

I. Knowing the Bible Versus Knowing About the Bible

There are all kinds of people out there: pastors, laymen, people that go to church, and Christians. They know a lot about the Bible. They have heard and cataloged in their mind, their notebooks, or even their Bibles, things that preachers have said, messages that they have heard, or even books that they have read. But if you had to press them to explain it to you and open up the Scriptures and show you from the Bible how it lays itself out, they could not do it.

I do not want a bunch of God's people to just know things about the Bible, but I want you to know the Bible. Many of you are coming to that point in your life now. We have been together three years, and you are growing and really focusing on the aspect of getting the Word of God. The systematic study we are going through every book of the Bible in the little groups has really been a benefit to you. Most importantly, the time that I have spent with you one-on-one. As you know, I will spend an hour a week with anybody that wants to learn the Bible and go through the Word of God. I have really watched that bring you to a place in your life where the Bible really is working for you. This is just another aspect to it.

I told you that when you got saved, you laid a foundation in your life. That foundation is Jesus Christ the day you got saved. The rest of your life you build on that foundation. Your body is like the temple of God, like unto the temple of God in the Bible, and you are to build that temple. The Bible talks about that we are to be a wise master builder. Every man is to take heed how he builds that temple. We are in the process of you building that temple.

When I look out here, I do not see Johns and Joes and Ralphs and Toms and Marys and Sues. I see a bunch of building projects. I see men and women who are all in various levels of your spiritual growth. Some of you just got the foundation laid; you just got saved. You are being disciplined right now; you are being worked with, and you are beginning to lay those first building blocks of your Christian relationship with God on that foundation. Some of you have the walls up. Some of you have the walls up and you have the roof on, and you are working on the light fixture. Everybody is in a various stage of spiritual growth. My job is to help you as best I can, and as much as you are willing to, to really take the Word of God and finish your temple.

We know now from our past studies that God has a plan that He wants you to do. We have separated God's will from God's plan. We know what those are now. If you have been coming for a while, you know that God has a plan for you. He has a job that He wants you to do. My job as pastor is to help prepare you for that. It is your job through your individual relationship and what you do on your own. I learned a long time ago that I could teach you everything I know about the Bible, but that still will not make you what God wants you to be. It only is what you do with what I give you and then what you take and do on your own. That is where it really comes down, and that is where we are at.

II. The Seven Judgments and People Groups

We have been coming through, and last week we started the series on the seven judgments. I showed you last week how these seven judgments are built around the seven family groups in the Bible. We talked about the Bible talking about the household of God. I showed you how there were seven distinct members of God's family from Genesis to Revelation. Sometimes they are called dispensations. A dispensation, I told you last week, is a period of time from Genesis through Revelation where God deals with people differently.

One would be before the law, from Adam to Moses. Another dispensation would be under the law, from Moses to Christ. Then you have another dispensation, which is the church age, and another dispensation would be the tribulation period. In each case, God is dealing with men and women on different issues, and they make up a different part of the family of God. That is why I told you when it comes to studying this book, you never study it, read it, pray over it, or dig out God's secret in it from a Christian standpoint, because that is too limited. If you start to do that, then what you are going to do is you are going to see one small dispensation out of seven in the Bible. Really, there is more than that, but there are seven people groups. What you are going to do is you are going to view everything through that one instead of looking at it in its entirety.

So I tell you all the time, you do not study the Bible from a Christian standpoint. You study the Bible from God's standpoint. It is not about what you and I are doing per se in the church age, but what God is doing overall from Genesis to Revelation, and then where you and I fit into that. That is the key. That is what I have got to get. You give me a young man or a young lady that will start to view the Bible that way, and they will learn the Bible very quickly because they are on the right path.

Last week we saw how the whole Bible is built around a wedding. The Bible in its simplest form is simply this: God is going to have a wedding for His Son. All the way back in Genesis with the first people group, and we looked at two last week with the first two people groups, what God has done is He has called all through the Bible. He is inviting people to come to that wedding. Every age and dispensation, God has sent out His servants, His people, and no matter what they preach, no matter what dispensation they were in, it all came down to the exact same thing: there is going to be a wedding in the air in the sweet by and by. God wants you and I to be at that wedding. You and I are the bride in that wedding. That wedding is about Jesus Christ, God's Son, getting a bride, the church. Revelation 19, all through the Bible, Song of Solomon, all through the Bible, that is what it is about. We looked last week and began to see that that is really what the Bible is about.

Then I began to tell you that if we are going to study the seven judgments in the Bible, we have to understand that these seven judgments wrap themselves around these seven people groups. These seven people groups run from Genesis to Revelation, and you are going to find throughout the course of the Bible that there are seven judgments.

Last week we talked about judgment number one. Judgment number one was the fact that when Jesus Christ died on the cross of Calvary, when God poured out His wrath on a perfect man, His Son, thereby when He did that, He judged every man and woman down through the history of the Bible as a guilty sinner. That is judgment number one in your Bible. Judgment number one is

the fact that God took a sinless man, His Son, put Him on a cross, and then poured out the wrath of God on Him on that cross. When a perfect, righteous man died, God judged you and me as a guilty sinner. That is judgment number one in the Bible. We saw last week how that fit in. We talked about how it fit into the first two groups, the people from Adam to Moses, and then Moses up to Christ. I told you there was a third group; that is us. We are going to talk about that today, and then we are going to move on to Judgment Chapter 2, putting it all together.

We also saw that once that judgment took place, it is no more about your good works or your bad works. It is not about that. We talked about how no matter what religion most people are or what they believe, everybody believes one concept, and that concept is that someday it is all going to wind up, and there is going to be one great judgment. The idea is, or the standard teaching is, the fact that there is a big set of scales up there, and He puts all your good works on this side and all your bad works on this side, and you balance them out. That is not how it is going to be. No, no, no. When Christ died on the cross, it is no more what you do good or what you do bad. It is simply now your righteousness up against God's righteousness. That is what the issue is. Of course, if you do not have somebody get into your life and give you God's righteousness, you are going to stand as an unsaved man, and this will be the last judgment we study, but you are going to stand as an unsaved man or a woman, and you are going to pit your righteousness, which the Bible says is as filthy rags in the book of Isaiah, up against a perfect man. It will not be about your good works and your bad works. It is going to be, He is going to put Jesus Christ in this hand and you in this hand, and He is going to weigh you out. That is the issue.

III. Learning and Remembering Biblical Truths

Last time, as I said, we saw how this judgment affected two of the seven people groups. Today we are going to pick it up again briefly, and we will see how it plays into our lives and your life and my life, and then we will see how it fits into judgment number two.

When I started learning the Bible, I looked for every way I could because I recognized very early after I got saved how important the Word of God was. For me, it was not one of these things like some of God's people where you drag your feet for two or three years and try to decide if you are going to serve God or not. The lifestyle I came out of when I got saved, the day that I got saved and I got this thing figured out, it was over. One day I was at work telling dirty jokes and laughing with everybody else, and the next day I showed up with a Bible in my pocket and a fist full of tracts. It has been that way ever since. It was not an either/or for me. My life is pretty much black or white. I do not have a lot of middle ground, and it has always been that way.

When I began to see this and I began to see the Bible, I realized how important the Bible was, and I wanted to learn it, and I did a lot of dumb things. I took a speed reading course because I thought, "Well, if I have to read the Bible, the guy that taught me the Bible used to read the Bible through every 33 days." So I thought as a young Christian, I felt like that little grasshopper with the Kung Fu guy. I thought if I could do that too, then I will learn the Bible. So I took a speed reading course, and I can read today, I can read 600 words a minute. I can read a book in 20 minutes, unless it has pictures, that slows me up a little bit. When I got that done, I was breezing through the Bible, and then I realized that the key to the Bible was the individual word. When

you learn to speed read, you have to take whole sections at a time and put it together that way. That was not going to work because every word of God was important, and I was missing too many words. So that went out the window.

Then I read that if you play the Bible while you sleep, you remember it. So I went out and got me a tape recorder, and I remember to this day, going to bed, listening to the guys read the Bible. It did not do a thing for me. I know I am denser than the average person, but I did not get anything out of that. Then I read where guys like Thomas Edison and some of the great guys, they got into this thing, light sleep and heavy sleep. So I thought that was a good deal, that you could get away with less sleep because when you sleep at night, if you sleep eight hours, they said that you only really sleep deep sleep so much in an hour, and that is what you need. The light sleep is not what you need, so you can stay up and do more, and that is how all these guys did this stuff. Thomas Edison had like what, 500,000 patents on everything. You know why? He says because he found a secret that light sleep and dark sleep. So I thought, "Hey, that is what I will do." So I came to the place where I tried light sleep and dark sleep. Two days after I wrecked the car because I fell asleep, I decided that was not going to work for me. Then I found out later that those suckers were taking naps in the middle of the day. I did not read that part of it. I must have missed that speed reading.

