

I. Living Above Life's Circumstances

Last week, we had great memory verses. I told you that you really ought to put them on 3x5 cards or at least get them in a place where you start to memorize them or get them into your life. This is essential if you ever want to attain that place in your life where you really become everything that God wants you to be.

The reality is, and I know this is a hard concept for many of God's people, but the reality is that you and I, as children of God, ought to live above the circumstances of life. I know that many times we are not responsible for the things that happen to us, but many times we are. Many times the things that we have to deal with in life are because of our own bad choices. But I also understand that many times, as a child of God, you and I are faced with issues, circumstances, and situations that you have absolutely no control over.

You may not have any control over what happens to you or befalls you in life, but you do have control over how you deal with it. That's where the Bible comes in, and you've heard me say this many, many times. I've been in the Bible now for almost 40 years, and I've learned one great truth: I will never in my life, no matter what I do, no matter how much I study, no matter how much time I spend in it, nor will you, ever master that book. The more I read it, every time I come through it again, the more I realize what I really don't understand about it.

My goal was never, from day one, to master the Bible. My goal was to have the Bible master me every time I read it. I think that is the real key to understanding what's taking place in the book of Romans, especially in chapters 6, 7, and 8. I gave you the intro to chapter 6 last week, and we learned that God has made a way. He made a way for you and I to be free from the bondage of sin.

If you're saved this morning, God has a job for you. He has something that He wants you to accomplish. The devil obviously wants to stop you. He knows God's plan for your life as well as God does, and he wants to throw everything in your life that is going to keep you from fulfilling that. Obviously, your job and my job is to try to overcome that. God has made a way, and that way was through the death of His Son on the cross. That got you saved. But then the next step is understanding how Christ's death on the cross is applied to you and me, that you and I can be dead. We talked about being crucified with Christ, "nevertheless I live; yet not I, but Christ liveth in me." We talked about those great verses.

II. The Decline of Biblical Christianity

In spite of all that, today as we speak, Bible Christianity is about the most defeated, pathetic, broken-down system you could ever hope to imagine. If there's anything that is more messed up than Christianity, and not by much, it would be how much we're all fed up with the federal government. The statistics out last week said that less than 15% of American people that were polled have anything good to say about the way the government is being run and the system that

we're under. Of course, it's a broken system; it's absolutely busted. Nobody has confidence anymore.

One of the reasons why, after the big bailout last week when they dropped \$700 billion to try to fix a broken system, nothing responded, is because it isn't about how much money. You can give me all the money in the world, but if I don't have confidence in you, it's worthless. We are now exactly in this country where it's just about to the place where it's broken, and it isn't going to get fixed.

I understand why that is. I realize, and I told you this Thursday night, the truth of the matter is, when you go back in history, once a nation turned its back on the Bible, once a country turned its back on the Bible, once a country turned its back on the Word of God and went another way, that country never lasted more than a hundred years, maybe a little bit more, but not much more. It's true of Israel; it's also true of England. Now we see it also true in the United States of America.

The Bible says that the Word of God is like salt; it's a preservative. Salt preserves things. When trappers would trap their hides and their pelts, what they would do is they would salt them down. It preserves; it keeps it from decaying. Jesus said in Matthew 5:13 that you and I are the salt of this earth. That's the job of the church. The job of the church is to preserve what goes on in this country. If everybody still believed the Bible, and a preacher still preached the Bible, and God's people still lived the Bible, our country would be a lot better off being preserved.

That's why if you go back to the 50s and the 40s and the 30s, certainly there was sin back then like there is now, but it didn't get to the proportion that it is now. Do you know why? Because we were still a nation that still preached the Bible, still believed the Bible, and still taught the Bible. It preserved this nation. But now we've come to the point in our time where Jesus said the salt has lost its savor. The reason why this country is in the problem it is, is not because of the federal government per se, though it is, but not directly. Indirectly, it's because we as God's people, we as pastors, we as churches, have not held the line as far as teaching the Bible and keeping ourselves with that salt that keeps preserving what's going on in our own country.

Unfortunately, you can take that and you can take it to Europe. There was a time when Europe, for the most part, was absolutely, totally, completely soaked with Christians. There was a time when you probably couldn't walk down a European street without somebody witnessing to you about Christ. Today as we speak, Europe is about as amoral and about as agnostic and atheistic as you could ever come to. I spent quite a bit of time in Europe over the last many years of my life. If you would go into Germany today and you would go into a Lutheran church and you would begin to have a conversation with that person that goes to those churches, and you would tell them that you are from America, and you would strike up a general conversation, I had this happen to me several times. The question they would ask you, you start to talk about your churches and what you do, and they would ask you this question: "Does your pastor believe there is a God, or is your pastor an atheist?"

We can't even get our head around that. How anybody in America—of course, we are fast getting to that point—but it is hard for us to grasp the concept that a pastor in a church could be somebody who stands up and talks about things but has no belief in God whatsoever. In Europe,

it is a common practice because they have gotten so far that the churches today are nothing more than social clubs that talk about social issues. There is no concept of God; there is no knowledge of God. Yet, there was a time in the history of this world when Europe was literally soaked and saturated with the Word of God and God's people. Do you know what happened? The salt lost its savor.

This country was founded. In our Declaration of Independence, in our Constitution, the founding fathers, many of them were born-again Christians. The ones that weren't had an understanding of God in a way that they had a reverence of God. When they first brought the Declaration of Independence back for its first viewing, Thomas Jefferson said, "There's not enough references to God in it. We wouldn't even be here if it wasn't for God." They sent it back to get more references to giving God the honor and glory, which they did. Well, we've come a long way from that.

III. The Gap Generation and the Church's Purpose

I told the people at Joplin a couple of weeks ago when we were down there preaching, I told them, "My greatest asset in ministry, I think anyhow, my greatest asset in ministry is the time period by which I was born." I call myself a gap-generation Christian. I'm a guy that when I got saved back in the 70s, there were still men around who remembered what the real Philadelphia period of time was like. The men that taught me how to preach were men that had grump shoulders and been taught by some of the great Bible-preaching, Bible-teaching men. Some of those guys were still alive. The men that taught me were men that back in the 20s and the 30s were gangsters. They were part of the mob; they were part of everything as you can imagine in the world. Then they got saved through the preaching of guys like Billy Sunday, Mordecai Ham, names that I'm talking to you about today that you have absolutely no idea who they are. Yet, they were the men, the last men, that through the preaching of the Word of God and through the power of God in their lives, shaped these men's lives who had an influence on my generation.

I actually got to watch how it turned, how it went from a church that believed the Bible. I saw men who came out of the Great Split with the Southern Baptist Convention with J. Frank Norris. I saw men that came out that believed the Bible was the Word of God, believed the King James Bible was the Word of God, believed that that book—you like my picture back here? I love this picture. If you don't like it, I really don't care. It's got the book, the A.V. 1611, and all the other books that man has written down here, and it's the King. These guys believed; they started out believing the Bible was the Word of God. Thirty, forty years later, as they were in their churches in my time, when I was in the 70s back there and going to those churches, every one of those men who started believing it wound up not believing it anymore. It was the most incredible thing I watched unfold right in front of my eyes.

Yet, I was connected with a group that would never, never vacillate on the Word of God. They knew what it was. They knew where they got it from. They understood the power that it contained, and they realized that God only wrote one book. They stayed with that book, and they drove it into my brain. Week after week after week, and year after year, that's all I heard. They kept me accountable with it and everything that went on.

