

Now if I do that for a mortal man who is a sinner just like you and I are, how much more should we do that for the person of the Lord Jesus Christ? Your job and my job is to be an ambassador. As an ambassador, that job is simple. It is to stand in Christ's place, in His stead, on this earth while I am seated in heaven, a new creature in Christ Jesus, with my conversation up there, my love up there, my affection and my loyalties up there, and I am to stand in this right place with Christ in a world that has slandered Him and set the record straight. Every time you open up that book, you talk to anybody about whatever the word of God is, whatever you get into, your job is to remember you are an ambassador. That is your job.

He says in Ephesians 6, I told you that the battle that we are in is spiritual.

*Ephesians 6:10-18*

*Finally, my brethren, be strong in the Lord, and in the power of his might. Put on the whole armour of God, that ye may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil. For we wrestle not against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this world, against spiritual wickedness in high places. Wherefore take unto you the whole armour of God, that ye may be able to withstand in the evil day, and having done all, to stand. Stand therefore, having your loins girt about with truth, and having on the breastplate of righteousness; And your feet shod with the preparation of the gospel of peace; Above all, taking the shield of faith, wherewith ye shall be able to quench all the fiery darts of the wicked. And take the helmet of salvation, and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God: Praying always with all prayer and supplication in the Spirit, and watching thereunto with all perseverance and supplication for all saints;*

Four times in those verses, you are told to stand and to do all to stand. You and I are to stand as an ambassador in this world representing our home government, straight out the lies that are told about your Savior. Now you do not get an attitude about that. You do not get a superiority attitude. You have got to be careful. Knowledge and wisdom is knowing the Bible, but understanding is discernment, is knowing how to use the Bible.

Paul says in Ephesians 6:20:

*Ephesians 6:20*

*For which I am an ambassador in bonds: that therein I may speak boldly, as I ought to speak.*

Paul never lost sight of the fact that he was in bonds. He never let his attitude get to the place where he thought he was better than anybody. He recognized that his job, no matter what God called him to do as an individual, no matter what God has for you as a plan, whatever God has got for you, the overall umbrella will be you are to be an ambassador in a world, and you are to take Christ's stand in His stead and keep the truth going in a world that wants to slander it. Stick up and stand up for Him.

Proverbs 13:17 says:

*Proverbs 13:17*

*A wicked messenger falleth into mischief: but a faithful ambassador is health.*

Now using our "how to study the Bible" approach, you find three great things in Proverbs 13:17.

10. First of all, in Ephesians 6:20, we are an ambassador in bonds. You speak through those bonds.

11. Then in Proverbs 13:17, you find that an ambassador is a messenger. He has got a message.

12. Then the purpose of that message is health. Health in the Old Testament will always be in a spiritual sense, spiritual health.

You want to keep these things in mind as you serve God and as you grow in your spiritual life, and as God, you work on the inward, God reveals the outward. You learn those absolute concepts that are without any kind of variance.

I am just going to tell you this, and then I am going to be done here, but the greatest example of an ambassador in the Bible is the Apostle Paul. He is the model ambassador. I cannot conceive of a child of God who has grown properly, who has come up through the ranks of growing properly, who by the time they are saved at least 10 years, have not sat down and laid out. Now I know there are all kinds of various things, but I am talking about somebody that just is in their church all their life and it makes some pretense of knowing the Bible, and I just cannot grasp that you were so inept in your spiritual growth that here you are saved for 10 years and you do not understand how the life of Paul impacts into your life because you do not see him as the model.

There are certain models in the Bible that if you do not sit down as a child of God and break down those models and see them for yourself, you are not going anywhere. Paul gets saved in Acts 9. The next time you find he is in Acts 13. That is nine to 14 years later, depending on how you count the time, not sure for sure. But when we do find him the next time, we find him in Acts 13, you know where he is at? Antioch. There is no man in the Bible that represents what you and I should be as far as our ambassadorship better than Paul. None.

I do not know anything. He knows his mission. He is clear on his calling. He is clear on his message. When you study his life, he does one thing: he takes the stand of what is right in Christ's teaching against the Roman Empire and against the scribes and the Pharisees and the Old Testament Jews that do not want to switch over and follow Christ. That is all he does. His preaching is nothing more than standing for the truth in a world that wants to change truth and slander it. Same job as yours and mine.

He is both a diplomat and a hell-raiser. He is the most unique man in history as far as I am concerned. Did you ever stop and see his life? He is born a Jew, but he becomes a Roman citizen. There is an oddity. He is born a Jew, but he becomes a Roman citizen, and then on top of that, later on, he becomes a Christian. So now he has got his Jewish heritage, he has got his Roman citizenship, and that impacted his life, and now he enters into Christianity. You know what he has got? He has got three cultures that he has been grown up in.