So I tried everything. I am not a very good memorizer. I am better now than I was because I have disciplined myself for the last 30 years, but I was not very good in school. I was in the sixth grade so long the kid brought me an apple; they thought I was the teacher. I was not good in school. I barely got out with a C-D average. I was not very smart in school, and I guess it was not that I was not smart; I did not want to apply myself. That is what my teachers always told me.

When it comes to the Bible now, here I was. I wished I would have learned all of those things. I understand now how important English literature is and English sentence structure is when it comes to the King James Bible because it is perfect in its sentence structure, and the Holy Spirit of God, believe it or not, has used the very punctuation in the sentence structure to teach you things about the Bible. So I had to go back and teach myself English again. I could have got it in school, but oh no, no, no, no, I had to do it my way. So that is where I was at, and I had a tough time memorizing things. So I began to put things in little phrases that helped me with memorizing. I have already given you some of them.

A while back I gave you:

1. Faith, Fact, and Feeling That to me represents a whole doctrinal teaching. I do not have to try to remember the whole doctrinal teaching or recall it because if I just go with faith, fact, and feeling, that brings up in my mind the whole concept, and I could teach it from that. If I was someplace, somebody would ask me to teach on something relative to that, I would have in my mind a three-point outline: Faith, Fact, and Feeling. That would be the basis of the Christian life. I have faith in the facts and the Word of God, and the facts then produce the right feeling. A charismatic will have faith, but he has it in his feelings because he has no facts. You see how it works? You have some people who have no faith; they have facts, and they have their own feeling. It works for the child of God who was saved, and you have it

perfectly cooking in your life. It is faith in the facts, the Word of God, that produces the right feeling. You get to your place in your life as a Christian where you will see a circumstance, and your first emotional reaction will be one thing, and an almost secondary, like generators kicking in, like circuit breakers kicking in, the Word of God principles will take over, and you will not expand your human emotion; you will expand the emotion based on the biblical principles of any given situation. That is where you will get to in your life. That is based on faith, fact, and feeling.

2. Saved, Sealed, and Seated You got saved when you got saved. You got sealed by the Holy Spirit of God, and once you got sealed by the Holy Spirit of God, you are seated in the right hand of God the Father. That ends it. I cannot remember all of this stuff, but I can remember saved, sealed, and seated, and if I just take those three, then it brings everything out.
3. Seek and Set I have probably a hundred of them that I just remember things that way because I am not smart enough to remember it all the other way.

IV. Sinner, Son, and Servant: The Three Judgments

In these judgments, these first three judgments we are going to study are all to you and me, and if you want to remember them, another little three-way concept puts it together for you, and this is how I remember it, and this is how I am going to teach it. It is:

4. Sinner
5. Son
6. Servant

If you get that three little outline down and memorize it, it will cover the major doctrine, and you will never have a problem getting messed up on bad doctrine if you can just remember and understand the concept of sinner, son, and servant.

Last week I talked to you about that when Jesus Christ died on the cross, He judged every man a sinner. So in that judgment, you and I were judged as a sinner, and I gave you all the verses. I gave you Isaiah 53, 2 Corinthians 5:21, John 3:14, and I showed you that at Calvary's cross, by the death of a perfect man, God judged us as a guilty sinner, and at that point, we are without hope. We are hellbound; we are lost without hope, lost without Christ, and it now is His righteousness up against my righteousness.

These next two judgments, the first judgment is you are judged as a sinner; that was at Calvary's cross. Now these next two judgments fit right into your life and my life, and I want to talk about sinner, son, and servant. We already talked about sinner; we are going to talk about son today, and then we will get into servant next week, and you will see how these little play on words really come in.

I need to say this to you, there probably are some sermons, though I do not like to admit this, there probably are some sermons that you can nod off on. There probably are some sermons that you could get a good daydream going about your fishing or your hunting trip or whatever. This is not one of them because these next two judgments are right where you live, and if there is anything that is going to break your back as a child of God, it is going to be these next two. You

are already past the first one, I would say most of you are, because you were judged as a sinner at Calvary's cross. Then at some place in your life you got saved, and when you got saved, then you are no longer a sinner in God's sight. That judgment is taken care of. Now we have got to see how the second judgment comes into your life after you get saved, and brother, this one and the next one is what will get you. So I would suggest to you that you listen very closely. I know you do not hear this preached anymore today; that is a terrible tragedy. Maybe many pastors give a judgment of this, the judgment seat of Christ, and probably the great white throne judgment, but I am telling you this, you better listen to it today, and you better just understand what I am talking about.

It is real simple. Before you were saved, you were judged as a sinner at the cross of Calvary, and God looks at you as a sinner. He views your sin as a sinner, hence He is going to judge you as a sinner. Then you got saved. Oh, what a glorious day it was! I do not know about your life where you got saved; everybody has a different testimony. But there came a day in your life when God reached down over the banners of the heaven and He touched your filthy soul, and you looked up to heaven, you cried out to God, and the Bible says, "Whosoever shall call upon the name of the Lord shall be saved." You called out, and God saved you, and the Holy Spirit of God came inside you, and now you are saved.

The moment that takes place, and this is what you have got to get, the moment you got saved, you are no longer a sinner. You say, "Do you still sin?" Absolutely. It is not about whether you sin or not; it is about how God now looks at you. That is the key. This hard concept of you can lose your salvation, and this terrible teaching of that stuff, all it does is confuse people, and I am telling you, because you are a new creature in Christ Jesus (2 Corinthians 5:17), because you have been spiritually circumcised (Colossians 2), because you have been born again by the Spirit of God (John 3), and you have a new nature now that cannot sin (1 John 3), and you have an old nature that still can (Romans 7-8), it is a whole new ballgame.

Now you know what those four or five places I just gave you? Those are doctrinal places in the Bible. Those are the facts. When you base your faith on those facts, you give me any man, any woman, I do not care who, you give me any man or any woman who believes you can lose your salvation, bring them on Sunday morning, I will put a chair right there, I will give them 20 minutes to explain those five passages in the doctrinal context to the church. They could never do it. You know why? Because if they understood those passages, they would know you could never lose your salvation. It is not your salvation to lose. If you could lose it, you are going to lose it. Who do you think you are? The greatest, wisest, holiest man that ever lived on planet earth in the Word of God, Abraham, Moses, David, Jeremiah, the devil found out every one of their weaknesses that at some point in their life, he got them. There is nothing keeping you that is better than your righteousness; you were in trouble this morning. Praise God there is.

Here it is. Before you got saved, God looks at you as a sinner. You are a sinner, and God is going to judge you as a sinner. The moment you trust Christ as your personal Savior, you are no longer a sinner in God's sight. Now you are His child. Now you are His child, and the whole ballgame changes. God no longer looks at your sin the same way; therefore, He does not judge you the same way.

Turn over to Hebrews chapter 12. I told you to turn to Hebrews and let us look at it. No longer does God look at you as a sinner, nor does He deal with your sin as He will the sins of unsaved people, but now He will deal with you as His son. Let us look at it. Great passage.

Let us pray. Father, we ask You, Father, to take today the great passages of the Word of God. Knit our hearts together with Your Spirit. Forgive us where we failed You, Lord. Help us today to apply it to our lives, and we will thank You and praise You in Jesus' name for His sake. We ask you, amen.

All right, Hebrews chapter 12, pick it up in verse 5. Here is a great passage, and you will want to get this. This passage says it all.

Hebrews 12:5-8

And ye have forgotten the exhortation which speaketh unto you as unto children, My son, despise not thou the chastening of the Lord, nor faint when thou art rebuked of him:

For whom the Lord loveth he chasteneth, and scourgeth every son whom he receiveth.

If ye endure chastening, God dealeth with you as with sons; for what son is he whom the father chasteneth not?

But if ye be without chastisement, whereof all are partakers, then are ye bastards, and not sons.

There it is. When you came to Christ, you received Christ as your own personal Savior. He received you as His Son. You know what those verses say? God does not deal with you as a sinner anymore. You are now His Son. Sinner, son, next week, servant. That is how you remember it.

Verse 7:

Hebrews 12:7-8

If ye endure chastening, God dealeth with you as with sons; for what son is he whom the father chasteneth not?

But if ye be without chastisement, whereof all are partakers, then are ye bastards, and not sons.