Last week, my father in the Lord, Mel Sabaka, who is one of the last of the last, 86 years old, can't preach anymore, can't hardly walk. He was in town and over to a buddy of mine's church, and we got together and spent the day together Monday. He wanted to see this church so badly. Mel's the guy that I've told you about before. He's the guy that I told you about before that when he was 56 years old—I'm 58—when he was 56 years old, this is the kind of guys that trained me, I hung out with. When he was 56 years old, if you're 56 years old right now or thereabouts, you're probably looking at the fact that you only got maybe another 10, 15, 20 years and you can retire. You're looking at your 401K, which probably isn't there anymore. You're looking around and you're saying to yourself, "Wow, I put in all this time," and you're looking at your financial future.

Do you know what he did every year of his life? My wife knows this is true. Every year of his life, in January, or December before January, he took whatever he had in his savings account. Whatever money he had in his savings account. Now, keep in mind, he never had a 401K. He never had any of that stuff. You can do what you want to do or think what you want to think. This old boy represented a bunch of old boys that just thought God was enough. Every year at the end of his year, he would take every dime he had and he'd throw it into the missionary Christmas offering for the missionaries, and he'd simply say, "Next year, every year, I just want to start even with God." That was his mindset at 56 years of age when everybody else is thinking about retiring.

He had a very successful ministry. He had a ministry that reached around the country. He could go anywhere he wanted to preach; he was in great demand. He was training up young men and young ladies left and right, and he had one of the greatest college and career classes that anybody in the country had ever seen, ever heard about. At 56 years old, with absolutely nothing in the bank, with absolutely nothing with his family, he left that job because of the burden that God gave him, went to New York City in the middle of nowhere, in the middle of Staten Island, in probably the hardest spot in America to build a church, where the cost of living is through the roof, they're indifferent, they don't care, and they don't care about the gospel. But God had called him to go to Staten Island. He went to Staten Island and he started a church, and that church today is probably running six or seven hundred people. He gave the last 20 years of his life, giving God what he had left.

Yet, when he came in here last Monday and he saw this place and he recognized what it was, his eyes lit up. It took him back. It took him back. He's not much impressed with the big grandest buildings that people build because he knows what I know, that the true church isn't in any building you put up. He also knows what I know, what's coming down the line. He stood down here and he looked, and we had prayer before he left, and he blessed this place up one side and down the other. You could see it in his eye that coming down here, he had went back in his mind to when he was in Staten Island, New York, and he didn't have anything, and God gave him a place. To him, that place was just as important as Bob Schuller's Crystal Cathedral out there in California, more so.

Let me tell you something, I walked out of here that day, and I already knew it in my heart and my mind because we weren't looking for a place when God gave us this place. We were faithful

with what God gave us; we were satisfied. We realized that what we had to do was build people and not try to build a building, and we just invested our lives in people one person at a time. I told God, "You do your job, I'll do my job. My job is to preach the Word of God, help people with the Bible, help them get their lives back in order, help them get better marriages, get a handle on their children, do what needs to be done, help young people get out of the world. That's my job. Your job is that when you feel we're done where we're at, you need to go and get us someplace else."

We started out meeting in our home, and we were looking for a place. Remember, Chris, we looked at that place over there, and he's counting the offering. We were over there; we looked at that place over there in Independence along one of those Sterlings or someplace, and they wouldn't even call us back. I had driven by this place over where we used to be, and I told Chris on a whim, I said, "Call and see what they want. We probably can't afford it, but you just never know because we only run about 20, 30 people." So he called it, and the lady was absolutely ecstatic that a church wanted to come in. She said, "Well," Chris says, "When can I come and talk?" She says, "Why don't you come on down now?" When he got there, she already had the paperwork filled out for it, and we took it, and we had that. We thought we died and went to heaven, didn't we? We only had it; we couldn't have it whenever we wanted it. We could only have it certain times because they booked the weddings in there.

It is a bittersweet thing coming over here and leaving that. It's like where our roots were. But yet, I understand it through the process. I wasn't looking for that place, and God dropped it into our laps. I wasn't looking for this place. Not this anniversary, last anniversary Sunday. We were getting ready to go over to Joe and Jerry Tatum's. We were getting ready to go over for our baptism and our anniversary Sunday, and before I left, the woman who ran there, she says, "Larry, the guy that owns all of this, he says he's got a better place for you that you might like." We went over and looked at it, and we said, "Whoa, absolutely incredible."

We started to work out the deal, and there was a lot of things that had to be done. This place was packed to the ceiling with junk, and it was just a long process, a year's process, and we were patient because, like I said, I'm not in any hurry. I told God, "If you want me to stay over here, I just put it out of my mind. If you want me to stay over there, that's where I'll stay." A year to the day of our anniversary, we're down sitting down there having time, just baptizing everything, and Steve Bracken's phone goes off, and Larry calls him and says, "Hey, I'm ready. I'm ready to have you guys. We're going to get this thing going to get you guys in there." I didn't do a thing to put us here. I know the men and the ladies did a tremendous amount of work here, and I appreciate that more than I could ever say. It was a labor of love because you love this church. I know that there were some tremendous sacrifices made for you guys that did what you did to get us in here, and I know that, and more importantly, God knows that, because there was a labor of love that you gave up what you gave up to get us here, and it was an incredible thing. But it was God's deal.

Those are the kind of men that I grew up with. Those are the kind of men. I remember when Mel bought his first little chapel. It was a broken-down Roman Catholic dilapidated chapel that they had moved out and built a new place down the road, and he went in and bought that, and he

signed the agreement, and he told me, he said, "I signed agreement for four million dollars to buy this place." And I said, "Where in the world did you get four million dollars?" He said, "I don't have four million dollars, but God told me to buy it, so He better come up with the money." Do you know what he used to tell me? He says, "The most exciting time of my life is going out to the mailbox every morning and watch God come through for you." He got us four million dollars. He never missed a deal. He built almost miraculously. He built a church up there without any finances, without any bonds, without anybody doing anything, just God bringing it in, much like we've done here.

I can't even imagine. I talked to a pastor last week that, you know, the economic situation the way that it is, the fact that he just got into a four or five million dollar building program, sold bonds to all of his people. All the people, you buy the bonds, and then the money comes in, and hopefully the bonds are still there. How would you like to be in the situation we're in right now, and you owe four or five million dollars on a building someplace? That's not even counting the land. I talked to another friend of mine that his electric bill last month in his church was fifteen hundred dollars on top of a twelve thousand dollar a month mortgage that he has. Do you know why? Because they're building churches. That's why they would never think about being in a basement like this because they don't think people will come.

We don't even have a sign. I'm going back. I may change after a while, but I'm back to my old retro mode. I'm not even going to put a sign up for a while. I'm just not because my philosophy is this, when I was raised by the old guys: I believe that if God wants a church here, we could be down in a hole, in a crack, in that closet by sometime, and people would still find us. Do you know why? Because a sign doesn't do it. The Holy Spirit of God is what does it, and I got to tell you, we got about a hundred and fifty of the greatest signs that you ever saw in your life. You people bring people here all the time. I don't need a sign. I probably at some point I'll cave in and have one just because I'll get tired of him nagging me about it. But the bottom line is this: you are the signs of this church, and I still believe this.

I like putting God to the test. I like saying to God, "Hey, this is your church. If you—I'm here, I'll preach the book, I'll do my job, you do yours." I like Him bringing the people here. For the most part, if you're in this church today and you're a member of this church, you can probably say one thing for sure in your life: God got you here. God got you here. We didn't go out and knock on your door and beg you to come so you can slam the door in my face or sick the dog on me. We simply just stand behind a pulpit and preach the Word of God and let God do what He does best.

I told the people of Joplin, "I'm a gap-generation Christian." I saw the way it was. I know what the real thing looks like. I feel sorry for most of the pastors out there. I talk to them all the time; I bump into them, and I feel absolutely sorry for them that they have no earthly idea of what a real New Testament church model is. They don't understand how to build one. They think it's like the "Field of Dreams": build a big ball field, and they'll all come. That's exactly the way they operate. Yet the Bible says that which is highly esteemed among men is an abomination in the sight of God, and that's a general truth in most things.

