

I. The Importance of Looking Back and Forward

The month of June is typically our anniversary month. This year will be our fourth anniversary; we have been in existence four years. We started four years ago with 26 to 28 people. This is what God has given us in four years. We are so appreciative of that, but I always like that now that we have got ourselves somewhat established, I like to take the month of June and always focus on what we need to look back at and what we need to understand.

I think that in leadership, I have told you that the whole basis for ministry and leadership, and in your own personal Christian life too, you can never not look behind where you have come from. You have to always look around where you are at, and you have to always be looking ahead of where you are going. That is a basic principle taught all the way back in the Old Testament with Moses and the children of Israel.

I gave you a while back, I talked about, I think it was on a Thursday night, somebody asked a question and I talked about the three infirmities the Bible says that we all have. Those three infirmities are the things that we all struggle with.

1. One of the infirmities is found in Romans 8, and that is the infirmity that the Bible says we do not know how to pray.
2. The second infirmity was found in Romans 6, and that would be our flesh.
3. The third infirmity talked about throughout the Bible is, I always go back to Psalms 77, you can go many places to find it, and that is the infirmity of forgetting what God has done for us.

When a Christian forgets what God has done, and it happens sometimes, I have been in churches all my life where some of the most sanctimonious, Pharisaical people in all the world were yet saved and on their way to heaven. They had critical spirits about everything that went on. They are always judging people about everything and basically are the most worthless piece of people in the church. Thank God we do not have any like that here. I have been with them all my life, and some of you that have been in other churches, you grew up in them, you know exactly what I am talking about. The reason why they get that way is because they forget where they have come from.

You cannot ever lose touch and ever lose sight and ever forget where you were and how you looked the day God first laid eyes on you. When you forget what you were when God saved you, you will stop to view people through your own life and your own problems and your own history. That is what happens. When a church forgets, it ceases to become a church.

I am amazed of that. You know what I hate about life in general, about the world? Trying to call somebody to get help with something that you bought. We all have cell phones. Try to get a hold of somebody that is a live person to help you with your cell phone. You go through a series of prompts. It takes you an hour. My subscription will be up before I get somebody. You call a place and they say, "If you know your party's extension, dial it." I do not know the party's extension.

"Then go to an alphabetical list." You and I do not know how to do that on a phone. Whatever happened to the day that you just called a place and somebody alive on the other end answered?

Churches are the same way. Most churches now you do not get a live person. You get a series of prompts that will guide you through wherever you want to go. But if you are getting ready to commit suicide, you are going to have to put it off for a while. You are going to have to prompt your way through everything. That is the sure sign of a church that has lost and forgotten where it comes from. They become political. We do not have pastors anymore, and I know how many times I have heard this over the years, that we liken the pastor to a CEO. We get staff members someplace. I never found them in the Bible. The pastors all have something called interns, which I never found in the Bible. We now get people who personally do the things that we do not want to do. It becomes a nice big Congress and Senate. It becomes one gigantic big political organization, and the ministry gets lost someplace in the process.

This is why, and you have heard me talk about this several times, this is why all throughout the Bible, this is why in the Old Testament, everything that had to be done in the tabernacle, the lighting of the fire, the lighting of the candles, the lighting of the incense, all of the things that in that tabernacle the Old Testament required fire to get them going. That fire had to come off the brazen altar that was in front of that tabernacle. You know why? Because that brazen altar is a picture of Calvary's cross, and it teaches me and lays out for me that one of the greatest principles you cannot ever forget. When you forget to remember these things, then that is when you forget. It is simply this: whatever you do every day of your life, you always have to take it back to the day you got saved. Whatever you do, if it is not rooted and based in the day you got saved, then you are going to have some problems in life, and in time, you are going to wind up either as most Christians are, or this church will wind up like most churches are.

We have been here now four years, and I want to take this month before we have our anniversary Sunday, and I am going to do this every year because I think that that may come at it from a different angle every year, but I think that we need to have one month a year where we just stop and reevaluate where we have come from and where we are at and where we want to go. There is a real danger in a church that has this much success. There is a real danger in a church that has this quality of people. That danger is that we get so good and so big and so moving with a lot of things that are happening that it is easy to lose touch with where we have come from.

I want to take today 2 Timothy 2:1-5, a passage I have never really preached on before to you. I have preached it to myself many times, and I want to talk to you today about an aspect as we approach our anniversary Sunday. I know not everybody was here when we started the church, and I know that many of you have come in, and that four years, somebody just is three or four months ago, maybe a couple weeks ago, maybe a year ago, it does not matter. It is good for everybody. It is good for you to understand how we started this and why. It is also good for us to have been here from day one to go back and revisit our commitment of why we decided we were going to be a church.

II. Essential Books for Ministry

Some of you guys and gals in here are going to grow up to, and obviously if the Lord tarries, it is coming, you are going to pastor a church. I can see already that you have that rough ability already hidden down in there, that you have basically what it takes if you just keep your nose clean and do what you have to do and let God work through you. You have that ability.

I never overemphasize any more books in the Bible, but let us face it, there are certain books in the Bible that you have to have to do certain things if you are ever going to be a good pastor. I am not saying you do not have to learn; I am not saying you can just learn these books and get away with it. You have to learn the whole Bible. But if there are books in the Bible that if you are going to be a pastor, you are going to be a leader, you are going to minister to in ministry with people, there are certain books of the Bible that you just have to get down. You cannot have a passing knowledge of them. There are certain books in the Bible that you are going to have to take and you are going to have to tackle them. I can help you tackle them, but you are going to have to tackle them because in those books you are going to find exactly what you need to get the job done when it comes to the ministry.

> Take the book of 1 Corinthians. The book of 1 Corinthians is a book that you have to know if you are going to be valuable in any ministry. You know why? It shows you what kind of church, what a church should not be.

> Then you have to get the book of 2 Corinthians down because it shows you what a church should be. What he does, he contrasts 1 Corinthians with 2 Corinthians, and it is the most incredible study you are ever going to get into in your life.