He is basically saying, if you are a son of God, you are going to get chastised sometime in your life. Nobody escapes it. He says, "But if you are without chastisement, whereof all are partakers, then you are bastards," illegitimate children. You are not really a child of God. A bastard child is someone who has no legitimacy in a marriage. His mother has had the child without a wedlock, and he has no legitimacy. What he is saying here is that if you do not get chastised, the child of God, when you do not do what is right, you are kidding yourself about the fact that you are God's child.

Verse 9, furthermore, here is the practical application. He just gave you the doctrine. Now he is going to give you the practical that puts it all together.

Hebrews 12:9-10

Furthermore we have had fathers of our flesh which corrected us, and we gave them reverence: shall we not much rather be in subjection unto the Father of spirits, and live?

For they verily for a few days chastened us after their own pleasure; but he for our profit, that we might be partakers of his holiness.

That is your mom and your dad. "Shall we not much rather be in subjection to the Father of spirits?" That is God, "and live." "For they," your mom and dad on earth, "verily for a few days chastened us after their own pleasure." That is an old English phrase. It does not mean that they took pleasure in it. In an old English phrase, the word pleasure just means in the way of doing things. "For they, after a few days, chastened us after their own pleasure. But he for our profit." There is the difference. There is the difference. Now, you have got to get that. Your mom and dad, if they were Christians, they were charged with a task. In the next couple of, about four or five weeks from now, six weeks from now, we are going to start our parenting classes. I have not got an exact date yet, but we are going to do it. I am going to tell you right now, we are going to do it on Thursday night. That way it eliminates the babysitting problem. It just takes care of everything. We are in a place now where we have got so much going on, and I am working with groups of people over here and over here that we just cannot take another day because I just do not want to eat up your time from your families, or I am defeating the purpose. So we are going to knock off about five or six Thursday nights, and we are going to get it done. It will be proper for everybody. If you say, "Well, I do not have any kids." Well, if you are going to be somebody that is going to work with people in this church, then you better learn this material because you are going to wind up dealing with parents who have problems with their children. So it does not matter where you are at. I guess it just matters if you want to learn it or not. That is all it comes down to. If you have kids, and most of you do, because you may not get any other verses down in the Bible, ladies and gentlemen, you have got to be fruitful, multiply, and replenish the earth down. We have grown just by having thousands of kids. I thank you for that.

Now let us work on a few more of them. This is the difference. "For they," verse 10, your mom and your dad, "chastened us after their own pleasure. That he," God the Father, "for our profit." Why? The rest of the verse: "That we might be partakers of his holiness." The chastising of God in your life is not because God likes to whip you and beat you up. You have God's people out there because they do not understand the Bible. They are scared to death that God is just waiting to give them some incurable disease. They are just waiting for God to squash them like a little bug. They live their whole life in fear. They think if they do one little thing wrong, God is waiting around the corner and says, "Ah, I am going to fix you. Oh, cancer." That is not the way God works. God is not looking to whip anybody just for the sake that He wants to do it. But you are going to see this morning out of this message that once you become God's child, you enter into an agreement with God. Just like you would be a bad parent if you did not discipline your children when they did wrong. You would be a bad parent if you did not tell your kid, "Do not do that." When they keep on doing it, you take them out and you apply the corporal punishment that you have got to give them and to get their mind straight. We will talk about that when we get to that point. You would be a bad parent if you did not train up your child in the way they are supposed to be. Well, you think God is any less than that? God has a job for you to do, and God

is going to use the rod of chastisement to grow you up just like you have to use it to grow your child up. The difference is you do it because you want them to be the right kind of child. You do not want to be embarrassed when you go over to your friend's house and you say, "Hi," to the people, and he walks up and he says, "Hi, little Johnny," and little Johnny goes and kicks him in the knee. You do not want that. You do not want that.

I had a dream last night about you two. You had a baby. Well, you did, but he is a big man now, but I do not know where you were in this dream. But I swear I had a dream about you guys last night. You know what it was? We had a party tonight, and you had little babies about three or four years ago, about Jack's age, and we went in there. We were all together, and he had some french fries, and I sure can be using it, and a little kid came up and just splattered the french fries all over my pants. I dreamed that last night. I do not think it was him. I mean, but that is, you know, dreams are weird. I had a rough weekend, man, my dreams, that was an easy one, I guess. But you do not want that to happen. No parent wants to be embarrassed by their kids. So you try to bring them up the way they should. You do it because that is the way you are supposed to do it. God does it. Look at this. God does it for our profit. He does it so we might be partakers of His holiness. Do not mark this; you have got to get this. He does it so, because when you get chastised, and it is coming at some point in your life, that you might be partakers of His holiness. He does it to make you get what He has got for you at the judgment seat of Christ.

Now, how can you get mad at God? I have never understood it. How can you get mad at God? God made a deal with you the day you got saved. You know what He said? You talk about eternal security, here it comes. God said, "I am entering into an agreement with you, and because you trusted Me as your personal Savior, I am going to get you home to heaven if it kills you." That is what He said.

Now, look at verse 11.

Hebrews 12:11

Now no chastening for the present seemeth to be joyous, but grievous: nevertheless afterward it yieldeth the peaceable fruit of righteousness unto them which are exercised thereby.

That is true. Nevertheless, when you go through something and God whips you, it is never fun. Nevertheless, I love the "neverthelesses" in the Bible. I mark them all. "Nevertheless, afterward, it yielded the peaceable fruit of righteousness unto them which are exercised thereby." Now, see that thing? That passage says it all. It says that God will chastise you as His Son. He does not do that to an unsaved man. You see, you were judged as a sinner at the cross of Calvary. The moment you got saved up to the time of the rapture of the church or your death, God judges you as a Son. He is your Father. You are His child, and He deals with you just like a good Father should deal with you, but for the fact that He brings you to be closer to Him, to be partakers of His holiness.

Let me tell you something. This crowd that goes around saying you get saved and live your life anywhere you want to, you are an idiot. You really believe that. I do not even believe you are saved. I do not believe you are saved. You certainly do not know nothing about the chastising of

God. You know what the Bible says over there in 2 Timothy chapter? I am going to give you a great picture of your piece of your Bible today. We have alluded to this, and I have told you this. Now I am going to drop the whole answer on you.

V. God's Purpose: Honor and Glory

The bottom line is this: When God created everything, He created it around His Son. The theme of the Bible is about a kingdom. That kingdom is when His Son sits down in Revelation 19 and gets crowned King of Kings, Lord of Lords. When His Son sits down and gets crowned right before that or right after that, there is a wedding for His Son. It is all about His Son. What God did is He created everything, and He wants for Him as God, He wants honor and glory out of everything on planet earth, everything. So when God created it, He created it that everything would give Him honor and glory. The Bible says, "The heavens declare the glory of God." The creation declares the glory of God. The animals declare the glory of God. You ever notice that animals do not leave one mate for another mate in the middle of their relationship? You ever notice that? You ever notice how animals obey the laws of God even when they cannot read the Bible? They do not crossbreed. They do not, they do not, they stay within the structure of which God has designed for them. Why? Because the Bible says, believe it or not, in the book of Romans 8, the Bible says even the animals are looking for the coming of the Lord Jesus Christ. You may not believe that, but it is in there. He says not the animals, "the creature is waiting for the manifestation of the sons of God," because when He comes back, Isaiah 11 in the millennium, all the animals, there are no more wild animals. They do not eat meat. The lamb lies down with the lion. It is all a beautiful representation of everything that God is. Right now it is not.

God wants honor and glory out of everything on planet earth. When God created man, He created man for one reason: Man was to bring honor and glory unto God. God demands it. God rightly demands it because He is God, and there are no other gods beside Him. God created this whole thing. I know you do not know that. Some of you may not even believe that. Some of you have your head stuck someplace else where you think it is all about you. The bottom line is it is all about Him. You do not live your life down here to bring honor and glory to yourself. You live your life down here to bring honor and glory to Him.

Now God is going to get that honor and glory one way or the other. It is not simple. You know what He says over there in 2 Peter chapter 2 verses 19 and 20? He says this:

2 Timothy 2:19-20

Nevertheless the foundation of God standeth sure, having this seal, The Lord knoweth them that are his. And, Let every one that nameth the name of Christ depart from iniquity.

But in a great house there are not only vessels of gold and of silver, but also of wood and of earth; and some to honour, and some to dishonour.