I am telling you, the bad things and the good things and the things in your life that you are going through right now, just like my being ripped off for \$1,500 for that helmet, is what God takes and molds and shapes you through the things you are, that when He gets you where He wants to go, you get a good education. That is what he got. He was born a Jew. He persecuted Christians. He even delivered them over to be killed. All the time he was a Roman citizen. He had the best of both worlds, and then came a day in his life, and he became a Christian. Now he understands three distinct cultures. You know what that did for him? That made him understand as a New Testament born-again ambassador the times that he lived in. He fully understood the times that he lived in. He understood the world, how it ran, and how he affected it by how he lived in it.

He was taught by the best, a guy by the name of Gamaliel over there in Acts 22 and Acts 5. He was the greatest teacher of the day. He taught Paul everything about being a Pharisee. He taught

Paul everything about the law. There probably was no greater man during Paul's life that knew more about God and the Bible than Paul did before he had his conversion. Yet he uses all these things. He counts his education as dung. He never put any stock in his Roman citizenship, and after he got saved, he laughed at the fact that he was ever a Pharisee. But you know what? He uses those things because he understands that those things were put in his life for a reason, and he learned by it that after he gets into the real ministry and understands his job as being an ambassador, he uses those things to his advantage.

You will go to Acts 22. You know what he does? Paul cared nothing once he got saved about being a Roman citizen, but in Acts 22, he finds himself in a situation where they are going to beat him up, and he finds himself that the Jews want to beat him up, and the Romans do not care if they want to beat him up. There is a good possibility they are going to drag him out and beat him to death. You know what he does? He sees the situation. He sizes it up, and then he says to the guy, "Hey, you are going to let these guys do this to me?" The guy says, "Well, I care." And Paul says, "I am a Roman citizen." The guy says, "You are a what?" "I am a Roman citizen." Whoa, that changes it all. You see, he could not happen to him. He did not care about being a Roman citizen, but he used that in the situation he was in diplomatically.

Another time, you get over there in Acts 23. This time he is with the scribes and the Pharisees, and again he is in the middle of a controversy. You will always be in the middle of controversy. You learn how to use it diplomatically. Now he cared nothing about being a Pharisee. You know what he called himself? He called himself a Pharisee of Pharisees. He was the best there was. When he gets into that situation, he pits the Sadducees against the Pharisees. They get fighting among themselves, forget about him, and he walks out the door. He uses it.

One of my favorite verses is found in Acts 23:6.

*Acts 23:6*

*But when Paul perceived that the one part were Sadducees, and the other Pharisees, he cried out in the council, Men and brethren, I am a Pharisee, the son of a Pharisee: of the hope and resurrection of the dead I am called in question.*

He had spiritual discernment. He understood. He had no love for his Roman citizenship nor his education, but he used it as tools to his advantage. He never loses sight of his job. Paul's mission was in his plan was to establish the church, but his overall job was to be God's ambassador.

## IX. Conclusion and Application

I do not know what God has called you to do. Some of you, it looks like it is coming into focus. Some of you, it is too early to tell. Some of you, forget it. But you are coming to the point in your life where God is beginning to focus and put it in focus, and if God shows you exactly what He wants you to do in this body, as men and women rise up the level of leadership, and as the ministry grows, it becomes so automatic. I cannot explain to you how automatic it is. It is like I do not have to go or look around and say, "Boy, I need this done," and then say, "Well, you do this." It is like somebody comes to me and says, "God put this on my heart, and this is what I

want to do. Will this help you in ministry?" And if not, you just tell me, and I will not do it. And it is exactly what I need. That is the difference between the Spirit of God. It is you taking what I teach, taking what you study, and building the inside, and then God bringing that to the outside, manifesting.

But you see, without the character of God, you will never have the power of God. To think that you have the power of God without spending time to get the character of God and doing the character qualities that God is, you are kidding yourself. You are kidding yourself.

Lastly, check this out in 1 Timothy 1:16. I want you to turn over and look at this. Now that we are going to be done, this whole thing comes back where we started. You are a new creature in Christ Jesus. Because of that, now you have the ability to love God, your citizenship, you are seated in heavenly places, your conversation, your affection, and now your job: you are to be an ambassador.

Look what it says in 1 Timothy 1:16 about Paul:

*1 Timothy 1:16*

*Howbeit for this cause I obtained mercy, that in me first Jesus Christ might shew forth all longsuffering, for a pattern to them which should hereafter believe on him to life everlasting.*

You know what that says? That tells you that Paul was a pattern for you and for me. God showed it in him first, and Paul is your model ambassador. He is your model ambassador. He is a pattern for you and for me. Now you can take that, do something with it, or you can let that fly over the top of your head and go on out and do what you were doing. But it is things like that that will make the difference whether you become a leader in this church or whether you do not. It is things like that that will make the difference that five years from now, ten years from now, twenty years from now, you do not preach any better than you did twenty years ago. You do not know any more about the Bible than you did fifteen years ago. Oh, you are a great guy, you are a great gal, and you go through all the emotions, but you know what? There is just no, there is no outward. You do not know anything more about history. You do not know any more about... I mean, you have been saved ten, fifteen, twenty years, you did not even know Paul was the pattern. I do not know what to tell you. What pattern are you? Where is your pattern?