> Then you have to have the book of Romans. The book of Romans, without a doubt, I am going to tell you this, the book of Romans was probably the hardest book in the Bible, but it can be worked out and worked through. I have a confession: it probably took ten times through Romans before I ever started to grasp it, and yet there are still times that I begin to read it in some place and I will think to myself, "Now what was that again?" It is just one of those books that Paul writes it like a lawyer writes a legal document because in the book of Romans he is laying the foundation of Bible doctrine by which the church is going to be built on, and you need to know what those doctrines are. Its placement in your Bible is crucial. You have Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John to Israel, Acts to Israel up to Acts 7, and then the transition begins. In that transition, Paul now changes. He gets the gospel of the grace of God, and in that book, Romans, he tells you what is different now in the church to Gentiles than the way it was with the Jews in the Old Testament and even Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John, very crucial.

> Then the other two books you have got to get down at some point are 1 and 2 Timothy. Where 1 and 2 Corinthians are about a church, and where the book of

Romans is about church doctrine, 1 and 2 Timothy are about your personal accountability within the ministry. There lies the qualifications of a pastor, qualifications of a deacon. There you find where a man named Paul takes a young man named Timothy and basically gives his life to him. I am sure Paul, when he met Timothy, probably did not think it all the way through. Maybe he did, I do not know. But in 2 Timothy, what you find is Paul now, who is about to die, this is the last book he writes before they kill him, and what he is doing is putting the finishing touches on a young man who is going to take over his ministry for him. With that mindset, it is an incredible book. It shows you everything you need to know and understand how these things work in churches.

These five books of the Bible, if you are going to be a pastor, a leader, or you are ever going to do anything meaningful, you have to get these down. These books will stop you from flying by the seat of your pants, which so many of us like to do. These books will rivet you and bolt you down to the place where you know why things happen the way they do.

III. The Foundation of a Work of God

I want to read the text here in 2 Timothy 2:1-5.

2 Timothy 2:1-5

Thou therefore, my son, be strong in the grace that is in Christ Jesus.

And the things that thou hast heard of me among many witnesses, the same commit thou to faithful men, who shall be able to teach others also.

Thou therefore endure hardness, as a good soldier of Jesus Christ.

No man that warreth entangleth himself with the affairs of this life; that he may please him who hath chosen him to be a soldier.

And if a man also strive for masteries, yet is he not crowned, except he strive lawfully.

Father, we thank You and praise You for the Lord Jesus. We ask You, Lord, to take this time this morning that as we look back and we reflect, help us, Father, to understand how that we have where we have come from. We want to focus, Lord, on what we need to be doing and where we need to be going, but we can only do that when we have looked at and understood where You brought us from. Help us, Lord, as we in these last four years, You have been so good to us. You blessed us with so many good people and so many good people who are geared toward ministry. I pray, Father, that this lesson today would be taken to heart, that those that have found their way that want to serve God and have made their mind and set their intentions and their heart toward that would be blessed and be encouraged. And those, Lord, that maybe have just come in or that maybe are struggling through things, Lord, would it help clear it up where they need to put it,

what they need to do. Lord, we thank You and praise You in Jesus' name, for His sake we ask it. Amen.

There are five lessons here in what I call "building a work of God." I learned very early from the man that taught me the ministry two concepts: a work of God and a work for God. We do not think about how we use terminology a lot, but he told me that anybody can build a work. Anybody can build a work for God. He says most churches are works for God. He says very few men ever build a work of God. We do not think about the impact of that little statement, of those little words, but brother, there is a great truth lying behind that. You see, most churches are churches for God, but you do not find many churches today that are a work that is of God.

When a church is for God, they usually follow the standard cookie-cutter procedure that most churches do. They want to fit in, they want to blend, not with the world so much, but with the standard mindset of Christianity. A work of God does not fit into any mold. It is a church that follows the Bible. It does not stand on tradition. Other churches may do other things; they will do what works. I remember when we started the church, I was told that you could not build a church without a building. Well, hello, here we are. I was told that, well, when they found out that we were not having a Sunday night service, it is an anathema. Well, that is a terrible thing. Yet when I threw them a Bible and I said, "Okay, no problem, simply show me Sunday night church services in the Bible." It is not there. Now you can find it in the Baptist Creed, but so what? I mean, we make fun of the Catholics all the time and their little stupid stuff that they do, but just let me tell you, do not you think that the Baptists do not have their own form of catechism? You notice how I punctuated that by silence as I walked back there. It did not impress you. It impressed him.

Building a church is simply about building people, men and women. There really is, and if you ever build a church, or really anything, but if you ever build a church, and maybe someday you will take over as this church gets bigger, obviously we will have a youth department someday, and who knows where it will go. There are going to have to be men and women who take over large portions of this ministry. As we speak here right now, this church is fast approaching the place where one man cannot run it all anymore. But when you look at that and you see it, whatever you build, I promise you, whatever you build, whether it is a church, some of you boys may get cut out and God sends you somewhere, and God may use you to start a church someplace, who knows. But I want to give you a little bit of advice. If God ever calls you to build a church and you want to build a work that is of God instead of a work for God, let me give you the biggest piece of advice I can give you: do not get in a hurry when you build it. Do not get in a hurry.

Building a church, working with people, takes patience, lots of patience. Building a church, working with people, takes long-suffering and perseverance. You have to be able to have those qualities in you if you are going to be in ministry and you are going to work with people and build anything for God. I will tell you this, and this is true of anything you ever remodel a home or ever do a kitchen or a room or a bedroom or whatever. Everybody has, we all hate to do it, but it is something that we all have done sometimes or other. I am going to tell you something you can count on three things whatever you do, and it is true of the ministry.

4. The job is always going to be bigger once you start it than you thought it was going to be.
5. It is always going to take you longer to do it than you thought it was going to take you to do it.
6. It is going to cost you more than you originally thought it was going to cost.

That is just the truth. That is a truth of ministry and building people, and that is why you have to have patience, perseverance, and long-suffering. That is why you have to be patient with people when they do dumb things, and the only way you can be patient when they do dumb things is to look at all the dumb things you have done. See, it is easy to look at somebody who does not do it the way we think they ought to do it, and because we have been around for 20 years, 30 years, I am speaking of myself now, and I know how to do it. It is easy to see that when I give you something to do and you do not do it well or you do not do it right, it is easy for me to become self-righteous and look at you and look at you from that standpoint and say, "What are you, idiot? Why can't you do that the way it needs to be done?" But the truth of the matter is, when you look at it from the fact that I can look back and think of all the stupid things I did when I first got into the ministry and when I was being trained in the ministry, it takes patience, it takes long-suffering.