There is your seal with Holy Spirit, Ephesians 4. "The Lord knoweth them that are his," your son. "And let everyone that nameth the name of Christ depart from iniquity." That is every

Christian. Here it comes, verse 20: "But in a great house," there is the household of God. "But in a great house," you know what He says? It is in that house. Vessels, two kinds of vessels. Vessels of honor. Vessels of gold. Vessels of silver. Vessels of honor. And vessels of dishonor. Clay, dirt. Vessels of wood, clay, dirt. Vessels of honor, silver and gold.

Now you know what? You know what you get to choose in life? You get two choices in life. All you get. Your first choice is to trust Jesus Christ or die and go to hell. That is choice number one. Most of you here probably made that choice. You know what your second choice is? I am going to be a vessel of honor or I am going to be a vessel of dishonor. You know what? The first one has to be a conscious choice. The second one does not have to be. You have to say, "God, come into my heart and save me." You do not have to say, "God, I am going to live my life as a vessel of dishonor or a vessel of honor." That choice is made by the path you choose in life. But you better remember one thing. Everything on this planet that God created, including you and I, are for one reason: to give honor and glory to God. He is going to get that honor and glory one way or the other. One way or the other. I am telling you, you can think you can live your life and you can do what you want to do, but I am going to tell you, God is going to do it.

You go back in the Old Testament, I look at Pharaoh. I look at Pharaoh. I look at, there are some great guys in the Bible. I look at Pontius Pilate. I think Pharaoh was one of the greatest examples in the Old Testament. Pontius Pilate was one of the New Testament greats. You know what? They had a great chance. Here was Pharaoh in the Old Testament that could have let the people of God go. God would have blessed Egypt, even though Egypt was a nation that did not recognize God. God still would have blessed them out of Genesis 9, because God says, "I will bless those that bless My people, but I will curse those that curse My people." Pharaoh could have been a great man. He could have said, "You know what, Moses? I am going to let you go. And I am going to tell everybody in this place to let you go, because I do not agree with you, and I do not agree with your theology, and we have many gods, you have one. You go to one place when you die, we have pyramids, we go down there within the afterlife. But you know what I recognize? I recognize that your God has His hand on you. You go ahead and go." Wow, would history have been different? The Bible would have been different. You know what he said? He said, "No, I am not going to let him go." You know how Pharaoh wound up? He wound up being drowned in the Red Sea, drowned in the Red Sea. You say, "Well, how did God get honor and glory out of that?" Oh, I will tell you, three or four years down the line, two or three, they wandered for 40 years now, two or three months, two or three years down the line, they are starting coming through all these other nations that own this land. You know what some of those nations may say when they meet them? Here comes two million of the nation of Israel going to cross through their country. You know what they say? "Hi, Moses, how are you? It is good to have you. We feared you were going to come. Hey, you know what? You just go right on through. You have anything you want. I pulled my whole people. That is you through. We are glad to have you. You stay as long as you want. Move out when you want to move out. If I can do anything for you, here is my cell phone number. Here is my pager number. You call me." You know why? And at the end of the conversation, he says, "Because I will tell you, Moses, we heard what your God did to Pharaoh, King of Egypt." See that thing? God is going to get the honor and glory one way or the other.

I think of Pilate. Wow, what a chance he had. They brought Christ into them, and he walks out there before the assembled world, the nation of Israel. He is up there saying, "What evil have they done?" And they say, "Crucify him." He said, "Why? What has he done wrong?" They said, "Crucify him." He says, "Should I crucify your king?" "We have no king but Caesar." What an opportunity. You know what he should have done? He should have took that old rotten robe off of Christ and he should have wrapped it around himself and he should have walked out to that howling mob, demon possessed, crazed mob. And he said, "You want to crucify somebody? Why me? Because there is the King of the Jews." Wow, would history have been different? If he could have just done the right thing at the right time, changed the course of the world. I am going to tell you something. Your Christian life and my Christian life is about one thing once we get saved. It is about doing the right thing at the right time. God is going to get honor and glory out of you one way or the other, pal. Sweetheart, it will happen one way or the other.

VI. The Purpose of the Church and Self-Judgment

Do you have any idea at all why you are here this morning? Do you have any idea at all why there is such a concept of churches where we go to churches? Do you know why when Paul wrote this thing out and God gave Paul the mystery of the church, you know why in the book of Ephesians and throughout the book of Romans, 1st and 2nd Timothy, Titus, Philemon, all that, do you know why God set it up the way that He did that you are here this morning? You know why He picked the first day of the week? You know why He gave you pastors, teachers, evangelists? You know why He gave you deacons and elders? You know why He gave you a church service? You know why He said, "Meet the first day of the week," and then you figure it out from there how you go, but you take care of that whole system and you make it work? You know why He did that? Have you ever figured out why God has set the structure that He did?

I will tell you why. Because God knows once you cease being a sinner and you become His child, there is a journey you have got to go through. It is a rough journey. God knows we are a weak people. Do not tell me how strong as a Christian you are. We are all weak. We all have feet of clay. God knows how weak we are. So God gave you a place that would preach to you. You know what the Bible claims it is? The Bible claims over there in James 1 that it is a mirror, a looking glass. You know what you do when you come on Sunday morning? You know what you do when you stand here and you listen to me or somebody else? You know what you are forced to do? You are forced to open up that Bible. When you look at that Bible, you see your own reflection. The Holy Spirit of God takes this open book like an open looking glass. I may not even preach on where you are at and your problem. But the Holy Spirit of God will take one little thing or many little things, and He will bring it right out. This is why people do not like to come to church. This is why people get mad at me.

You ever start the Old Testament with the Old Testament prophets? That was a rotten job to have. Those guys, me, all I have to do is face about 125 of you. They had to face two, three, four million people as a nation. They were the most unpopular guys that there ever was. Here is a whole nation that is in the depths of sin, so far from God, playing the spiritual game and pretending that everybody is right with God when they have forsaken God. Let me tell you, when

you as a child of God get in that mode, when you get into the mode that you want to play you are right with God when you know you are not, when you get into that mode that you are living in sin and you want to hide it by pretending you are not, I am telling you right now, the last thing you want is this faith in your mind. The last thing you want is me up here forcing you to look into this book because this book is "mirror, mirror on the wall, you know my sin, one and all." That is why they do not like the book. That is why pastors do not preach today. You preach like this today, you do not get people to come back. You cannot build your great dynasty. You cannot, you have to cancel the fountain. You will have to, you will have to take out the stained glass windows. You will have to cancel the gym. Starbucks will not be put in. My God, we have got to keep it coming so you do not preach anything offensive. You preach nice, warm, fuzzy stuff. You never preach on sin. Why? Because when you do, they will not come. Me? I do not care if you come or not. It is not about you. It is about Him and His book. Hey, you get mad at me all you want. I am going to tell you something. You may not know it now. I am your best friend. I am your best friend. You have all kinds of people around you that will tell you what you want to hear. I am your best friend today because I am telling you, there is a day coming when you think I am rough on you. Where do you stand before Him? I am telling you the reason why God did it this way is so you would look at your own sin today and before you leave, get right with God. So God does not have to come down and deal with you Himself.

You better get that one concept about church. 1 Corinthians 11:31 says:

1 Corinthians 11:31

For if we would judge ourselves, we should not be judged.

Hey, I am your best friend. You may not like what I am saying to you, but I am telling you the truth. I have your best interest at heart. I do not care what circumstances you found yourself in. I do not care what you have done. I do not care about that. I care about, do you want to do what God wants you to do? Will you quit hiding behind your sin? Will you do what God says? I am telling you, you think you are getting away with it. I am telling you God has vessels of dishonor and honor. You choose.

VII. The Consequences of Unconfessed Sin

I am telling you all my life for 35 years in the ministry, I have seen the same patterns. They never change because the Bible is an absolute book, and the patterns of human nature are fixed. If you want to learn to deal with people, and many of you will learn those patterns. I am telling you, the Bible says, "A child is known by his doing." Just watch what they do. You cannot hide your sin. You try to pretend you are right with God and say, "Well, I am right with God." Hey, you know what? The first thing that goes, the first thing that goes when you get out of fellowship, the first thing that goes is when you do not want to go to church anymore. You look for every convenient excuse in the world. You know why? You do not like looking in the mirror. Second thing that goes, you do not want to be around God's people. You do not want anybody to remind you you are not doing right. So you separate. Oh, there will be every excuse in the world. Oh, I have heard them. I have heard them. They will try to hide their sin. They will try to alibi their sin.

They will try to justify their sin. They will try to rationalize their sin. They will try to blame their sin on somebody else, all the time holding off because they want to enjoy their sin. They will judge everything and everybody around them except themselves.