I told the people that in Joplin a couple of weeks ago that my verse—you don't have to turn to it, I'll read it to you, but you might want to write it down—is Haggai 2:3. When the nation of Israel found themselves in great disarray and great mess, they asked themselves, they said:

Haggai 2:3

Who is left among you that saw this house in her first glory? and how do ye see it now? is it not in your eyes in comparison of it as nothing?

They were saying, "Who here remembers what the nation of Israel was in its great glory days? Who remembers what it was when God's power and God's glory filled the tabernacle, and God did incredible things for us, the nation of Israel? Now look at it." The problem was, they were satisfied with what they had then because nobody knew what the real thing was. That's the way we are. We're growing up building churches and not knowing what the real church is even supposed to look like. When it comes to understanding this thing in Romans chapter 6, we're just as in the dark of understanding how you and I are to be dead to this world but yet alive unto Christ Jesus.

The problem is that Christianity today basically is what the world was 20 or 30 years ago in my day. The new word now that has infiltrated into all the churches, you see it all the time, you hear it all the time, to me is the most disparaging and damaging word. The moment I hear it, I just click it off because I'm an old guy from the Gap time. I know what the real thing looks like. I know how to build a church. I know what people are looking for today.

I remember back in New York time when Mel was up there. I went up to visit, and we were driving down, and as you know, the Watchtower Society or the Jehovah's Witnesses have their world headquarters, and they've got an incredible facility up there. We were driving down through there, and we were going all through that, and we were coming down the freeway, and it was showing me the Jehovah's Witness thing, and I looked over across the street, and one of the Christian organizations, like Campus Crusade or one of those groups, put a big billboard right across from the Jehovah's Witness, and it said, "Christ is the answer," in big red letters. Somebody had crawled up on top of the billboard and took a pan of paint and wrote underneath of it, "What's the question?"

I thought to myself, "That's exactly what Christianity is." Pastors today are answering questions that nobody's asking, and the real questions you have in your life, the real issues that you struggle with every day in your life, the real thing that every day of your life you have to face and you have to deal with and you have to make decisions on, nobody's giving you those answers. The terrible word today in churches is the word "contemporary." Contemporary means, as far as I'm concerned, "like the world."

The thinking is today, "Well, people don't like the old style church service. They don't like the old music. So we'll get new music." Do you know what the new music is? It's worldly music, as far as I'm concerned, with Christian themes. "We have a contemporary service." What does that mean? It means that most churches have two: they have a standard traditional service for the old folks, and they have what they call contemporary for the young folks. Do you know why?

Because the young folks don't want to hear what the old folks want to hear. They think there's a difference. So instead of just preaching the Word of God and going after a person's heart, we're defining this thing and making this thing work one way or the other as best we can. So we have contemporary music. We have contemporary services. "Oh, we got to get a contemporary Bible to go along with it all." So we do. Then the pastor, he preaches contemporary preaching. He preaches stuff that is absolutely, totally, completely, will not offend anybody.

The deal is, they want to build a church, and people are money. No bucks, no Buck Rogers, man. You have to have the money to do what you want to do, to build a big building, to maintain all the things, to put in the school, to do all the stuff. So what happens? You preach that you won't offend anybody because we don't want to lose you. We don't want to lose you.

We live in a world that is fast moving toward a one-world system and everything in it. You can see this whole thing is spiraling out of control. Why? Because God's people, God's pastors, and God's church have taken the worldly road and now are trying to make everything compatible so that you don't get upset about it. I want to tell you something, and I love you with all of my heart, but if you ever leave one of my church services that I preach or Thursday night Bible study and I don't tick you off just a little bit inside, there's probably something wrong with my preaching.

Do you think that—and this is another thing you see in most churches—it's comfortable to the eyes. Most churches wouldn't put these up. They really wouldn't. They really put them up. They're not—I mean, they put babbling brooks that goes along with the babbling preachers that they put in all the nice things. They wouldn't put something like this up. See, I want it up because I want you to get tired of looking at me. Where are you going to look? If you look backwards, I know there's something wrong with you, but you only got four places to look sitting where you're sitting: me, there, there, or that. I got you anywhere you go. I like that. Now, that's not socially acceptable today. That's gory. We don't like to think of Christ's death on the cross. That's too plain for us; that is not contemporary.

See this over here? Those little specs are people in a lake of fire. That's not socially acceptable either. In fact, my kind of preaching or old-time kind of preaching now can be classified up there with hate preaching because of the fact that we just don't—we're not contemporary enough. We don't accept everything and everybody does.

IV. The Doctrine of Division

Here's our problem, and this is a major issue, and this brings us right back into Romans chapter 6. We live in a world that wants to get everybody together, but the God that we serve and the book that we read tells us very clearly that before God ever puts anything together, He always divides. That's one of the greatest single truths found anywhere in the Bible. Before God can ever—and I know the church's bottom line is reconciliation; I know that, I understand that—but before He can get together and reconcile, He has to divide.

You go back to Genesis 1, you go down there in the first four verses, and it says:

Genesis 1:4

And God saw the light, that it was good: and God divided the light from the darkness.

First time the word "divided" shows up in your Bible.

Matthew 10:34

Think not that I am come to send peace on earth: I came not to send peace, but a sword.

Matthew 10:35-36

For I am come to set a man at variance against his father, and the daughter against her mother, and the daughter in law against her mother in law.

And a man's foes shall be they of his own household.

Do you know what "variance" is? Divide. Why? Because when you get saved and you start to do what's right, the first thing God does in your life is divide out those things. Many times, that's a prelude to putting it back together. I've never really met too many people that didn't have to get offended before they got saved. I know they're out there, and we bump into them every once in a while. Everybody Thursday night, somebody raises their hand and says, "I'm ready to get saved." But even in that case, I think a lot of prep work went into that. Human nature is such, I don't think there's anybody out there that the first time they heard the gospel wasn't somewhat offended by it. The first time you see that, or that, or that, that it just doesn't bother you a little bit. The truth of the matter is, that's how God does it. He has to get your attention. You realize sometimes the best way to get you to think is to make you mad.

He said in Hebrews 4:12:

Hebrews 4:12

For the word of God is quick, and powerful, and sharper than any twoedged sword, piercing even to the dividing asunder of soul and spirit, and of the joints and marrow, and is a discernor of the thoughts and intents of the heart.

The Bible says the Word of God just divides you right down the middle. Even when it comes to the Bible, in 2 Timothy 2:15, it says:

2 Timothy 2:15

Study to shew thyself approved unto God, a workman that needeth not to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth.

Before you get the Bible together, you got to get it divided out. Marriage, Ephesians 5:

Ephesians 5:31

For this cause shall a man leave his father and mother, and shall be joined unto his wife, and they two shall be one flesh.

He divides you from your family before He puts you together with your wife or your husband.

Do you know the first thing that God does when you and I get out of fellowship? You see it all the time. If you're paying attention in any way, shape, or form, this is one of the most obvious things. Do you know how they track submarines now out there in the North Atlantic? It's gotten so sophisticated. Back in the old days, you had to put a periscope up, take a peek. Now they got these guys that sit on these computers, and they can sit out there and they can listen for a—they have every Russian submarine or Russian ship cataloged computably by the sound that the screws make, the propellers on the back end. Every one of them has a distinctive sound. If you just record that sound, make a record of that sound, it's like your fingerprint. There's no other sound like it. Maybe another will be a little higher pitch, a little lower pitch, somewhere in between, or have a little clank and a clang with it, or this one have a little bing bang with it, but they'll never be the same. Once they take those in their sonar and they get them into the computer, run them into the program, then when they hear screws going out there in the water coming out of maybe a Russian base or someplace, or they're not sure what it is, they just run it through the computer, and it gives them a match to know exactly what ship it is. That's one of the most incredible things I've ever heard in my life.