When you start to work with somebody, you can just mark it down, people are going to come in for a discipleship, and you are going to get you a little lessons, and suddenly they are going to start spilling their guts about everything that they have had bottled up for the last 50 years. You know what? The job just got bigger than you thought it was going to get. You have ten lessons. Let us see, if I do one a week, I can do it in ten weeks. If we do one every other week, that is 20 weeks. You know what? You are going to find out you get through one lesson about every three weeks. So the job takes longer than you thought it was going to take, and you know what? You are going to have to put more time, and it is going to cost you more than you thought it was going to cost you. It is the same, it is the same, that is the people and that is the ministry, building people and building a church, it is the same way.

I will tell you something else, guys, you need to learn this, and this is stuff I told you the day we started. I explained every step of the way when we started our church. I told you what we were going to do, how we were going to do it, and now it is time to look back and see how the plan, as Dr. Phil would say, it is time to look back and say, "How did that go for you? How did it work for us?" You cannot build up without spreading out at the base. That is a mistake most pastors make today because they are in a hurry. The young generation coming up does not have any patience at all. Part of that is because they have been given everything. If a kid growing up in school now, he gets to be a senior or a junior, if mom and dad does not have a brand-new spanking car out there, he thinks something is wrong, and mom and dad are the worst people in the world because everybody at school the moment they become a junior, they get a car. Pat, did you get a car when you graduated from junior high? Stephen, you? Well, you do not need one now, you work at a car place, you take whatever one you want. I did not. But you see, kids demand things now, they expect things now, and of course all that added to it just produces a generation that wants everything right now.

Then the society adds to it. I remember when the first McDonald's opened in Canton, Ohio. We ate there. Hamburgers were 15 cents, french fries were a nickel or a dime, shakes were like 25 cents. But I will tell you what, there was no drive-through, there was no fast food. That was the first beginning of the fast food. Up to that point, mom and dad and families ate around the table. Okay, but then we got fast food, and then that was not fast enough, so we had to get faster foods. We put a drive-through because going into the fast food place was not fast enough to get your fast food. Okay, the way our society has worked, I know this is true, some of you older people do too. When I went to school growing up, I hated when you got new blue jeans. They were sticky and starchy and stiff. It is like new shoes. Every time you went to school, and this is, this helps you understand some of the psychological problems I have is from these things in my life. I hated new shoes. I would stand up in the parking lot and scuff them up. You know why? Because I went in and what happened? "Oh, Bobby's got new shoes! Everybody see my new shoes!" You remember that? "My new shoes!" And I would be over there saying, "Up your big nose with a big rubber hose!" I do not like to be embarrassed like that. We used to get jeans, they would be too blue. You want them faded, you wear them a while, get used to them, wash them out four or five times, and six, seven, eight times, pretty soon after about six months, they look good. Boy, now you go out there, you will pay \$60, \$70, \$80, we were going to pay Lenny \$85 for a jean that you could find out at Goodwill, holes in the knees. Now they strategically placed the holes for you. They fade them, they fix them like that. They are already old. You know why? Because we live in a society generation that will not wait for something to take its course.

Now I do not care about your jeans, but in the ministry, it will not work. You will have to come to the place where you have to realize that you build leaders one at a time, and you cannot go up until you go out. The base that you build will have to be in direct relation to the attendance that you go up. Building a church with a lot of people without a strong base is a disaster. I knew a guy years ago that worked in another country, and he produced one of the largest churches probably the world has ever seen, and it was an incredible church. But the problem was the guy never took any time training anybody to be leaders. He just got a lot of people in church. The church probably ran three or four thousand people, and he got into the process of turning over areas of responsibility to Christians that had no business being in responsibility. You know what happened? About three or four years later, the leadership of the church rebelled. He had all kinds of, they kicked him out, threw him out, and now the church that had had a chance to be a real impact is now just a big conglomerated glob. You cannot produce a work for God without time, patience, long-suffering, and paying the price and working one couple, one person at a time.

Everything rises and falls on leadership, folks, and that is not just true of the church, that is true of anything in life. Leadership is crucial. Building good leadership is absolutely essential in a work for God. It is true of anything, it is true in a corporation, it is true in any business, but that is beside the point. It is absolutely paramount.

I grew up in the churches in the 60s and the 70s. My home church was a church called the Canton Baptist Temple. Back then they all called themselves whatever Baptist Temple. There was an Akron Baptist Temple, there was a Cincinnati Baptist Temple. It all came out of that J. Frank Norris crowd. What happened was this: I watched it. I watched it at the Canton Baptist

Temple, I watched it at the Akron Baptist Temple. I watched men build a church in that day. Dallas Billington, Akron Baptist Temple, he was running 10,000 people in his church. Now Dallas Billington had no college education. He came over from Kentucky. He is one of J. Frank Norris's boys, and all he knew how to do was love people and preach, and brother, he could do both. He built a church in Akron. Harold Hennigar, Canton Baptist Temple, same thing, same thing. They all came up from the South, they all came out of Kentucky, Alabama, they all came from West Virginia. They all were boys that were in that little circle of J. Frank Norris that broke out of the Southern Baptist Convention, and they all loved people, they all could preach, they all believed the Bible, and they all built a great work. When they got old or they died or whatever, their boys took it over. It became a family heritage type thing, and to this day these churches are absolutely cemeteries. Now there are a lot of reasons for that, but I will tell you the main reason. The main reason is the boy could not appreciate what his dad gave him because the boy never labored to build it. Harold Hennigar had four heart attacks in building that church that he had. His boy took it over. His boy ran it into the ground and left and went to Florida, came back when Florida came back, it was a mess. It is all the same way, it is all the same way, and it goes back on the father's shoulders because the fathers, I mean, I am not saying that situation will not work, but the fathers never trained the leaders to be in the right place.