I remember telling you this story. This is my first lesson that I ever got in the ministry. When I came from Canton, Ohio, back in 1976, I was a youth pastor. Yes, I was youthful then. I had been, you know, I had a lot of head knowledge, a lot of heart knowledge about the Word of God, loved the book. Did not have a lot of practical application. I was still in a delusion that everybody in churches wanted to do what was right. I was very naive on my part. That was 35 years ago. I have come to a conclusion now. I know when nobody wants to do what is right. But back then, I still had my head in the daisies, or wherever. I will never forget. I got a call one night, and a prominent member in the church, a boy, was in my youth class. He is caught in a compromising situation with one of the girls in the church. Some of his friends called me and said, "Hey, you know, Billy is over here, and he is saying he is going to kill himself, you know, because he is caught now." See, he is caught. So, you know, it was about 10:30 on a Saturday night. But no, not me, because out in the stable is my white horse. I am the youth pastor. I am going to stand for righteousness. I remember telling Barb, "Honey, I am going about God's business tonight. Go ahead and go to bed. Saddle that big old white horse." He is a beautiful horse. Big, strong legs. Beautiful horse. He is about five hands high. "Saddle him up." Oh, I still remember. Slowing up on that horse, man, and saying, "Okay, let us go help this situation." Yeah! And boy, I will tell you, I looked down and sparks were flying off them hooves, man. I mean, we were galloping there, and I could hear, "Oh, and we are Christian soldiers." And I was right into that thing, man. I pulled up there, and there was little Billy. I was horsing a dance around and said, "Hey, little Billy. You know how the horses are when they went up to the blue and say, 'Hey, little Billy, what is the deal here?' Oh, whoa, whoa, big fella. Whoa, whoa, whoa. Get off that horse. Come on, little Billy. Let us go home." I made Billy drive home. I said, "We are going to tell your parents what you did." All the way home, Billy is trying to intimidate me. We are driving down the freeway, and he is saying, "Horses trot along behind me." He ran on the freeway, and he is saying, "You know what I will do? He says, 'I will just run into that abutment right there and kill us both.' What do you think of that, Bob?" And I said, "Well, I do not think that one will do it, Billy. Once you get up, go fast enough. Once you get a little fast," because Billy was a coward. I can smell a coward before I can smell anything. I walk out of my front porch in the morning, and I will say, "There are three cowards living down here, and there is one over here." I know cowards when I see cowards. Billy was a coward. Billy was no more going to run that car into the pole or the abutment of the freeway than Billy was going to take responsibility for what he did. Billy was a coward.

So I will never forget. We got to Billy's house, rung the doorbell, dad opened the door, mom came behind me. Now, I have got to explain to you about Billy's family. They were deacons in the church, very self-righteous. The moment they opened the door and dad looked and said, "Well, what do we got going on here?" I knew I was in trouble. I explained the situation. I asked dad to come out. We talked a little bit, and I told dad, I said, "Dad, here is what you are at with this. Billy does not want to take responsibility for this. Billy, all the way home, would deny, took any responsibility for this." I said, "You have got to put Billy into a structure. You have got to

make sure this kid quits playing the game right now, and you and your wife have the position. The moment it blew up, you have the position now to stop Billy from ever doing this again. Or you just roll back over and go to sleep, play Billy's game, and Billy winds up going on with the game because Billy will find, and they will always do this, they will find another avenue. They will tell you what you want to hear. They will make nice pomegranates throwing up in the air, and then they will sneak out at night and find exactly what they want to do." That is the way it works. For 35 years it has worked that way that I know of.

Well, next morning I get there for church, Pastor calls me in the office. I said, "Yep, what is up?" He says, "What did you do to Billy last night?" I said, "What did I do to Billy last night?" I said, "I took him home, and I explained the situation to him." And he says, "Well, his mom and dad are really upset." And I said, "Okay, upset about what?" Well, and he said, "Now Billy is refusing to come to church." And he said, "They are blaming you for it, the way you handled it." I said, "The way I handled it, all I did was bring him home. He was talking about killing himself. What do you think I should have done? Leave him out there? If I would have left him out there and he would have killed himself, would we not be having any more serious conversation now than what I did?" But you see, that was not the issue. Now, the fat cat preacher, his problem was they are big tithes, you see, and I am building the kingdom, and I need the money. So do not ruffle the feathers of Billy's mom and dad. Me, I did not give a flip. Billy's mom and dad were just like anybody else. It was right or wrong. That is my mistake. Before this whole thing was over, boy, I paid the price for it. When this whole thing was over, it was my fault, okay. Billy's dad said, "Well, my son cannot come back to church now because of you." I said, "You said your son cannot come back to church. You know what? All Billy has got to do is do what is right. He can come back to church." But it was my fault.

You know what happened to Billy? He put his mom and dad to sleep. They thought Billy was an angel. Off down the line, you know what happened six months down the line? Billy got that little girl pregnant. They called me into the deacons. They brought me into the deacons. The deacon's daughter that he was found with was one of the deacons in the meeting who did not know it was his daughter. So this is where I played Paul and Felix and Festus over here in Acts 22. They bring me in there, the deacons want to know why I did this. The one deacon that was his daughter, he said, "I do not know why you handle this way." And I said, "Well, I will tell you what. When I saw it was your daughter in the back seat with him, I just thought, I better do something." He said, "What?" See, he did not know.

I will tell you something, parents. You have kids, when you grow up, the little kids you got when they grow up, they are all going to get into trouble, and they are all going to have problems someplace along the line. Maybe not to that degree, but I am telling you right now, there is a way to deal with it. There is a way to deal with it. I have been in a situation, I have been in a situation one time where a guy and a woman were in a bad situation, they both were married, and I talked to the guy, and I will tell you what. I said to him, I said, "Let me ask you something." I said, "Do you see this as sin?" You know the first thing he said at his mouth? "Well, let me tell you about so-and-so in the church, brother." And I said, "I do not care about so-and-so." We went at it for 20 minutes, and then her for 20 minutes, they could not get the word sin out of their mouth. He

says to me, "Well, you know what? Everybody in that church over there, you know, they all got skeletons in their closets." And I said, "Yeah, but you are sleeping with yours." Hey, you want to fence with me? I watch Captain Blood, brother. I know how Earl Flynn did it. I took it in school. You want to fence with me? Go ahead. I am the last guy you want to fence with, but I will fence with you. Do not tell me about your skeletons.

You know what Martin Luther said? He gave great advice: "Keep short accounts with God." Keep short accounts with God. Do not try to hide your sin. Do not try to alibi your sin. Do not justify your sin. Do not blame it on somebody else. Deal with it.

Now, you know why they do that? Now, I am going to give you a big piece of the puzzle. This is Psych. We are going from 7 Judgment to Psych Class 101. Do not turn to it. Sometime this week, and I am out of breath right now because I have not fenced for a long time. Sometime this week, read Deuteronomy 28, one of the great unknown passages in the Bible. Sixty-eight verses, one of the longest chapters in the Bible. You know what it talks about? Historically, it talks about the blessings to Israel if they do what is right and the curses to Israel if they do what is wrong. Inspirationally, you know what it is? It is a picture to you and me as God's son. If you do what is right, God does this. If you do what is wrong and will not do what is right, this is what you have got to look forward to.

You know why those people rationalize their sin? You know why they will not admit their sin? You know why they do not want to come to church anymore? You know why they do not? You know why they want to always never take responsibility? You know why that is? I will tell you something. The longer you... that book is absolute. God never intended for you and for me to get way out of touch with God. That book is God's mind. It is real simple, boys and girls. You play with that mind, it plays with your mind. Now, that is how a man can be in a relationship that is dead wrong and not see it as sin. That is how a woman can get into a dead wrong relationship and not see it as sin. That is why little Billy could get into that situation and take it home to his mommy and his daddy. Because they wanted little Billy so much, they could just not deal with the fact that little Billy could do these things. It had to be somebody else's fault. Now, that was one of the most tragic things in my young life, but it was one of the greatest things. You see, then, at that day, I cared. Today, I could give a flip who you want to blame. You want to blame me for your problems? Okay, I am your best friend, pal. Maybe you will not see it today, but there is a day coming. There is a day coming. You know, I will force you to look into this book, into this mirror every day. Every time we are together, Thursday night, it will be looking into this mirror. That is the way God designed it, so God does not have to come down and deal with you Himself.

I am telling you, some of you young men want to get into the ministry someday. Some of you have some good potential. You are going to get into the ministry today. You better take one class. Forget the Bible classes. Take all the other classes. Just take one class, and that is taking it on the chin for Christ. That is what you have got to do. You will become the focal point of everybody's problem. They do not have enough guts. They are like little Billy. They are cowards. They will not go out on a hilltop in a full moon, rip their clothes off, and cuss God. No, they will keep their

clothes on, pretend they are just right, and cut your throat from behind. That is what the little Billies of life do. That is the way it works.