At the same time, dealing with people is the same way because human nature is always the same. Do you know the first thing God does when you and I get out of fellowship? He divides us out from the people that are still in fellowship. Have you ever noticed it? You've never noticed it's so easy to see somebody who's lost the joy, joy, joy, joy down in their heart. The Word of God divides you. If anybody's paying attention, if you just know what the sound of the motors running like out of fellowship versus the sound of the motors running in fellowship, you can see it in a heartbeat. You have a certain countenance about you when you're on top of things with God. You know that; I do too. You have a certain countenance; you have a certain way about you because you and God are in a union together, and when that union breaks, it's just like listening to a Russian submarine with his screws going, and he's got a broken shaft playing area, and he's bing, bang, crack, crack, back. You hear him a million miles away. Why? Because the Bible says, "If anybody love God, the same is known of him." By the same token, if any man quits loving God, the same is known to him. Dividing out, and that's what God does.

That's why, and this is one of the hardest concepts for a church to get. It's certainly one of the hardest concepts for a young pastor to get. Yes, I know the church exists to reconcile you to God, reconcile your family, reconcile your fellowship, your children, but only after it divides you from something else. You must realize the job of a church, any church, the job of a Bible, the job of preaching, the job of a pastor, is to understand that you're going to divide before you get back together. Do you know what the Bible does? Do you know what preaching does? It forces you to look deep inside yourself and ask yourself some hard questions.

Most churches, most pastors, don't ever understand this great key to ministry. They're under the delusion that we're just going to keep everybody here. The more you get, keep coming, and we'll get real big and real big. Let me tell you something, you cannot, today anyhow—I'm out of the old gap; I know what it was like—you cannot preach a church, you cannot build a church of 2000 today and not compromise what you're preaching. Do you know why? Because nobody on planet Earth wants to hear what this has to say other than you guys. How many people are going

to put up with this week after week after week after week? Those who want to perfect themselves and realize that your life and my life, very frankly, after you get saved, is that we're in a constant state of dividing, dividing out. Do you know what you got to do to get the victorious Christian life? You're going to reckon yourself dead. You got to divide yourself from the world first.

V. The Necessity of Sanctification

Thirty years plus in ministry have taught me some things about people and dealing with them in ministry. Ever wonder why some people make it and some people don't? In our own church or any church you've been in, you ever wonder why there's some that make it and some that don't make it? I've seen young men that had all their life, they had sold themselves to the flesh. They've been involved in stuff before they got saved, or maybe they were saved, and all of their life all they did is cater to their flesh. All they did was just feed their flesh. They didn't have any discipline, no structure. Nobody ever got into the world, and they just ran wide open for the world and everything in the world. Then they get saved, and then they wonder why they struggle with the things they struggle with. Do you know what the key is? You got to divide yourself from where you were, and sometimes you say, "Well, I don't go to those places anymore." Then you got to divide yourself from the thinking process that takes you back there. I learned a long time ago, I take my mind many, many places I never allow my body to go. You're in a constant state of dividing yourself out from whatever keeps you from being what God wants you to be.

I've seen people that they come to church for a while, and in this ministry, my other ministries I've had, they come to church for a while, and you try to help them. They can't get two weeks. I've sat down with people and I said, "Okay, here's what you need to do. Next week, you meet back with me, and you get this thing laid out, and we'll start to put a program in your life where we get this thing going." Three weeks later, they come back, "I haven't got it done yet." Four months later, "Well, I'm back, but it ain't very good." Do you know what their problem is? All day long, they're just filled with the things of this world. They spend all day watching "As Your Stomach Turns" on TV. They want to put themselves into the same category as a desperate housewife. They don't know their verses, and I gave them last week on a 3x5 card, but they know the three girls' names on the section of the city, don't they? You see what the problem is? You cannot have the best of both worlds, and this kind of preaching is good from this aspect: it divides who is and who isn't. I don't know what to tell you. If you're looking for a nice little contemporary church, you're in the wrong place this morning.

I watch some of you young people. I talk to your parents. I see their concern about the thing that you struggle with, and you'll come in and you'll get disciplined, or you get work with here, or somebody will help you here, and you'll get this and you get that. But you come in and talk to me, and you'll say, "I just can't get it together. I struggle with it." Yes, and listen to the stuff that you listen to all through the week that offsets what you're getting in the Bible. Do you know what you got to do? You got to divide yourself from that. You got to divide yourself from the world: the music in it, what you watch, what you listen, what you read. Where did the idea ever come in that you can get saved and keep a big slug of the world in your life and think you can make it? You can't. You can't.

Yet, I know it can be done. Remember last week, remember old Mike that sat down here from Souls Harbor Rescue Mission down in Joplin? I met old Mike down in Joplin. It's really one of the main reasons I wanted to go because I had heard about Mike and how Mike had been into everything. I mean, you go down to the city in the mission, and sometimes you work out to find out the worst guy in there, and that was Mike. Mike struggled with everything. Mike was homeless. Mike lost everything. Mike had absolutely nothing. But he went to a mission someplace, sometime, somewhere, and he heard the gospel, and he got saved, and then he allowed God. He allowed God to put in his life. Now, I might as well tell you right now, the chances of a man like Mike ever getting to where he's at, that he's cleaned his life up, that he loves God, loves the Word of God, and is very clearly divided himself out, the chances against that happening are more than I can ever imagine to calculate in life. It is absolutely astronomically almost impossible.

Somebody hooked him up to our website. He didn't have a church to go to. Yes, he got it without a church to go to. Some of you can't do it when you have a church to go to. He got into the website. By the way, Kyle told me this morning that it won't be just a couple of weeks, and you're going to be able to go to the website and actually watch the video of the whole service on the website. It won't just be this because I know, and I appreciate it, Kyle, because I get a thousand phone calls a week saying, "What do you look like?" Now I'm going to get a thousand that's going to say, "I thought you'd be bigger."

But there's a case in point: had no church, had nothing, had no Bible. Some guys took him in down at the mission and began to put him on the right track, got him plugged in. Brother, today when I went down to Joplin, I took him a care package. I took him a wide-margin Bible. I took him a "How to Start of the Bible." I took everything we could glean out of the thing down there, and I gave it to him because there is a man who the odds against him getting where he is are astronomically against him, and yet he was in this church last week. You got to see him. You got to meet him. You bothered to come. You got to see him, and you got to meet him.

Now, why does a guy like that, who the chances against him are probably more than electrons in the universe, make it, and some of God's people that hear it every day can't make it? I'll tell you the difference: Mike got sick of the world. He got sick of the world. He got sick of the world. He got tired of the world, and he knew that everything in his flesh and everything in the world was just going to drag him down, and he did what many of God's people could not do. He did what many of you young Christian kids can't do. He did what many of you singles can't do. He did what many of you individuals who struggle with things in life couldn't do. He divided himself from the world because he knew it wasn't going to work for him. In the Bible, that's called the doctrine of sanctification.

Joshua said it best in Joshua 24:15 when he simply said:

Joshua 24:15

And if it seem evil unto you to serve the LORD, choose you this day whom ye will serve; whether the gods which your fathers served that were on the other side of the flood, or the gods of the Amorites, in whose land ye dwell: but as for me and my house, we will serve the LORD.

Jesus Himself said it in Matthew 6:

Matthew 6:24

No man can serve two masters: for either he will hate the one, and love the other; or else he will hold to the one, and despise the other. Ye cannot serve God and mammon.

Simple fact: you will never be able to live a victorious Christian life until you decide to break with the things of this world. Very frankly, I don't understand. I just don't understand. The base root issue is, I just don't understand why you aren't just sick of this place. I just don't understand what the world has for you. Maybe you've just never had a real taste of God. I don't know. I don't know why.