IV. Five Lessons for Building a Work of God

Now there are four or five things I want you to remember here out of this, and I want to talk through it, go through it very quickly here. It is going to be a shorter time than we normally have because I have my other meeting coming up here. But let me just say this, verse one says this:

1.) *"Thou therefore, my son, be strong in the grace that is in Christ Jesus."*

Now that is the first thing I want to talk about. I want to draw your attention to the name Christ Jesus. You have heard me say this before that when it comes to the Bible, even the way the words lay out are very important. Now you look at that word Christ Jesus. The proper name for the Lord Jesus Christ is simply that, the Lord Jesus Christ. Three in your Bible, the number of completion. So you want to get Him in a right order, it is the Lord Jesus Christ. See, Lord, that is His deity, is God the Father. Christ, that is Christos, that is the anointed one, that was His job. And Jesus, that is the earthly man. So if you want the complete title of the Lord Jesus Christ with all three of His offices, it is the Lord Jesus Christ. When you find in your Bible where it says Christ Jesus, or you find in your Bible that says Jesus Christ, or you find in your Bible where it says the Christ, or you find in the Bible where it says the Lord, or you find in your Bible where it just says Jesus, they will all denote a different context that will be in direct relationship to what that name means.

Here we have Christ Jesus. Christ is the name of the Christos. Christ is the name that He had up in heaven, the Christ. And it is Christ Jesus. The context is going to be Him leaving heaven and coming down to be the Son of Man. So when he talks down through here, he talks about, "Thou therefore, my son, be strong in the grace that is in Christ Jesus." All right, let us talk about the main characteristic of Christ coming from heaven, coming to earth. The first characteristic was He was a servant. He did not come down flexing His spiritual muscles, showing Himself to be

God. He came as a servant without reputation. He came showing us obedience. He came showing us and defining for us what sacrifice was. He showed us what it means to do the will of the Father. You see, when that name says Christ Jesus, it is showing you that He is going to show you Christ leaving heaven and coming down to being a man and everything that goes along with it. That is the first thing I want to see in there.

The second thing I want to see is this: "Be thou therefore, my son, strong in the grace." You notice he did not say strong in the Bible. You notice he did not say strong in the truth. He said strong in grace. You see, you can have all the Bible in the world and not have grace, and you are a worthless zero. Everybody knows about Fred Phelps. How many know who Fred Phelps is? I have known Fred Phelps for 25 years. You will know who he is immediately when I tell you because he has made national news in the last three or four years. Fred Phelps is the guy, his church is in Topeka, Kansas. Make it closer now. Fred Phelps is the guy that goes to all of the funerals of our boys killed over there in Iraq and stands out there while the grieving families with signs saying, "Those boys went to hell." That is Fred Phelps. I knew Fred Phelps when he used to go up to the college up there in Lawrence and preach on the street, and he used to yell, screaming in a loud voice of what the people, sexual sins they were doing in those rooms. Kind of made me unnerved. I mean, I like he wanted to do them too. I mean, it was a weird deal. But I never forget Fred Phelps is the guy that he talks about all gay people in the most derogatory way, calls them fags and tells them they are going to hell. He will picket funerals of good, clean U.S. boys who died in the service. And while their grieving families are burying their boys, they will have to look up and see signs that say, "Your boy is in hell, ha ha ha. We are glad your boy is in hell. We are glad your boy is in hell." They will have signs up that says, "We hate all faggots. All faggots are going to burn in hell for all of eternity, ha ha ha."

Now the sad thing about Fred Phelps, and this is my point. The tragedy of people like Fred Phelps is this: basically Fred Phelps is right. A lot of those boys over there that died for your freedom and my freedom, and that tears my heart to say it, probably in hell. Let us face it, fighting for your country and dying for a good cause, do not cut any ice with God. Obviously gay people, if they do not get saved, that lifestyle is going to lead you to a lake of fire. No question about it. But you see, Fred Phelps has truth, but he has no grace whatsoever. And his message of truth is lost in the fact that he has no grace. Everybody looks at Fred Phelps as they should. They look at him as some radical right-wing absolute nut, which he is. I have no use for him whatsoever. I hate that he calls himself a Baptist. I hate that his church is a Baptist church. But I cannot remove myself from the fact that basically what he believes about those situations is what I believe about them. The bottom line is he has no compassion. He has no grace. He has truth, but he has no grace. Therefore his truth is rendered ineffective. You cannot ever come to that place in your life where your truth that you have loses its impact because you have no grace. That is why he says, "Be strong in the grace." That is the first thing you have to have.

I talk a lot about balance. The biggest balance you have to balance in your life is grace versus truth. John 1:17 says that the law comes by Moses, we know that, but grace and truth came by Jesus Christ. You will find that you find examples of it all the time. I will give you a great example. The greatest example in the gospels of grace and truth is John 4, I believe it is, the

woman at the well. Here is a woman that had five husbands, and the husband she had was not hers. The plural background. Nobody in town wanted anything to do with her. She represents, by the way, in a spiritual picture, you and me. Caught up in the adultery of our sins. Caught up in all the garbage in our lives. Jesus met her at the well when nobody else would. That is your first key. Jesus met her at the well when nobody else would. She tried the little Baptist two-foot shuffle, and He calls her right on her carpet. And she says, "Go call your husband." She says, "Oh, I do not have a husband." She says, "I know, and the guy you got right now, he is your husband." You know what she said? "I perceive you are a prophet." You bet she was. He immediately turns the conversation to the living water that she needs. And He sent her away with a simple instruction: "Go and sin no more." But He had to have the grace to talk with her first before He could minister the truth that God has saved. Sometimes we are short on that. Sometimes we are short on that. That is the balance: grace and truth. The key in the Bible is biblical discernment to know when you apply grace and when you apply truth.