Now, I am going to show you why it is. Deuteronomy 28:27-29, listen to it.

Deuteronomy 28:27-29

The Lord shall smite thee with the botch of Egypt, and with the emerods, and with the scab, and with the itch, whereof thou canst not be healed.

The Lord shall smite thee with madness, and blindness, and astonishment of heart:

And thou shalt grope at noonday, as the blind gropeth in darkness, and thou shalt not prosper in thy ways: and thou shalt be only oppressed and spoiled evermore, and no man shall save thee.

"The Lord shall smite thee with madness." You lose your mind. Once you went to church and you saw right and wrong, now wrong is right and right is wrong. You lost your mind. I have looked at God's people who knew better, who know better, know the Word of God, but because of their sinful, wicked relationship with this world, suddenly what they used to know as right is now wrong, and their sin is okay. They are nuts. Keep short accounts with God. Let us go on. He smites him with madness and with blindness and astonishment of heart, and thou shalt grope at noonday as the blind gropeth in darkness, and thou shalt not prosper in thy ways, and thou shalt be only oppressed and spoiled evermore, and no man shall save thee. You lose your spiritual eyesight. You do not prosper, and you know what? The worst part of it is you come to a point in your life where nobody can help you. The longer you stay away from God, the less chance you have got of coming back.

O. J. Harold Smith, brother, he preached a message. You do not hear it preached anymore. He preached a message on the unpardonable sin, and I know, I know, doctrinally, there is no unpardonable sin, but you know what he preached on? He took that context to give everybody's attention, and it is true what he said. He said a child of God can live in sin so long, lie to himself, rationalize his sin, blame everybody else, that there comes a time in his life where he is living in a life for so long that God Himself cannot come down and deal with him and help him because the man now, not because God will not or God cannot, because the man has barricaded himself and will not let God in. Oh, I have seen it. I have seen it. I have seen a man or a woman get to the place where they thought they were getting away with it, having a great time, doing their own thing, and you go, and you go, and you go, and you play the game, and you play the game, and then someday, you know what happens? I will show you what happens. Oh, you will beat the book. It is a mirror, mirror on the wall, tells your sin, every one and all.

Look what happens.

Deuteronomy 28:30

Thou shalt betroth a wife, and another man shall lie with her: thou shalt build an house, and thou shalt not dwell therein: thou shalt plant a vineyard, and shalt not gather the grapes thereof.

You get divorced. You get married, and somebody else winds up sleeping with her. "Thou shalt build a house, and thou shalt not dwell therein," because you have got to sell it when you get the divorce, or she gets the house. Now, I will tell you what else. "Thou shalt plant a vineyard, and thou shalt not gather the grapes thereof." Somebody else winds up raising your kid. That is the end result. That is the end result. You think you play games with God? Hey, He made a deal with you, and He will get you home to heaven if it kills you. I am telling you, you better hear this today. I am your best friend. I do not care what situation you are in. There is a biblical way to deal with it, and when you do not deal with it, and you play the game, and you believe the lies, and you follow the deceit, you will wind up with a broken home, broken marriage, broken kids. Take it to the bank! I am telling you, you find yourself in that situation, you get to the place where nobody can help you. Nobody can help you. Nobody can help you.

Let me tell you something. When a child of God will not do what is right, keep short accounts with God. Remember, God has vessels of honor. God has vessels of dishonor. There is more than one young man the last 35 years of my life than in our final conversation before he went his way. I told him this. "Look, son, you are God's child, and I love you. But you are not doing what is right, and I am not going to kiss your butt like your mom and your dad or your wife or your husband does. I am telling you right now, when you die, when God comes down and finally has enough, I will preach your funeral, and I will use you as an object lesson of what not to do to be a vessel of dishonor, because you know better!" One of those young men blew his brains out. 15 years ago, 16 years ago, 20 years ago, I do not remember what it was. I am telling you, you do not play games with God.

When you got saved, God had a deal with you. Over there in 1 Corinthians 11:30-31, he is talking about the Lord's supper. He says that we would judge ourselves.

1 Corinthians 11:30-31

For this cause many are weak and sickly among you, and many sleep.

For if we would judge ourselves, we should not be judged.

"But when we are judged, we are chastened of the Lord, that we should not be condemned with the world." God wants to perfect you, but you go so long, you blow it off. If you will not listen to my sermons, pretty soon you are not listening to the Holy Spirit of God inside you. Pretty soon, God has no option. God has no choice. He says in verse 30, "For this cause, many are weak and sickly among you, and many sleep." He said some of the people were weak. Some of them were sick, physically sick, because of unconfessed sin. Some of them slept. They were dead. God killed them. I hope I do not have to tell you in 1 John 5:16, the Bible says there is a sin unto death. God only lets you go so far. God is only going to let you blow it off so long. He is only going to let you do so much damage.

I have seen situations. I know a guy that got, I cannot look into anybody's heart. I feel bad in some respects even saying this, but if telling you this will save you the pain and the heartache, then it is worth it. I had a friend of mine, Barbara, and I knew the guy who was wife back in Ohio for years and years and years. This guy was one of the meanest guys that you ever had in

his life. He treated his wife like dirt. He treated his kids. It was all about him, all about him. Yet, he would never use anything else in the King James Bible. You know what? That does not prove anything. I mean, I appreciate it if you believe it, but do you believe it enough to live it? Oh, he would not have, oh, and he loved Bible study. He loved the deep things of the Bible. He just never translated them into his own life. We had moved out to Kansas City, heard some time later, killed in the car wreck. Bill Hackaporn. Killed in the car wreck. Now, I had not seen Bill for four or five years, but I am going to tell you this. Based on what I know about this book, and I cannot look into his heart, and I do not know what God did with him, but based on the last time I saw him, he was heading for this. You know why? Because he had a sweet little kid, boy, and that little boy was going to grow up to be a Bill Hackaporn, Jr. And God said, "Uh-uh, Bill, you can play it your way. You can do it your way, but you are not going to bring that little boy up that he is going to be just like you." As far as I am concerned, judge me if you want to. I think God took old Bill out of the picture, took him home to heaven. She married somebody else, good Christian man, and that kid gets what he needs. Do not mess with God. Do not mess with God's Word. I am telling you, you are all young Christians. I love you to death. I am giving you some good advice. I am your best friend. Keep short accounts with God!

Now, I am going to say this to you, because now I know what you are all thinking. You are all thinking God is going to kill me by 3 o'clock this afternoon. Well, if He does, He will kill me at 2:30, so we will be in good shape. That is not what I am saying. When something happens in my life, there is a major deal. You have got to gauge this for yourself, because I am telling you right now, if you get the flu next week, do not run back to 1 Corinthians 11 and say, "Well, if this caused someone sick, it must be because of the unconfessed sin of my life." You do not need to do that. Every time you hear somebody die that is a Christian, it does not mean God killed them. It certainly does not mean that if you get a cold, if you get sick, if you break your leg, or whatever, that God is judging you. It certainly does not mean that, you know, I cannot think of anybody in this room today. Does this make you feel better? Unless you know something, I do not know. I do not think of anybody in this room today where you are at in your spiritual growth, God is ready to kill you yet. Does that make you feel better? I mean, I saw the clipboard this morning, your name was not on it. I am not saying those things to make you afraid. Now, listen to me. I am not saying those things to scare you, but I am saying those things to scare you. Understand where I am coming from? God gives you grace. Certainly, 99% of you in this room are young Christians that are growing and thriving. I know you have problems; you have not got them all solved yet. Nobody is expecting you to. God is not going to come down and whack you for that. God does not care. Most of the Christian life is three steps forward and two back. That is fine with God as long as you keep making the one-step progress. God knows we are weak. God knows we have got problems. God knows we have to work through it.

But let me tell you this. Here is another little rule that I use in my life. When something happens to me, I follow through a three-part process to check it out with me.

7. Am I right with God? Did this come into my life because of anything in my life that is not right and confessed up with God? If that is clean, I move on to the next one.

8. Then God put this into my life for some strengthening that I need. This bad time that I think is bad is for my profit. I have got to look at this in that light because everything between God is clean. So it is not because of unconfessed sin. It has to be because now God has something for me.
9. Then God has put me into this position because He wants me to get me up against somebody else.