I gave you the key last week where he said, "Seek those things which are above, and set your affections." I look at some of the problems people deal with, and we've got some great victories in here. I mean, we do. But there will always be people, as long as we have a ministry, there will always be people that will not make it. I feel bad about that more than you know, but I also learned that in every battle—and this is something else that Christianity has lost the mindset of—we're in a war. Show me any war in history where somebody didn't have casualties.

We send you to basic training in the military, and we teach you how to stay down. Three rules in the military in combat: get down, stay down, and don't get up. We teach you in basic everything we can to help you survive. But in any battle, you always got people that in basic, their mind is somewhere else. When the DI is telling them, "This is what you got to do," they're thinking about home with their girlfriend. When he's trying to explain to them how you make a certain tack and how you stay out of getting killed and how you enter a building and how you do this and do that, they're daydreaming about back home. The other guy there is taking notes. He's following it through. He's watching everything. After everybody else is down at the PX, he goes back and he actually works out the scenario because he's going to give himself the best chance to survive. So when you get into combat, that's why some guys make it. That's why some guys don't. When you get into churches, this is your basic training. Some of you daydream half the time on Thursday night. Some of you don't care. Some of you got everything else you're focused on, and then you're going to wonder why you have the problems that you have in your life. I love you, friends, but I'm telling you, I'm just being honest with you.

Let me ask you a question. If you, God forbid this would happen, if you went to the doctor next week, say you had a pain other than me. I just said that so you wouldn't have to say it. Say you have a pain down inside your gut. Now you go into the doctor, and he said, "Well, let's run some tests." And a doctor comes back and he says, "Whoa, we just found a tumor inside your stomach." Now you hear that word, you panic. He said, "Well, we're going to biopsy." So we biopsy, biopsies it, and he comes back and he says, "I got some more bad news. It's cancerous. It's malignant. But here's the deal. I'll tell you what, we caught this early. If you'd have waited another six months, I don't think I could have saved you. But here's what we're going to do. We're going to do surgery. We're going to take out that tumor, and then what we're going to do is this: we're going to set you up for 75, 80 radiation treatments. That radiation treatment will kill whatever is around there, and right now, if we do that, you got about a 99 to 100% chance of

surviving. You caught it early. We're going to get it early with this operation. We'll take care of the radiation; we'll take care of the rest, and we'll get it all worked out, and we just got to get these 85 or 80 radiation treatments to you. They're all concentrated. They're going to do exactly what needs to be done, and it's going to be okay. You're one of the lucky ones."

Do you know what you do? Here's what you would do. You'd walk out of there and you'd say, "Wow, boy, thank you, Lord. That's so wonderful. I'll tell you what, God, you sure took care of me on that one, boy. This thing's going to be okay." So you go home, get your surgery, come back to the hospital, and you're home now, and your first radiation treatment. You go to the first one, and then your next one is next week. You go to that one, and then the next week, you say, "Oh, you know what? I've had two. I think that, you know what, I'm going to sleep in this morning." So you miss one. Then the next time it comes around, you go, but then the next time it comes around, you think, "Oh, you know what? I had something else I wanted to do today." So you go do that, and in the process, you only get about 35 of your 85. Do you know what's going to happen to you? You're going to die.

Is there anybody in their right mind that if you thought you were facing physical death, where you were going to die, that you wouldn't be there when the radiation place opened up at 8:30? You wouldn't be out there at 8:00, would you? Would you not be asking that guy a hundred thousand times, "Are you giving enough? Is it strong enough? You want to hit me some more? I'll stick around for a while. You want to give me another dose?" Is there anybody who would just take one or two and then flippantly go through like that?

Let me ask you a question: this thing, you got a cancer in you, and it's called your old sin nature. That thing is eating away at you every day of your life, and it's going to wind up killing you in the flesh. God has made a way. First, He gave you an operation. He gave you an operation made without hands that took out and separated, but you still got to deal with it. So God says, "I got daily radiation you got to have." If you don't get it, you're going to die.

Do you know what some of you look at that book and look at what God's given you, what He's done for you, and you just say to yourself, "I won't read it today," or "I won't go to Bible study tonight," or "I won't go to Sunday morning. I'm just going to roll back over and go back to sleep. I've had a hard week." Would you do that with your radiation treatment? That's why you are having the tough time you've got spiritually. You're not spending any personal time. You're not attacking your problem like we talked Thursday night. You're not going after it the way that you should. That's the problem. We're all struggling with the problem we're facing.

Last week, I told you that an unsaved man is stuck to his flesh. I told you that he's stuck to his flesh, and when he is stuck to that flesh, he's going to die, and he's going to go to hell. When you got saved, at the end of salvation, God cuts you loose from that soul, from that flesh, and now you're an old nature and a new nature. At that same time, God makes it possible that you now have the ability to live above sin. You now have the power in your life to be a victorious Christian, living a victorious Christian life, if you realize that now that the operation has taken place, you have to have the radiation treatments. You have to get yourself into a daily program where you allow the Word of God to cut out the old dead thing in you and just keep it to the

place that it doesn't infect you any farther. No, it can't get your soul, but it can absolutely destroy everything in you and your walk with God.

The Bible says that the three things that we're up against, you find it in 1 John 2:16. It's called simply the world, the flesh, and the devil. The world will be defined for you as the lust of the eyes. The flesh will be simply defined as the lust of the flesh. The devil will be defined as the pride of life. The devil's number one problem was pride. Those are the three things that we are up against, and it works like this: your biggest problem in your life is the number one problem the devil has; it's pride. Pride manifests itself into a number of different ways. It really does. Pride manifests itself that as a Christian, when you know you're right, or excuse me, when you know you're wrong, you don't want to get right.

Sometimes you find Christians who are wrong outwardly, and they've got such a pride problem, they will not deal with it. They will not go to somebody else and say, "I'm sorry. Will you forgive me?" They will not reconcile with anybody. They won't let God do anything in their life. They're so prideful that their pride is something that just absolutely keeps them from ever getting what God wants them to have in their lives. When you take a person when it's pride, and the next thing that they see when you go down through there, the lust of the eyes, we look out to this world. We see the things that are in this world, and because we are prideful, because we're not dealing with the Word of God, the lust of the eyes come to the point where we see it out there, so therefore we want it. The lust of the eyes feeds to the lust of the flesh. Those three things are the area, and that's why the Bible says in 1 John 2:15:

1 John 2:15

Love not the world, neither the things that are in the world. If any man love the world, the love of the Father is not in him.

1 John 2:16

For all that is in the world, the lust of the flesh, and the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life, is not of the Father, but is of the world.

That's what we are up against. You have to divide yourself from that. You have to. It's the only way you can ever, ever have that victorious Christian life.

Hebrews 12:1-2:

Hebrews 12:1

Wherefore seeing we also are compassed about with so great a cloud of witnesses, let us lay aside every weight, and the sin which doth so easily beset us, and let us run with patience the race that is set before us,

Hebrews 12:2

Looking unto Jesus the author and finisher of our faith; who for the joy that was set before him endured the cross, despising the shame, and is set down at the right hand of the throne of God.

"Laying aside every weight and the sin which does so easily beset us." See that verse? Most of us, we're running a race. If you're saved this morning, you're in a race. Every race has a finish line. Every race has a finish line that you want to cross. The finish line for you and for me is the judgment seat of Christ. We want to get across that finish line. We want to finish that race, and the Bible says that in this particular passage here, somebody is wearing weights as they run. Who in the world would put 10 pounds of weight on their ankles and then try to run a race? I read a couple years ago, back in the 20s, a guy swam the English Channel, which is about 60 miles across, and he actually swam the English Channel. I thought to myself many, many times, "I wonder how far he'd have got if he'd have tied on 10 pounds of lead on each foot."