I have a friend of mine that is probably one of the best Bible teachers in the world today. He has a school where he trains young men to be pastors. I would not send a young man to his school for anything in the world. First of all, you do not need to. We have everything we need to have here. But even if I did, I would never send him there. You know why? Because he has got truth up the kazoo. But in the mode that he is in, what he is doing, he turns out guys that are the meanest guys you ever met in your life. I ran into a couple of them a couple weeks ago, and they go down to the plaza. I call them Fred Phelps Jr. They think because they have got the truth, they get up down there in the street corner of the plaza and they just rip everybody going by. I was preaching at a guy's church one time up in Boston. He picked me up. We went out to eat. He said, "Let us have some fun." I was never so embarrassed in all my life. He drives down the street. He has got a CB in his car that has now got a PA with two speakers underneath the hood. He flips it over. We are in a red light. Men and women are walking back and forth. He starts calling them out. A guy walks across the street. He says, "Sir, God knows where you are going tonight." He saw a lady walking down the street that was dressed nice, was not dressed improper, called her an immoral whore. And then he gives the mic to me. Like it is my turn. So I just blew it off. I said, "Attention Kmart shoppers, turn your attention to the blinking blue light." I said, "I am not doing this." You think you really accomplished something by just trampling people under your feet that are lost because you have got the truth? But that is where we are at today. I found it this way: either you have got the truth and you have no grace, or you have got grace and you have no truth. This church has to be in the middle. You have to be strong first, not in the Bible, not in truth, strong first in grace because grace is the ability to use the truth that God gives you. Without that, you are worthless when it comes to the ministry. Absolutely worthless. You will become a self-righteous Pharisee that thinks that you have got the Bible all to yourself, and it just, like I said Thursday night, you will become so right in your life that you are not going to be able to do that. You become so right in your mind, you become wrong, and you do not even know it. The problem goes back to forgetting. Forgetting what God has done for you, forgetting the day God saved you. The bottom line is, the first thing that he says, Timothy, Paul says to Timothy, is to be strong in the grace.

2.) Now look at verse two, here is the second thing: *"And the things that thou hast heard of me among many witnesses, the same commit thou to faithful men, who shall be able to teach others also."*

Now in the church, and this is what most people do not understand, if you go back through church history, you will find an unbroken chain. You will find an unbroken chain in the biblical church of teaching the word of God down through the history of the church. Basically, it is God's chain letter. We all hate chain letters, "Send this to seven people or you die." Well, this one is, "If you do not pass this on to somebody else, you are going to lose everything in the judgment seat of Christ." Maybe that is why we do not like them.

See, my job as a pastor is simple. It is not complicated. If you ever become a leader or a pastor, your job becomes very simple. It is very basic. When you go to Bible college, they cloud that. They tell you a thousand different things that do not mean anything. They take from you basically any ability you would have had and destroy them. But the bottom line is this: my job as a pastor is simple. I do not do administrative things. I am not good at it. I am not one of these guys that thinks I have got to have hands on everything. I screw it up that way. I do not do administrative things. I have something that needs to be done. I have plenty of ladies or guys that can get it done. That is not my forte. I do not do that well. You do not see me planning a canoe trip. Christor does that. You do not see me doing a picnic. Jamie does that. Or Rose does that. Or somebody else does that. I do not get into those things. I would screw it up so bad that it would never get done. That is not my job. I do not walk around as a pastor thinking, "I have got to be in control of everything." And I will tell you what, nobody can do it better than me. Well, let me tell you something. There may be some things I do better than you right now, but there are a lot of things you do better than me right now. A good leader understands that. He uses the people around him. He allows people who have those abilities to do it.

It is like, you know what a good commander in the military does? First thing he does when he takes over an army. If he is smart, the first thing he does, the first thing he does when he gets control of any military army group that are in battle, and he has got to logistically do it all, the first thing he does is go through the records and the files and find him the best chief of staff in the whole army and make that man the logistical guy that knows how to do it. Nothing will bog you down quicker than minutia. Nothing will bog you down worse than the details that you do not have to be dealing with. As a pastor, I have one job. That job is simply look for faithful men and women and then invest my life into them to make them faithful so they can pass on the book to other faithful men. That is it. That is my job, and that will be your job, and that is the job of every man or woman whoever takes any form of ministry anywhere is to be part of the unbroken chain down through history where you take the word of God that somebody else gave you.

I learned my Bible from a guy by the name of Mel Sabaka. He is in his 80s now. He will probably be dead in the next couple of years. He was the apostle Paul of my life. He set the foundation for everything I know today about ministry, and yet I was smart enough, because if you ever heard him preach, and some of you have, it would be really easy to lose yourself into a Mel Sabaka and say, "I want to be him." I was smart enough or dumb enough, however you want to put it, that I never lost my own identity in what he taught me, and I took from him what was

good and what I needed and what I could use and understood that there were things that he did that I could not do, but there were things that I could do better than he could do because I am not him and he is not me. He was trained by a guy by the name of Peter S. Ruckman. He was trained by a guy by the name of U. Powell, and the list goes on. U. Powell was one of J. Frank Norris's boys. I have no idea who trained him, but somebody trained him. They are all part of the unbroken chain that goes back to the Waldensians, to the Albigensians, to the Huguenots, all the way back to where we are at here with Paul and Timothy. An unbroken chain of men and women who grasp the vision once they are saved and, "I want to clear my life out and I want to be used of God, and I am a no-nonsense person, and I am going to get it together," and then you invest everything you have committing to them because they are faithful, and then they take it to somebody else that is faithful. That is how it works, that is how it works.

The model without a doubt is Paul and Timothy, and that is what I told you when we started. Paul is in a situation here with Timothy where he has given him everything he knows. He has taken him on his missionary trips. He has invested time with him, and now when he is ready to die, he is putting the finishing touches, and he is telling him, "Oh, these books are great." I mean, there are like 12 charges that he gives to Timothy in 1 Timothy. The whole thing just breaks down. We will go through them at some point in our leadership, but it is absolutely incredible. But you know what? The real model, if you want the perfect model, is not even Paul and Timothy. It is Christ and the disciples found in Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John because here is where the model gets structured to it. The Lord took 12 men. Those 12 men He invested three years of His life in. At the end of those three years, He went back to heaven because at the end of three years those men were ready to take over what He wanted them to do, and so He went back to heaven.

When God took the apostle Paul and wanted to teach him about the ministry, in the book of Galatians it tells you this, I think it is like chapter one, verse 17 or someplace in there. When God wanted to take Paul and get his undivided attention and get him ready to be the apostle to the Gentiles, He took him over there in Arabia, Mount Sinai, right where Moses was. You know what? He was there for three years. Three in your Bible is the number of completion. You give me a man or give me a woman or give me a couple. You let me build into their life Sunday morning, Thursday night, one on one with them throughout the week or every other week for three years. Allow me to add into their lives the things that they need to have like the Bible structures of the books of the Bible, like the counseling things we are going through or the leadership aspects. You give me that person, and if I do my part, and here is the real key, if they do their part, at the end of three years I would put them up against anybody in this country in the Bible. See, the problem is not me. I know how to do it. I can make you the sharpest guy or gal in the Word of God that you could ever want to be. The problem is not me. I am somebody, you are looking at somebody that has made every mistake in life already. I can save you a lot of heartache. But I cannot do what you have to do. You have to do that. That is your job. But three years you ought to be ready to go. If you are not ready to go in three years, you ought to ask yourself why.