You see, you might as well get in on the ground floor the way we are doing it this time and putting it to the place where you really grasp it. You young men and women begin to understand this is your pattern: Paul. Find out what he did, how he did it, where he did it, who he did it with, all the ramifications, understanding that your job is one: to be an ambassador. That takes you building the qualities in your life, the Christian character that develops in Christian power that God gives you, that whatever job God calls you to do, you have the ability to do it. Now your job, my job, is to be an ambassador, and what we do is the same thing that Paul did.

You have all had life experiences, good, bad, and indifferent. You have all had education, good, bad, and indifferent. You have all had things you know and learned in life, maybe even the bad thing. Maybe some of you went through a bad marriage. Somebody said, "Well, that really hurts

me." No, no, that can help you. It does not make any difference. It does not make any difference. God sends us all to different schools to learn different things. You have got to grasp that concept.

I have never in my life looked at a man or a woman from where they have been or what they have done and judged them on that because I know that all that can be God's schooling. The only thing that matters to God today is not what you have been in the past or what you have done in the past. The only thing that matters to God today is what do you want to do from this point on? That is the only thing that matters. God will take those things, yes, even the things you are ashamed of, yes, even the things we do not want to deal with, yes, even the things that are bad things and the good things and the middle-of-the-road things and the blasé things. God will take them all, and once you put yourself to the task of understanding that you are to be the ambassador, He takes what you already have, what you know, what you have experienced, adds it with the word of God, gives you those absolute principles they are operated by, and builds you up. As you build the inward man, the outward man manifests itself, and then your passion changes, then your purpose changes, then your perspective changes, then your patience changes, and then you come to the point in your life where you are ready to be used as God's ambassador.

You see yourself as whatever the job God has given you to do, and it will vary with every man and woman in this building. Some of you do this, some of you do that, but that is beside the point. Your overall job will be understanding, "I am an ambassador. I do not get my roots down too deep. I do not do this. I do not do that."

I had to laugh this week. I saw in a paper where Jerry Falwell in Kansas City spoke the commencement service for the Midwestern Baptist Theological Seminary. I had to laugh. I do not know if you know anything about the Midwestern Baptist Theological Seminary. They do not even believe a Bible exists. They believe the story about Noah and the ark was a fable. They believe that the flood never happened. I doubt you probably got professors down there who do not even believe Christ rose from the dead. That is the most liberal, stunk-up place you ever put your hand, your hat for three and a half years to get an uneducated as you ever got in your life. What in the world is Falwell doing down there?

You know what he is doing down there? You see, the real issues come up. It is a Kodak moment. It is a photo op. It is a political move. He does not believe, I do not know what he believes now, but 10 years ago, he would not have touched that place. But you know what? He goes down there, and he speaks, and you know what? The whole place did not, when the paper recorded it, did not tell you what he preached on. Did not tell you what his text was. Did not tell you why he was there other than commencement. It just told you this: it gave you the political statement that he wanted to make. He came all the way to Kansas City, probably picked up \$65,000 for the check for speaking that night. He came all the way down there to say one thing: he wanted to make a statement on stem cell research, and he wanted to make a statement of all the stuff that politically he is involved in.

I am going to tell you something, and you better learn this. I told you the United Nations is corrupt. The United Nations is corrupt because it has lost its original purpose. Its purpose was to preserve freedom and liberty in this world, that no more aggression like Japan going into China

butchering six million people, like the Nazi gassing seven million Jews, like the atrocities of the Russians and the purges that Stalin did. The United Nations were set up that actually what is going on in the Middle East right now should have never happened. But you know why it did not do its job? Because it lost its mission. It lost its mission because it became a big money-making deal. It lost its position because guys like Kofi Annan make deals with Saddam Hussein in the food for oil program and skim off billions and billions and billions and trillions of dollars off the top. That is why it does not work.

You know why churches have failed today? They did the same thing the United Nations has done. They have forsaken their mission, and they are making big bucks at your expense. It is the same sick system, and that is why in these last days, in these last moments of these last days, you and I need to understand no matter what they do, no matter where they are at, it is immaterial. We, part of this consulate, carry out our ambassadorship flawlessly, taking the place of Christ's stead, declaring the truth in a world that has rejected His truth, and whatever comes, comes till Jesus Christ comes back. That is your job and my job overall, whatever God has called you to do with an individual in His plan.

Every head bowed, every eye closed. Father, thank You, praise You for the Lord Jesus. Thank You for today. Thank You for the men and women that are here today for their love for You.