You see, we strap the weight on us of our old sin nature. We won't divide ourselves out from the world. We keep ourselves in it and want to justify what we do, and then we actually have the sense to scratch our head and look in the mirror and say, "I wonder why I'm feeling so bad today. I wonder why I just can't get a handle on things. I wonder why my life is just upside down. I wonder why my world is just going topsy-turvy, and I just can't get a handle. I wonder why I'm having all the problems I have." The answer's in Job 9:1:

Job 9:1

Then Job answered and said,

Job 9:4

He is wise in heart, and mighty in strength: who hath hardened himself against him, and hath prospered?

"He that hardened himself against God shall not prosper." You're not going anywhere. God isn't doing it to you. It's to realize when you got saved, God gave you the ability to live above the circumstances of life. He gave you the ability to have that—sin doesn't have dominion over you anymore unless you choose to. This is the great concept of Romans chapter 6. This is the great concept: looking unto Jesus who endured the cross. He endured the cross so you could endure the world. That's simple. He paid the price on the cross so you and I could have the choice and the power of God in our life. You have that. If you're saved this morning, you have the power of God in your life to live above every circumstance in life. It's our fault that we don't choose to separate ourselves.

I can't make you do that. That is something that you have to—you have to let the Word of God penetrate your heart, penetrate your soul when you hear it on Thursday, you hear it on Sunday, or you read it throughout the week. When God begins to work in your heart, you come to the point in your own heart when He starts to divide that thing out. Don't even pretend for a second in your mind, in your heart today, that sitting right here under the sound of my voice, that already 15 minutes into this, the Holy Spirit of God didn't start doing His work, and that was dividing out in your life what you know doesn't need to be there. You may maintain a smile. You may maintain flashy eyes. But deep down inside your heart, the Holy Spirit of God is telling you, "You need to dump this, dump this, dump this, and dump that."

I feel that is my job as a pastor to tell you these things. I know many of you don't believe this now. Maybe not many of you, but I know some of you don't understand this right now, living in the world that we're living in. It doesn't seem like it, but I want to tell you the truth. Based on someone who lived back when they really knew what the real thing was, seeing it work in men's lives, seeing men like Tommy Thomas.

VI. A Personal Testimony of Division

Do you know how I got my life back right with God? I was saved probably supposedly when I was five years old. I told you the story, told many of the story in a discipleship lesson I teach on salvation, and I don't think I was saved. I lived my life coming up through elementary school and high school, and I was just as worldly as anybody else. I went off into the army shortly after I graduated from school, and I didn't do anything with God there. I just would do my own thing. I'll tell you what, when I got out of the army, God had a plan for me, and God began to initiate that plan in my life. My father died when I was 20 years old, and that was a big impact in my life because it was one of those things where God got a hold of my heart and got a hold of me through that process.

I'll never forget. I went to church. My mom wanted me to go to church with her that morning, and I went to church with her, and for whatever reason, I don't know, I don't understand to this day, it had to be God. She went into the big church service, and I went over to the college and career class that Mel Sabaka, who wound up being my father in the Lord, taught. I went back there, and I made sure I—it was a big class, and it probably had two, three hundred people in it—and I made sure I was going to sit in the back because I didn't want him crazy Baptist dragging me up front. I know you go, don't you?

Well, Mel didn't preach that morning. An old boy that preached that morning's name was Tommy Thomas. Tommy Thomas had gotten saved back in the 20s, and Tommy Thomas was a great soul winner. He was one of the last of the Philadelphia preachers. Tommy Thomas was preaching that morning, and he wanted to preach. He got up in that pulpit, and he had a great booming voice. These are the guys that taught my father in the Lord. Tommy Thomas ran the Brown Street Mission where I preached my first sermon when God got a hold of my heart back in Tommy's pulpit. He got up in the pulpit that morning, and the place was packed, and he got up there, and he said—he was an old guy, he's probably in his, you know, probably 75, somewhere around that, but still going strong—and he said, "I want to preach to you a message this morning on the second coming of the Lord Jesus Christ." He stopped for a moment like that, and he looked out in the crowd, and in a second, he reached over and he grabbed his heart, and he started to lean over the pulpit like this, and he said, "I want to ask you a question this morning: Are you ready?" As he fell off the side of the pulpit down on one knee, pointed one finger back, and for the last time, with everything he had, before he went home to be with God, he yelled out one more time, pointing that finger, "Are you ready?"

Ladies and gentlemen, as well as I'm sitting here, standing here this morning preaching to you, there's no question in my mind that he was pointing to me and asking me. There may have been 300 people in that building, but God had brought me there, orchestrated the circumstances to get

me there, to answer a question that I was refusing to answer because I wouldn't divide out of my life what needed to be divided to answer the question. Old Tommy Thomas pointed his finger in my face before he went home to be with God. The last message he preached, the last convert he had was Bob Alexander, and he pointed that finger out, and he said, "Are you ready?" And he slumped over and died of a heart attack right on the floor. Mel Sabaka got up and preached one of the greatest messages after he took him out of that thing, and preached one of the greatest messages, and the place was just rocked.

I didn't move. I sat back there, and deep down in my heart, I knew Tommy was asking me, and I knew I wasn't ready. It was that moment in my life that God turned the switch, that I said, "I need to find out. I need to get out of my life and out of my world whatever is keeping me from being. It's very obvious to me now that God has something for me, and I'm tired of running from God, and I'm going to take out." I was working at the Hoover Company back then. Some of you ladies, older ladies that have vacuum cleaners quit working right after you got them, that's probably one that I built. Anyway, I left on Friday. When I left on Friday, I was cussing like everybody else, saying all kinds of dirty jokes, everybody else at the time clock, laughing, everything, doing everything everybody else does. That Sunday, I made up my mind. On my way out, I got me a pack of tracts, bought me a little New Testament in the bookstore. I showed up Monday morning with a Bible in my pocket, tracts. Been that way ever since. I decided I'm dividing it out.

With me, it's either—I don't know what I can't get in some of your minds. I can't. With me, it's one way or the other. I can't be half one, half the other. To me, it's either white, black, black and white, up and down, left and right. I don't know where you come from. I can't think that way. I knew in my heart that it was going to be tough for me to go back, and I knew if I didn't go back and make a bigger fool out of myself on Monday morning, that I probably would chicken out. So I went up there in the morning, and they're all around the time clock, and I'm passing out tracts at the gate out there, and everybody's like, "What happened to him?" I thought, "If I don't make a big hole in this thing that I can't ever go back, I'll chicken out." I've never been any different in my life ever since that day.

VII. The Urgency of the Times

I don't understand it. But I feel it's my job not only as a pastor to preach to you the Word of God, but I think it's my job also to help you understand where you're at in this thing. Ladies and gentlemen, I don't know if sitting here this morning you understand where we are at in relationship to the coming of the Lord Jesus Christ. I don't want to stand in the judgment seat of Christ with your blood on my hands. I don't. I know that some of you don't understand that as your pastor, because of where I come from, when it comes into relationship that you standing before the judgment seat of Christ, I am the greatest friend you have. I could just as easily be a mealy-mouthed pastor who would tell you whatever you wanted to hear and just blow smoke up your rear end, or come out your ears, excuse me, and just tell you every nice thing and jiggy thing that you wanted to hear and go out of here and shake hands. We'd all get along just fine, and you'd love me, and I love you, and I still love you even though some of you don't love me. But the bottom line is, that would not do you any good at the judgment seat of Christ, and I am

guilty of a lot of things, and I don't expect to get much at the judgment seat of Christ, but I'll tell you one thing that is not going to be on my hands is your blood of not understanding where you're at and what you're up against.