You know, in all the time I have worked with people, and this has been for years, I probably can count on my hand the people that come in and sit down with me and have said to me, "Bob, I want you to make me what God wants me to be. And I do not want you to tell me anything about the Bible until you tell me this. You have seen me now for a year, six months, eight months, whatever the case, what are my weaknesses? Because I do not want to just learn the Bible, I want to start with fixing what is wrong with me. Bob, I will take it. I do not care what you tell me. Just tell me, what do you see as my spiritual leader that is my weakness?" Some of you asked me a while back when I made a statement about the kids, you know, me and whatever I said. I must have had 40 people come up to me and said, "Were you talking about my kids? Were you talking about my kids? Were you talking about my kids?" Yes. No. Well, I do not know. But you know what? You are asking the wrong guy. You have got to go down there to the nursery workers, get a hold of Barb Christie, get a hold of somebody that you know really has a handle on things that says, "How are my kids?" And then when they tell you what you do not want to hear, this is what you will do: "Whoa, whoa, whoa, whoa, whoa, she is talking about it." That is why. See? Most of us just want to hear what we want to hear. That is why, you know, you will come and learn the Bible, you will come this, you will come that, you will take everything. But you will never really grow until you start examining yourself and asking yourself honestly, whether you ever asked me or not, "Bob, what is wrong with you? What are your weaknesses? What is really holding you back? You have been doing this now for three years. Why are not you where you need to be? If three years is the model, why are not you where you need to be?" Those are the questions you have to ask yourself.

Let me tell you something. If when I was growing up, somebody would offer me the deal that they would spend an hour with me who knew the Bible and would teach me the Word of God, I would wear his ears out. He would be so sick of me, he would be saying, "Do not bother coming over anymore." The model is clear. My job is to take you men and you ladies. Once you decide and you give me Sunday morning, Thursday night, you give me the one-on-one, and you do your work. That is why a lot of you do not come because after about three or four weeks, I find out whether you are really sincere or not. When you sit there and we look at each other and you just look at each other stupidly because you did not do what you are supposed to do, you will not do that very often. I want the guy that comes in and just screws the top of my head off and wants everything out of it. That is how you learn. You learn by wearing me out, so in the process of building you, when you wear me out and I die, somebody is there that you can wear out after me. And then you take it and you give it to somebody else. You do what you are supposed to do with it.

3.) Third thing, verse three: "Thou therefore endure hardness, as a good soldier of Jesus Christ."

We talked about this last week. Now look at the word again. See, last time it was Christ Jesus, this time it is Jesus Christ. We are going to reverse it. Now we are going to talk about leaving earth going back to glory. See? This is my point. Jesus Christ, now we are going from the earthly man back to heaven, and you are told to endure hardness because when He went back, they had to endure the hardness without Him.

I will tell you the problem in the ministry today and problem in working with people. We have a lot of wannabes. We have people who want to pretend they are spiritual, they pretend they are leaders, they pretend they can do this, but there is no spiritual stuff to them. We used to have them in the army. Used to have guys that wore medals they never earned. Guys that wore jump boots that never been to jump school. I mean, wherever you go, you find them. But there are specifically people who want to do this. It is typically rampant in the ministry because the ministry is a spectacular thing, or so you think. You think it is spectacular to have people want to come over to your house and talk to you. You think it is spectacular to stand up in front of people and to lay out the Word of God and everybody listening on every word like it is the last thing they are ever going to hear or fall asleep. You see, you think that is the, you see the glamor of it. You see the grandeur of it. But you do not ever see or stop and consider what it takes to get there. What you have got to change about you and being faithful to ever accomplish it.

Now I have got to say this, it says the hardness here is not a hardness toward people. A lot of people get that. A lot of people think that being a pastor and being in ministry is yelling real loud and just being nasty all the time. That is what they think it is. The louder you yell, the more spiritual you think I am. Of course that is not the hardness that he is talking about. We have already covered the patience, the perseverance, and all that stuff. The hardness here is your ability to do a hardness against the opposition that is trying to stop you. It is the hardness. It does not mean that you are a bull in a China shop, that you are hardheaded and unteachable. It just simply means you know your order and you know the job that you have got to do, and it really comes down to how do you do that job when the pressure is on.

I never forget, I was in basic training in 1968. We are on the firing line. We had this one kid, he was an Indian kid, and he was a crack shot. This guy, I scored, I do not know, out of a possible 100, I think I scored 86, 87. This guy would knock down 100 targets every time, every time. I mean, I do not care if it was standing prone or on the sandbag position, he was just knocking them down. I could get down good, but the standing up was always tough because when you are shooting 300 meters, that is tough for open iron sights. But I got through it, 85, 86 out of 100, whatever it was. I was happy. This guy was boastful and prideful that he was beating the pants off everybody. So the drill sergeant, as drill sergeants do, most drill sergeants would make good pastors if they got saved. 80% of my ministry is what I learned, not in Bible college but in the military. I flunked Bible college, and I did not even go. But this guy used his pride not only to humble him but to teach us all a great lesson. Now that guy had no idea in that day that he was preparing me for the ministry. He is probably, Drill Sergeant Collins, he is probably in hell right now. My goodness, that was a long time ago. He is probably dead in hell now. But he never understood that he was not just teaching me about being a soldier, he was preparing me for the ministry and did not even know it. He got up there and he said, "Now that is how you do it. Now I am going to show you an example of what a real soldier should be so that when you get into combat, you know how to do this. Private so-and-so, you come front and center." Oh, he puffed up, came up there. He said, "Now I want you to instruct these men who most of them are going to die in combat." They like to throw that around. "But before they die and we ship their mangled bodies back to their mama, show them how in a combat situation you just knock down everybody coming towards you. Take the position, take six magazines." He loaded an M14, now

prone position. A guy leaned up there, he put the targets popped up. While the targets popped up, he had three other sergeants come up behind him. They had .45 automatics. They had a loudspeaker, they had an air horn. And the moment he started to fire, they fired off six rounds and blew the air horn and blew this, that, that. And that guy never hit a target.