Years ago, we had a haunted house back in Ohio, and Barb stepped on a nail. We went to bed that night. She woke up in the middle of the night. The leg was swollen up three times bigger. Took her to the hospital. She spent the next five days in the hospital. Now, I could not conceive of her doing anything wrong that God would judge her for sin. I think she is the greatest Christian I have ever lived. That is my own personal opinion, publicly expressed, but that is where I am at with it. She is much better than I am. I could not conceive of that. I did not come to later, five days later, and I was racking my brain because for a while there, it was not like it was going down. You know, I do not want a one-legged wife. You know, I never been to evangelist. We used that and said, "You see there, we had service last night, and Barb Alexander came down and gave up dancing, one-legged woman." Come find out after it was all over, they brought a little gal into her, put it in the van next to her. My wife wanted a Christ. Now, in my heart, in my mind, God let that happen, put her there for her. What I have got to tell you, she did give up cigars right after that, and that was a good thing too.

So what I am saying is, that is the criteria you have got to use. I am not trying to paint a damning, dooming picture this morning that I am. As long as you are trying to do what is right and you deal with your sin, you are fine. I will tell you what, you are not going to have a perfect day. You are not going to have a perfect life. It is not going to happen. So I am not saying that all sickness is sin, but what I am saying, that the most vile, godless, sinning Christian tonight that you know of, she got in that position by starting with one unconfessed sin. Sin is like mutual funds. It is like your 401K compounds interest very quickly. It is not long until you get to the place where it is not your fault anymore. Sin is no longer sin. Right is right, right is wrong, and wrong is right. Every problem I have got is because of somebody else. When you get in that place in your mouth, let me tell you something. Here is how it works. Here is how it works. God smites you with madness, and the last thing that comes, and this is where no man can help you. This is Romans 1. You know what you get? You get a reprobate mind. A reprobate mind is the bottom rung of the ladder. It is where you go that you do not ever come back from as a child of God. At that point, you do one or two things. One, it either takes you home, or God allows you to go on in your misery, and you wind up with a judgment of Christ losing everything that God had for you. I do not know what else to tell you.

An unsaved man sins because he is a sinner. A Christian sins because he does not grow and deal with his flesh, and therefore his flesh sins. But he has been sealed. That is why the Bible says, Paul said in Romans 7 and 8, two greatest chapters in the Bible about your old nature and your new nature. You see, when you got before you were saved, all you had was an old nature. So you did whatever you wanted to do. It did not matter. You are going to hell. But after you get saved, God separates those out, seals you with the Holy Spirit of God, cuts one from the other, and now

you have a new nature and the old nature. The new nature is what is going to heaven. The old nature is going back to the ground. But what we say, everyone you feed is the one that controls you. When you start to go from what you know is right to what you know is wrong, and you placate that, you play with that, you are let you be drawn away by your own lust or your temptations, and you start alibiing and you will not deal with it, you know what? Then the farther you get, the longer you go, the less anybody can help you. It is just that simple. I have never seen it change in 35 years. Never. Never. The only thing that changes it, it gets worse. Pretty soon you leave your wife, you leave your husband, you... It is a mess. That is where it goes. Or the kid, you know, in a parent situation, he gets into all kinds of trouble.

VIII. Maintaining Fellowship Through Confession

But you see, God has made a provision for us. This is where you have got to see this. Here is the answer. The answer is found in the book of 1 John. The book of 1 John is the greatest book in the Bible that shows you and I what to do with our sin. God knows we are going to sin. But I have got to tell you this. The older you get in the Lord, and the more you love God, the more you are going to hate when you sin. I would not give two hoots in the world for a Christian who, when he sinned, thought it was funny.

Let me tell you something, brother. When you first get saved, this coming Friday night, the moon will not be up. But if it was up, it will be up late. If we are that late, we can look at it. But, you know, you look at the moon. Like the night we were out there, Shelly and the boat, you see that big old moon out there. Boy, it is just beautiful. Shelly was talking about, "Look at the man in the moon. There is his face." Because people talk about the man in the moon. It actually looks like a man's face. You will stand back and you look at it. It looks like one thing. If I took my telescope, cracked that sucker up to about 300x power, put it on the moon, you would see nothing but crags, cracks, craters. You would see the biggest mess in your life. It is just absolutely the biggest mess in your life. When you look back at it, you see it in its grandeur. When you get really high magnification on it, you see it for what it is. It is hard to find a five-foot section that is not all busted up and broken. That is the way your life and my life is. When you got saved, you look at your life like the whole moon. You see yourself as a sinner. Maybe you have got drinking. Maybe you have got something you have got to give up. Maybe it is drugs. Maybe there is some big thing in your life that you just know is wrong. But you see, the more you grow, it is like putting higher magnification in my telescope. The more you see the moon for what it is, and pretty soon when you get to be 10, 20 years old in the Lord, you are always looking at yourself through 300x, and you see the little imperfections. Where when you first got saved, you never saw them at all. You know what it does? When you love God, you have got to love the things that God loves. When you love the things that God loves, then you hate what God hates. You love God, and you hate sin. So when you do sin, you hate yourself. You get so mad at yourself. You say to yourself, "I knew better than that. What in the world?" You just get so angry at yourself. You do not say, "Well, it is your fault." No, you deal with it personally.

Now here is how it works. He says in 1 John 1:5-10, here it is.

1 John 1:5-10

This then is the message which we have heard of him, and declare unto you, that God is light, and in him is no darkness at all.

If we say that we have fellowship with him, and walk in darkness, we lie, and do not the truth:

But if we walk in the light, as he is in the light, we have fellowship one with another, and the blood of Jesus Christ his Son cleanseth us from all sin.

If we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us.

If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.

If we say that we have not sinned, we make him a liar, and his word is not in us.

There are two great things that come out of this. One, you are going to sin. And two, how to fix it when you do. Now let me tell you this. I am going to give you the best sermon you ever heard, or the ending of the best sermon you ever heard. You do not want to go out of here not getting this today. I am going to guarantee you today how you can get the judgment seat of Christ and have everything that God has for you. That is the easiest thing in the world if you just follow the concept and understand the concept. Sinner, son, and next week, servant. You were judged at Calvary's Cross as a sinner. The day you got saved, God no longer looks at you as a sinner. He does not deal with your sin the same way. He now deals with you as His child, as His Son. God has made a provision. That provision is in 1 John 1:5. Here is what it is. You see, the key between you and God now is fellowship. The Bible says, "God is light, and in God is no darkness at all." Then if you are living in the first myth, if you are living and not doing what is right, you cannot say you are in fellowship with God. See that thing? That is the way that is.

Now, ladies and gentlemen, that cuts the crap right out of the alibis. If you hear it from your kids, you will hear it from people you work with. You cannot be right with God and still live outside of the structure of the Word of God. You just, it is impossible. When somebody tells you they are, you know what you are dealing with. You may want to believe them. You may desperately just want to believe. I have seen women that wanted to save their marriages. I have seen parents that wanted to keep their kids, and they just believed everything they said because they just wanted it to be true. You say, "What do you say to that?" I have got a helmet I want to show you right afterwards. All you are doing is prolonging it. It is not getting any better. When it finally hits, it is going to be a disaster. Take it to the bank. You cannot live in the light and in the darkness at the same time because the Bible, the B-I-B-L-E, the Bible, it is a black book with gilt covers, the Bible says, "God is light and in Him is no darkness at all." The Bible says, "If we say we have fellowship with Him and we walk in darkness," here it comes, "we lie." But then it says in verse 8, "But if we say we have no sin, we deceive ourselves and truth is not in us." See that thing? It is not a strange thing. Because what we are telling about here is fellowship.

Now here is how it works. Now here is how most of your lives will go tomorrow. I am going to show you the victory. When the Bible says, "Thanks be unto God, that He giveth us the victory in everything," here is what I am talking about. When we sing "Victory in Jesus," here is what I am talking about. When we talked about going through the Exodus and we talked about the song

of Moses, here is what I am talking about. God made a way, and that way is incredible. You see, once I get saved, I am now His Son. I am His child, and the key now is fellowship. But God is light. When I enter into darkness, I cannot have fellowship with God, and fellowship is broken. So a lot like if you were growing up and your child did something wrong and they know that it is wrong and they know you are upset with them. They know that the fellowship, that warm feeling, that bond is broken, and it has to be restored. Same way with God.