This church, whether you believe it or not, know it or not, or leave it or not, is the best friend you have in relationship to what's coming down the road to you. You saw last week or last couple of weeks, in one fell swoop, I told you no country on the face of this planet has ever lasted past a hundred years once they dumped the Word of God, and we dumped the Word of God in 1898. 1888, officially, this country was done with that book and took the RSV of 1888, and at that point, God turned the hourglass over, and He said, "A hundred years and running." This is why I come through that gap period of where it changed from men who believed it to now that nobody believes it, to men who understood the judgment of God and Bible doctrine to people who don't believe it and have no idea about it and don't care.

This is why I came out of a time when everybody knew what sin was. I can't even tell you, and some of you older people would probably identify with me, if you'd have told me back in the 70s that there was going to come a day when this country actually thought about legalizing same-sex marriages and letting homos live together as husband and husband, I guess, and that if you'd actually tell me that that was going to happen, I'd just said, "You're nuts." But it's happening. That's what happens to a nation that loses its salt, and the salt loses its savor, and it's not preserved anymore.

You saw in the last week what's coming. In one week's time, as Reverend Wright said, and I don't agree with much that he said, but I agree with one thing that he did say: he simply said, "The chickens have come home to roost." This country has violated God, has made fun of God. They've taken prayer out of schools. They thumb their nose at God. They've made God a mockery. They've taken His name off of everything. You can't pray publicly in His name. Now they took out Christmas. They took out Easter out of the school. They took everything out, and they still think that God's going to bless this country. They don't know their Bibles very well.

Let me tell you something, if you know your Bible at all, you know that where we're at in Revelation chapter 6 and the tribulation period, there's coming a famine of darkness and a famine of absolute unbelief that's going to sweep this world. Now, bless your heart, you're so caught up in other things. You think that the rapture of the church is going to take place on Tuesday, and then everything bad is going to start happening on Wednesday. You know your Bible. You know that God never does a thing that way. He won't start. He won't have the rapture on Monday and the tribulation start on Tuesday. There's always a transition of what God does, and though we are not going to go through the tribulation period as such, that does not mean that you aren't going to lose everything you have before we get there.

I love this place. Thank God for it. But I'm also in my mind, I'm telling you right now, also in my mind, looking down a little, look around, look behind, look ahead, also down my line, when push comes to shove, we're going to have to leave this place, downsize it. That's why, thank God, we don't have a lot of money in it. We can walk away from it, and we can do whatever we got to do because there's coming a time when, folks, it's going to go right back to the way it was in the

book of Acts, and do you know what God's going to do? Do you know what He's going to do to some of you sitting in this room right now? Do you know what He's going to do? He's going to divide you out of here. It's easy to come to church when you can. How about if you got to choose to go to church today or go to work tomorrow? You're not living in a very good time to not have learned how to trust God. You don't understand those circumstances. When people don't understand what they believe and why they believe what they believe, when bad times come, they all panic, and you're about to see a worldwide panic.

You were told that this 700 million dollar bailout was going to fix our problems. Nobody believed it. Do you know why? Because our government has absolutely no credibility with anybody. We never get to the real problem, do we? You see, that's why a lot of people don't like this church because we never not get to the real problem. But in our country, we never get to the real problem. We think 700 million dollars to the banks will fix everything. Do you know what the bankers did the very next day once they knew that they got the money in their pocket? They found out they went, a bunch of them went out and took a retreat and spent four hundred thousand dollars of your money in a plush restaurant someplace because they're really going to change. The problem is not money, the lack of money, how much money. The problem is corruption from the top to the bottom.

Now, let me ask you a question. If you had a child that was 12 or 13 years old, and you bought that child a really nice bike, and you sacrificed to buy that kid a bike, horn on it, handlebar things like that, curb feelers, you know, you had all those things on it, and you gave that kid that, and that kid just trashed that bike in three weeks' time, beat it up to death, didn't take care of it, and finally drove it out there and let everybody else ride it, and everybody else busted it up and broke it up, and then a month later he comes back or she comes back and says, "Will you get me a new one?" How many of you are going to get them a new bike? How many of you are going to say, "Oh, that's okay. You don't learn how to be responsible with that bike. We'll get you another one." Is there anybody here? If there is, please don't raise your hand. I don't want you to be singled out.

You see, the real issue with the bailout and the money wasn't the bankers. Do you think that anybody got their arm behind their back that designed those when they knew they didn't have enough money to pay for it? It goes right down to the common ordinary person who has no self-discipline, no structure in their life, no accountability, no responsibility, that when a good thing comes along, "I'll just take it and never think how I'm going to pay for it." Do you know what kind of Christians we got right now? Somebody in this church, you live in your life like you want to live it, and not even taking into account is the judgment seat of Christ coming where you're going to have to give an account.

Do you know what it is right now in our country? It's payday. It's payday. It's payday because this country has dumped God and the Word of God, and it's payday. God's hand has been off this country, and it's payday, and you are going to see this thing come down and spiral down more and more, and probably we are going to lose everything we have. To you, that's a big deal. To me, I'll never lose what I really cared about in the first place. He will get me through. Some of you have never learned to trust Him to get you through, and you, my friend, are going to have a hard time.

As your pastor, I love you. I'm telling you, I'm warning you. This is not a day in your life to be out of fellowship with God. This is certainly not a day in your life not to be saved. This is not a day in your life that thing rolls downhill. The banks fail. They can't—they're not going to give any money out because they're scared to death. Your boss, your businesses have to rely on their line of credit from the banks. They don't give anything. They come down. They lay off. They can't work. People pull their money out of the bank. They're scared. The banks collapse. Everything goes down, and now it's worldwide.

If I can just throw this in, did you see in the paper last week, the 10—1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, 10—the 10 financial geniuses from around the world? They're going to solve this problem. We'll go to the book of Revelation. He's got 10 kings over there that he runs it through. What do you read? Where are you at? Do you actually think that God is just going to allow this church—not this church, the church—who has dumped this book, dumped this word, to do whatever they want to do and thumb their nose at God when the Waldensians and the Albigensians and the Hussites and all of those named men who died and took a stand, and we're going to waltz into heaven and say, "Hey, here we are," and high-five? What's wrong with you? What's wrong with me?

I'm telling you something. Some of you got problems with other people in this church. You better get it fixed because push comes to shove, we're all we're going to have. I don't have any illusion that some of you won't sprint out of here and be gone so fast when push comes to shove if you'll get a better deal someplace else. No doubt in my mind. Why? Because you don't do anything here now. You think you're going to pay a price when you're not paying one now? You think you're going to care where we meet when you didn't care about this place? This is a really neat dedication service, isn't it? It's a reality service.

Do you know what you have here? Do you know what God has given you here? Do you have any understanding why God has allowed us to be together in this time period in the world that we live in with what's coming down the road? He could have left you out in the cold someplace. Yet some of you will get out in the cold. Do you know why? Because I'm telling you, you're going to have to be in the cold. Do you know why? Because I'm telling you, something's coming down the road. It's going to take everything we... Life in America changed after 9/11, and last week it changed again. If you can't see the handwriting on the wall and you can't see where this thing is going, let me tell you something, in the next year or so, some of you, if not most of you, probably going to lose your jobs. You're going to lose your 401K. Bear on with you. Some of you that have not been good stewards of the money that God has given you and by financially stupid and just got yourself upside down and get beyond belief, you're going to be in real trouble. There will be no bailout for you.

We stand on the verge of losing everything we have, and I'm telling you, it's a good thing because do you really want to go into the judgment seat of Christ without bearing any burden at all? Do you want to go into heaven like you walk around planet Earth flipping God a quarter every once in a while and saying, "Good job, keep up the good work"? Do you want to go into heaven when you've never learned how to pray, and your prayer is nothing more than a Sears catalog where you're ordering everything and telling God what you do? Do you really want to go there without really having a relationship that counts where you pay the price?