Point is this: it does not matter how good you shoot when it does not count. He turned around, he said, "War is the most confusing thing you will ever be in in life. War is the most terrifying thing you will ever be in life. War will make you wet your pants." I could not say what he said. "War, when the stuff hits the fan," cannot tell you what he said. "You will be so terrified and so afraid and so scared. You must be able to hit the target with the most unbelievable terror pressure that can be ever put on your shoulders." With that one example, he fixed his ego, fixed our problem, and set me up for the ministry for the rest of my life once I got saved. It does not matter what you know about the book, how do you handle it under pressure? It does not matter what you know about the Bible. When it all hits the fan and it is all coming down around you, what kind of decision-making process do you have? That is what it means to endure hardness as a good soldier of Jesus Christ.

4.) Verse four: "No man that warreth entangleth himself with the affairs of this life; that he may please him who hath chosen him to be a soldier."

If there is any downside to the ministry for me, and I love the ministry, I love people, but the downside of the ministry for me is seeing what some of you have that you are wasting. That is the downside. Now I know that there is a process of time, and I know that most of you good people, you think you are all the ones that take it to heart. I mean, you come Sunday morning, Thursday night, you are working with this, working with that, you are doing all this stuff, and you are the ones that beat yourself up. Let me tell you something. Mark this down. This is why many of God's people who have the basic ability to be used of God in a church in their lives will never reach their potential. It is simply the affairs of this life. It lays down one basic principle that you better grasp, and it is an absolute principle taught all the way back in Genesis. The more you have, the less you get done. That is why God's form of society was an uncomplicated, very simplistic garden. The first murderer in the Bible built the complicated city. That is why in the millennium it goes back to simplicity.

All this we have today, all that you and I have today, it is nothing more than entangling you and I into the affairs because you have got now to balance your kids, your family, and your job, and you get a new baby, and you have got to go to school, and you have activities with your kids, and then you have this, and you have that, and you have your own hobbies, and none of those things are wrong. But none of those things at the judgment seat of Christ are going to win place or show either. You have got to be able to prioritize and balance the affairs of this life. My God, some of you cannot even get to church before the service starts. How in the world are you going to do the ministry? Now I do not mean that as a criticism, and maybe, you know, maybe the baby puked and threw up, maybe it had a flat tire, maybe it is, and maybe you just stayed out so late last night you did not think ahead or you had to come to church this morning. You decide, I do not care, I am not mad at anybody.

The history of America is a dramatic overview of the history of the church and Christianity. If you went to the World War I Museum, the World War I Museum was an incredible eye-opener for many of you because it showed you America coming out of the agricultural age and moving into the industrial age. If you want to study America, basically moves into it once it becomes a country, it moves into what we call in history, the agricultural age. The primary one was farming. Around the end of the 19th century, moving into the 20th century, we moved into what we commonly call the industrial age, all the new inventions. We saw the invention in the middle of the 1800s, the telephone, the telegraph. Ships changed from paddle wheels to steamships. Locomotives became faster. We began to see Henry Ford start with the cars. We began to see all of it change from the industrial age to the agricultural age to the industrial age. In the Civil War, which was a terrible war. Men got killed because you took one musket, put one ball in it, crammed it down, fired it across en masse. When 100 guys shot every time, 100 guys shot, probably 100 guys fell. That is the agricultural. In World War I, we figured out a way to take 500 rounds, put them in one belt, and knock them down that way. Progress. We moved from the agricultural to the industrial. Now we had airplanes to drop bombs on them. Now we had mortars and artillery to shell them miles away. Oh, advancement of society. Now we see we went from the agricultural age to the industrial age. By the end of 1945, we moved into the atomic age. Now we do not need to shoot. One plane with one bomb can wipe out 300,000 people at one shot. Woo, progress. We are doing great.

Then if that was not enough, we moved into the space age. Now we do not send the planes over here. Now we have Star Wars, not the movie. Now we have man in space, men on the moon. Now we are going to build rockets up there. They can take out satellites. We can launch rockets, what? We can globally, see. Then we went from the space age, and now we are living in the information age, or so they say. Now the average man or woman who walks out in his driveway and picks up a copy of the Kansas City Star has more information in his hand right there than a man in the 14th century amassed in all of his life. Now information is everywhere. Now we turn on the television, Fox News, CNN, CBS, ABC. Now we find out what is happening around the world in a heartbeat. Reuters, the line of putting all the material in. Now if that was not enough, now you have the ability, now you have the ability to put all the stuff into play. We went from the information age and moved right into the dysfunctional age. That is where we are at. Hey, let us face it. Our government is dysfunctional. Our country is dysfunctional. Our president is dysfunctional. Our Congress is dysfunctional. Our Senate is dysfunctional. Our churches are dysfunctional. Pastors are dysfunctional. Families are dysfunctional. Husband and wife and their marriage is dysfunctional. The Bible has been changed. It is now dysfunctional. Our music is dysfunctional. We have raised a bunch of God's people who are now dysfunctional. We have now fallen down and seeing how the whole system breaks down.

Most people today are like a machine I saw at the state fair a number of years ago. It was billed as the largest machine in the world with over one million moving parts. It was huge. People marveled at it. It was moving and going and doing and doing and doing. I asked a guy, "This is incredible." I said, "What does it do?" He said, "Oh, it has no function." I understand. Yet look at this. Look at the technology we have. Yet we are so dysfunctional. I bought me one of them GPS's for my car last week. Oh, I love it. I am finding everywhere to go. I cannot believe it. It is

the most, I do not know how I ever lived my life without one. I love it. I mean, you just type in where it wants to go. It acquires three satellites, and off you go. It is a great place to go. It acquires three satellites, and off you go. It is an incredible thing. A lady in there tells me right where I want to go. I have already got five sermons on the GPS and the Word of God. I do. It is incredible. You know what a GPS does besides get you there? It shows you how we are with the Word of God. Now that thing has got 80 million trillion billion dollars worth of technology in it. It operates off a whole global thing of satellites. It pinpoints where I am at anywhere in the world within five inches. And it has a lady's voice, and you can even change the voice. You can get an Australian woman, an English woman. You can get a, I mean, it has all kinds of things. It is incredible. They even had one, it had Mr. T on it, it said, "Turn, you fool!" I was afraid I would wreck my car. I do not like being yelled at. Yet with all that million-dollar technology, when I program where it is going, when I start to drive and follow it, when I get in a place that I do not know, I still am afraid that I know more better where I am going than it does. Just like it does with the Bible. That book is the mind of God. The technical side of that Bible is endless. Yet we still think wherever God leads us that we think we know how to get there better than He does. Incredible. We have got laser printing, microchips, computers, email, satellite communication. We have got information on any subject in the world. It is in your hand. I mean, if you do not have it on your laptop, then you can get one of those little blueberries and you can get it off of that. What? You get it off of your tree, I will get it off of mine. Yet we are not getting one quarter done that they got in the book of Acts with any of those things, but just the power of God. There is the problem. There is the problem.