So what happens is this. Here is what your day is going to be tomorrow for most of us. You are going to get up in the morning. You are going to take this sermon, and most of you will take it to heart. Most of you will really look at it, and you will do something with it. You know, and you will go to town with it. You will get up in the morning, and you will be so determined that you are just going to give this day to the Lord. What happens is this. You are going to get up in the morning, and you are going to get a shower, and you are going to be singing, "All praise and power, Jesus' name." You are ready to go. You are going to just, and you are going to get out there, and you are going to go to work, and you are just going to drive down there, and you just think, "Boy, I got the joy, joy, joy, joy down in my heart." But at that time somebody is going to cut in front of you on the freeway, and you are going to forget yourself. You are not going to say, "In Jesus' name, amen." Or you are going to get to work. And you are going to get to work. And there, you know, you walk into your cubicle, and as you walk into your cubicle, there comes Sally the slut, you know, the office, she has got a dress on so short and so thin a mosquito can fly through it and not break her wing. You are going to, you are going to, you are going to go, you know, that is going to be your next problem. Then, you know, you are going to get down to the day, you know, and somebody is going to irritate you. You are going to think about this. They are going to get a phone call, you know, from somebody at home, your wife or your husband, whatever, you know, and they are going to be nagging on you because they are not feeling good, and the water pipe just broke, and you are going to get a little spat there. It is just going to be an all the time. At the end of the day, you are just going to be dragging, and here is what you are going to do. You are going to go to bed that night. Because you are a good Christian, you are going to go to bed that night. Here is how we do it. You are going to say, "Okay, Lord, I did not have a very good day today, and I know I have got to confess my sin, so let us see. What was the first one? We start with Sally. We start with her." You know what? You are going to forget them. You know what the worst part is? The worst part is when you forgot them. The worst part is you spent the whole day out of fellowship with Him.

Now, I am going to tell you, every day in your life there is going to be some scenario just like that. It is going to be. Now, how do you live your life? How do you do that? How do you do it? I will tell you what. Keep short accounts with God. You know what Martin Luther meant when he said that? He said this. You know what? Sometimes you have to judge your sin hourly. Sometimes you have to judge your sin every 20 minutes, and sometimes you have got to do it minute by minute. Here is what you do. You start out in the morning, and something bad happens. Right there. This is called God consciousness. This is called being aware of God in your life. You come to that and you say, "God, you are right on the spot." You say, "God, I am sorry. I should not have said that. I should not have thought that. It was wrong. Forgive me,

Father. Put it under Your blood. I do not want anything to come between our fellowship with You."

Twenty minutes later, I have known a preacher. He was an evangelist. He was a single guy. The devil used to beat him up. He had no wife. Obviously, he was married. His wife left him. He had all the natural desires that a man would have, yet he had no wife. This guy stayed faithful for 30-some years before he finally got married again. But he used to tell me, he said, "You know what, Bob? There were times when I would preach a place." And he said, "You know what?" He said, "I would go up there to preach, and there would be some gal sitting in the front row with a short skirt on." And he said, "The devil would get me, try to get me." There were certain Bible colleges that hated this guy. When he would have found out he was going, this is from a Bible college. Now, if I told you the name, you would have a heart attack, but I would not embarrass Bob Jones University in front of the world. So I am not going to tell you. They would actually send call girls over to his door to knock on the door in the middle of the night. I am not kidding you. This guy paid a price for it. This guy paid a price for it. He told me, he said, "There were times," he said, "I had to pull off the side of the road." And he said, "I stood there in 20 minutes just crying for God to take those desires away out of my life because there was an adult place right up the road here." He said, "I hear a guy like that, and I see a guy like that ministry, and I see what God has done, and I am telling you, everybody struggles." But he had the right format.

See, what happens is this. When you know, and I do not know about you, I do not have to have somebody tap me on the shoulder and say, "That was sin, by the way." I do not think any of us do. You have the Holy Spirit of God living inside. You know the minute you say it, you know the minute you think it, you know the minute it happens, it is wrong. What you do is you deal with it right then. You know what happens? You could go through the worst day in your life. You could have confessed something 555,423 times to God in that day. But when you go to bed that night, you end in fellowship. You started in fellowship, and you stayed in fellowship all day long because the blood of Jesus Christ, God's Son, cleanses us from all sins. If we are faithful and just to confess our sins, when we play this game, "Well, I am not quite in fellowship with God, but I am not really out of fellowship with God." It is when we play the games. "Well, I am really having a great time with God in the Bible," and you know you are not. You are living in the world. You are not doing what is right. It is all that stuff. It is when you just get honest with God.

But I want to tell you something, and I am done. Getting honest with God. Start with you getting honest for yourself. You understand that every man and woman in this room today has a personal responsibility and a personal accountability. Not to me, not to this church, but to that book to do what is right. God saved you for a purpose and a plan. He wants you to be a vessel of honor. He wants, and I am here to help. I am the best friend you have got, man. I am trying to make you look in that mirror. You are all good kids. I have got the best bunch of young crop of leaders that I could ever want. I have got the best people in this church, any place in this city. We are the best kept secret in town, and I want to keep it that way. Because I want to build here a work, not a work for God, but a work of God. I want men and women to come to the place where you learn and grow and understand what God has for you in your life. It will never happen until you get comfortable looking in that looking glass.

You know how you know where you are at to judge yourself spiritually today? And I am done. It is real easy. It is always easy. If you loved and liked everything I said this morning, and you could say into your heart, "Brother, that is exactly what I want, and that is what I want to hear." You are doing good. If you are out there saying, "I rubbed me the wrong way," you have some problems. You see, "No chastening for the moment. It is joyous but grievous. But afterwards," see, "it is for your profit." What I did today may just spare you from a car wreck tonight at 3 o'clock in the morning. What I just gave you today, if you heed it, may spare you from getting on a plane someplace and some terrorist going up and saying, "Oh, you are going to die," blowing you up. See? It is better than I do it, than He does it. That is my job. Hey, you want to get mad at me? Fine. You want to blame me? That is fine. I do not care. My whole life, I have understood my main job, as it used to be, boys, will be taking it on the chin for the Lord.

I watched my wife take a guy that was in prison. I watched her send money to him when she did not have the money to send him. I watched her write letters, help him with his legal stuff, watch him do everything in the world. I watched her give to that guy, counsel that guy, work with that guy, help that guy, do everything in the world for that guy. I watched it come to the place where he just, you know, she just gave and gave and gave and gave. She bought him Christmas. When he did not have money for a television, she got it out of her budget, cut short something. She wanted to send him money. I watched her do it over and over for four years. When the guy got out, started coming to church, got his wings back again, found some other gal that was not even a saved woman, they wanted to start hanging on with him. My wife takes the Word of God and she says, "Look, pal, that is not what they do." He never came back to church anymore. You know why he does not come back to church? Now it is her fault. See? Now, I do not care if you blow it on me. Do not blow it on her. You blow it on me. If I see the guy again, we will have a talk. But that is what happens, you see? That is where it goes.

Now, you better decide right now, you people that are coming up in this leadership class, you better decide right now if you are willing to pay that price. Because you will get it. You will get it. You will not have to worry about what I think about you because I understand where it is at. But you are going to lose some friends, you are going to lose some people, people are going to start looking at you, and they are going to start blaming you. You better decide if that is what you want to do. Oh, I know it looks glamorous up here. Oh, I know you think about standing in the Bible and preaching the Bible, boy, people, amen, and all that stuff, and people saying it. I know it looks grand and glorious, but behind the scenes, you pick up the tab for a lot of it. You better decide if that is what you want to do. Because when you start to get into ministry, you are dealing with crazy people. Crazy people. Bad dogs, man. Crazy people. Crazy. Fight your people. Okay? That is okay. It will be worth it all when we see Jesus. Life trials will seem so small. When we see Christ, oh, one glimpse of His dear face, oh, sorrow will erase. So bravely run the race till we see Christ. Vessels of honor, vessels of dishonor, your choice. God is going to get honor and glory out of everything we do. When you got saved, He made a pact with you, and He will be faithful when you and I will not.

Father, we thank You and praise You for the Lord Jesus. We love You. Thank You for all that You do. Thank You for these great people. I love every one of them. I am so proud of every one of

them. I just would not trade this group of people for anything in all this world, but Lord, they needed to hear what needed to be said today. Because there are a lot of young Christians here who need to know how to deal with their sins. There are a lot of things that need to get straightened up in young people's lives because of where they have come from, and they are new in the Lord. Lord, let this message, if they only understood and took to heart one message that I have ever preached since they have been here, let it be today, because this one is the key to everything else. Help us to understand that at Calvary's cross, we are judged as a sinner. After we get saved, we are judged as His Son. Next week, we will look at the third judgment to us, and that is being judged as a servant. Thank You, Father. Bless the rest of this day, and we will thank You and praise You in Jesus' name. For His sake we ask. Amen.

In the back there, you can get maps to Jan's place. Do not forget to check that number. God bless you. See you Thursday night. You are dismissed. Amen.