This church is the best friend you ever had. Me as your pastor is the best friend you ever had. I'm not going to allow you to walk in there. If you walk in there, you will go on your own. It won't be because I didn't tell you the truth. I don't take it personal. I'm not building a church. I'm building people. I'm looking for men and women that will take a stand in these last days, and it's going to get rough. You better make your amends with whoever you got to make them with because that same person may be helping you out when nobody else will, and you've got nothing else. God has put us together for a reason. We're here for a purpose. You better learn. You better listen. I know some of you don't listen to me. I mean, I tell you, "Watch out for this. Watch out for that. Watch out for this. Don't get around this. Stay away from this. Stay away from that." You just blow me off like I'm your grandmother. You better listen to me on this one. The bottom line is this: we're at the end, folks. It's done. It's done. It is finished. It is spiraling out of control faster, and now it's just not in America. It's a worldwide thing.

You do know that when the big 700 billion bailout came out, and the stock market the next day—God's got a sense of humor—they paid off their big 700 billion dollar. President Bush did it. He said, "This is going to make all the difference in the world." And the next day, it went down. Talk about God's sense of humor, it went to 777 down. God said, "Watch this," and it's been down ever since. It ain't going anywhere. Why? Nobody believes the government. Nobody trusts the government. They look at what they said, "700 billion dollar bailout," and then nobody's holding anybody who put it together accountable, and they're giving everybody a free pass.

If, take the worst case scenario, say you're here this morning, and you're so far in debt, you can't even get out. You're upside down in everything. You're so far out, you'll never get out. And so I come over and I say to you, "Here, I'm going to write one check, wipe out all your debt. Here it is. And on top of that, here's 200 thousand dollars." In a year's time, you're right back in debt again. Do you know why? Because giving you more money is not the problem. That's not the issue. We could give you all the money in the world, and you'll just get—will keep going up high as the money because the problem is you don't make good choices. You're undisciplined. You're unstructured, and you don't know how to make the right choices, and you keep burying yourself. You better learn.

I really like this day, but I can lean up against it and turn around and talk, and I'm going to sit on it in a minute, and I'm just going to—I just want to, David, we put a little flap that comes up, a little thing on it. I can just kind of sit here and let them have it for a while. I love you folks. We are going to dedicate this church this morning. I don't know how long we'll have it. That's up to you. I don't care. I love it. I was excited. I had the weirdest dream last night. I dreamed this a brain. How many dreamed about coming to church here this morning? Anybody else? I mean, I had five dreams last night. First dream was we were all late. That's not too much of a dream; that's pretty much a reality. Second dream is, and I can't forget this, that what the third dream is, somebody came in and tried to shoot up the place, and Jan Hepworth napped him down with a gun, and then Joe dragged him up, and I think just left him up there. I hope, I don't know. I woke up four or five times, every time with a different dream about this church because I just wanted to be here this morning, not because of what we have, because of who gave it to us and under the circumstances gave it to us.

Let me tell you something, if this message does nothing for you, and we're kind of starting over here, but the bottom line is this: we got to hang together here, guys. Don't look at this as a church. Look at this as a big lifeboat. We're just not going to float with the tide. Everybody pick up an oar, and we got to row this sucker. I don't care how bad it gets. We still have a job to do. Do you know what gets you through in those times? What gets you through this time is the relationship with God that you don't have this morning, that you better get one. You better come to the end of your life where you quit keeping the world into you and begin to divide this thing out, where you take the stand and you get what God has for you to become what God wants you to have.

I want to tell you something. I love you. I don't know where this is all going. I mean, I know where it's going to end. I don't have a clue. I'm not—you think I'm up here to be some prophet of doom to scare you? I'm not. My job is to tell you what's coming your way because I think that many of you are not prepared. I think that many of you have come to the point in your life where you are not ready for this, and I don't want to see it get any worse for you. But I'm going to be there for you. Unfortunately, I think it probably will because you won't do anything about it. You're like the person who just goes on and on and on, and you just never learn. You're like the kid who keeps hitting himself in the head with a hammer, and then he stops, and somebody says, "Why do you keep hitting yourself in the head with a hammer?" "Because it feels so good when I stop." Then you start again. You like that, didn't you? You'll be stealing that without giving me credit for it. You ought to be writing these down. You're getting a lot of material here free.

I love you. God has given us. Mel saw it when he came in down here. He walked in, and it was just almost like he stopped, and he was back in Staten Island. I took him back in the back and showed him the way it was and the way it was, and he just stopped up here, and he prayed, and he prayed for this church. He prayed for the people in this church, prayed for me as a pastor, and then he did something, and I got to tell you the truth. He's 86 years old. I don't think he's going to make another year. Barb and I both talked about it. I saw something in him this year that I have never seen in my life. It was almost like he was saying his goodbyes to everybody. I have never seen this guy who was as rough as nails, who didn't care what he said, who he said it to. He has a tenderness about him at this point in his life that I just—it almost like it just threw me off. He pulled me aside. Everybody else was going up the stairs, and he put his arm around me. He looked right in my eyes and he said, "We've been through a lot. We go back a ways together, don't we, buddy?" And I said, "Yes, sure, we do." "We've been through a lot of deep water together, haven't we?" And I said, "Yes, sure, we have." And he smiled, and he says, "But God never let us drown, did He?" And I said, "No, sure, He didn't." And he pointed his finger in my face, and he said, "Remember that in the years to come, or in some cases, maybe the days to come. He'll never let you down."

When I said goodbye to him, I've never done this in my life, I said goodbye to him, went over to hug him. He stopped, put his hands on me, and he kissed me. Never kissed me in all my life. And he said, "I love you, son." He said, "I'm proud of you. I'm proud of you." He said, "You built a church." And he said, "I'm proud of you." I tell you what, I come out of that old crowd. He knows what's coming. He's seen it better than I've seen it. But I saw it. I want to say to you this

morning, ladies and gentlemen, I love you with all my heart. If you're a visitor here this morning, I'm so glad you're here. I really am. If I can ever help in any way, shape, or form, I'll do whatever I can do for you.

VIII. Dedication and Final Exhortation

The bottom line is this: God gave us this place, and I want to take just a few moments, and I want us to dedicate it to Him. I wanted you to understand this morning that we're at the beginning of the end, and it's going to get rough. We have got to hang together, and there is no place for you getting out of fellowship with God. Maybe you will. Maybe you'll walk out of here, and I'll never stop you. Maybe you won't let anybody help you. Maybe you won't divide yourself out. But you heard; I'm free from the blood.

I know this: if it goes down to 30 people, I don't care. I know this: if it goes down to 30 people, I know I'll have the best 30 people in the world. I am firmly convinced the greatest Christians in this world are in this room. I believe that with all of my heart. In these last days, if I only have five or ten left, we will get done what we need to get done because the truth of the matter is, in everything that God ever did, only a small remnant ever pulled it off to begin with. Everybody else was just along for the ride. But what God's going to do, He's going to carve out the freeloaders. He's going to carve out the riders. This thing is going to come down to the thing where it's going to separate the men from the boys. But then again, that's what God does.

I think, you know what, seven times in the Bible, God has given a great awakening. That last great awakening took place in the 50s that spread across the West Coast and great revival. God's not giving any more revivals. There's no more great awakenings in that sense. But what He's given this church, and probably other churches around this world that believe what we believe, and there's a number of them, but what He's given us who are paying attention, He's given us our own personal great awakening. Don't get too far from your spiritual home. Don't get too far from your Savior. Hang on to Him with everything you've got. If you don't know how to build a relationship, let me help you, or somebody help you. Let me get into your life.

Some of you parents, you have an absolute chance. God has done some incredible things in your family, and Dad, you have an opportunity now to take control and lead. You need to take that control. Mom, you have an opportunity to do some incredible things. Now you need to take that control. But it requires you separating yourself from the world. That's where we're at. Every head bowed, every eye closed, and we're going to be finished here in just a second.