5.) *And lastly, verse five: "And if a man also strive for masteries, yet is he not crowned, except he strive lawfully."*

Now I want to talk to you about striving. Let me say this in light of the last four years in training leaders, there are no free rides. If anybody gets a position of leadership, you have got it there because you earned it. I have people all the time coming to me and saying, "Well, you know, you put so-and-so doing this, you know, he is not that or she is not this." Let me tell you something. I watch them strive to do what is right, even if they make mistakes, when you do not strive at all. What is your point? Somebody said one time, "Well, I do not know why you have so-and-so do this." I said, "Because I like what he does better than what you do not do." That is why. You are always going to have that. But there are no free rides. You earn it. You have to be able to make the separation of your loyalties to your friends. Sometimes the ministry of Christ, you have to do that. I have never had that problem. Never had that problem. I have no friend greater than the Lord Jesus Christ. No friend. We have to do it by the book. We have to do it lawfully. I will never give you a job to do so you become spiritual. I saw in churches before when they had some people, they said, "Well, let us make this guy a deacon, so maybe he will come to church." Oh yeah, that is good. That is what you need to do. That is really good. But that is the way we operate today. We operate that way. I am telling you, there will be spiritual issues that you have to deal with, that you are up against, with your friends, that the bottom line is, you like to cop out on because you do not want to lose your friend. See, you have to strive for the masteries.

Now I have never been under the illusion that all my studying of the Word of God, that I was ever trying to master the Bible. My labors in the Word of God was always for the Bible to master me. I know that the striving and the masteries, I can never attain in this life. That was never my goal. But he does say this, if you do not strive, you are not crowned. The crowning is the judgment seat of Christ, and the crowning is based on you running lawfully. That simply means by the book.

V. The Manna and Our Commitment

The great story in Exodus 16, and I close with this, I wanted to bring you up. We are going to take this whole month, we are going to go back and we are going to look at everything that we have done and see if it worked. There are enough of you here now that you need to learn from looking back. There are enough of you here that God is putting the bug in your heart to do something for God, that you need to see how these principles work.

In Exodus 16, you have a great story. This is the story of God bringing the manna down to the children of Israel. When you read down through that account, here is the bottom line. The children of Israel are in the wilderness. They have left Egypt, a picture of their salvation. They have entered into the wilderness, a picture of the world, and there is nothing for them to eat. There is nothing in this wilderness that will sustain them. It is a picture of once you get saved, there is nothing in this world anymore that is going to fill you up and feed you, nothing. So what God does is He brings manna. That manna is a picture of the Word of God. You can go down through this chapter and you can look at it in every detail. It is incredible.

The first thing you are going to find in Exodus 16:4 is that the manna was a supernatural gift from God. They did not run down to Walmart and get it. They did not go to John's Apple Market. God supernaturally, just like the Word of God, provided the food for their wilderness journey, just like He will do for you.

The second thing in Exodus 16:3-4, it was God's food for their wilderness journey.

In Exodus 16:15, you find it was not only food, but it was God's food for their mission to get to the Promised Land, to get them there to finish what God had started.

In Exodus 16:6, you will find that God gave them a leader because they did not know what the manna was. God gave them a leader that would tell them what the manna was for and how to do it and how to use it.

In Exodus 16:13, God brings the manna right to where the people are.

In Exodus 16:16, they have to work and gather it themselves.

In Exodus 16:19, they have to get it fresh every morning.

The greatest thing about it when you see this manna as a picture of the Word of God and a picture of God and you and me in our wilderness journey, when He provided everything for them because He had a mission and a plan that they had to accomplish. The greatest statement in the whole chapter is a statement about you and a statement about me. It really says where you are at

today with where your commitment is as far as what you are going to allow God to do with your life. The masteries. It really is. We have laid everything out now. We have talked about how that the job of the church is to take faithful men and commit to them the things that God has committed to me, and then you commit it to somebody else.

The bottom line found down here in Exodus 16:17, it says this: "And the children of Israel did so. Some gathered more and some gathered less." Some could not wait in the morning to get the manna. Others just said, "Ah, you know what? We had it yesterday." Some gathered more, some gathered less. The bottom line in it, what you get out of the Bible and where you go with God and what God does with you and whether you are successful or not, that you become the one like Timothy who carries what you got to other faithful men, is simply on that concept. Some gathered more and some gathered less. It is your decision. It is always your decision. But with every decision, my friend, comes your choice and comes your consequences. The Christian life is about choices. The biggest choice you have got to ask yourself is some gathered more, some gathered less. You only get out of something what you put into it. The affairs of this life will slow you up and hold you up. The greatest downside of a ministry is seeing men and women who have incredible potential who never let God use it simply because they cannot get past the things in their own world. Many of those things are not bad things. They are just unprioritized things. The devil uses them to keep you from getting done what God wants you to do. But at the end of the day, it is simply this: some gathered more, some gathered less.

Every time somebody talks to me about something, or I see something, many times in my mind, that thought will go through: some gathered more, some gathered less. Somebody will say, "Well, so-and-so is really doing good. He is really doing good with the Bible. He is coming right along." Some gathered more, some gathered less. "Well, I wish so-and-so would really get plugged in and do it. You know, he and she has got a lot to offer. She has got a lot to offer. They have got a lot to offer. He has got a lot to offer." I just simply walk away thinking in my heart, some gathered more, some gathered less. Your choice, your choice. But I guarantee you one thing, the affairs of this life that so busy you will not be showing up at the judgment seat of Christ in your favor.

Father, we thank You and praise You for the Lord Jesus. Let us take this month.