

I. Introduction to the Victorious Christian Life

We have a wealth of material. The thing that I am really impressed with you folks is how hard you are really working at all of this. I truly believe that most of you, not all of you, really want to build that relationship with God that you truly need to have. We have been talking about how to have a victorious Christian life. This is such a foreign term today in the world that we live in, in the Christian world that we live in. We talk about a life that helps you with raising your children. That is why I want to have so much material available, and I want to have everything that I can at your fingertips to help you with your children, and help you with your marriage. It truly will be a benefit. We want to help you get to the point in your life where you can live above life circumstances.

I have never seen a time in my ministry, in almost forty years now, where Christians have been so bombarded and so overwhelmed with things. I want to help you today as best I can. Every time we come to Romans 6, it just gets better and better as far as I am concerned, as far as things that God shows us. Yesterday, we started our ladies' classes, and that will be a great benefit to you in helping you. In a week, we are going to talk about soul-winning classes and help get you ready to take a part in this ministry and help you move up to the next level.

I want to start reading today in Romans 6:18-23, another segment here. I want to talk to you about this victorious Christian life.

18 Being then made free from sin, ye became the servants of righteousness.

19 I speak after the manner of men because of the infirmity of your flesh: for as ye have yielded your members servants to uncleanness and to iniquity unto iniquity; even so now yield your members servants to righteousness unto holiness.

20 For when ye were the servants of sin, ye were free from righteousness.

21 What fruit had ye then in those things whereof ye are now ashamed? for the end of those things is death.

22 But now being made free from sin, and become servants to God, ye have your fruit unto holiness, and the end everlasting life.

23 For the wages of sin is death; but the gift of God is eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord.

Father, we thank You and praise You for all that You do for us. Lord, I love You, and I ask You today, Father, to take these principles, take this great passage of Scripture, and Lord, help us today. I believe these people, Lord, truly love You, and I believe, Lord, that most of them, if not all of them, truly want to have the victorious Christian life. Help us, Lord, as we look to this passage. Help me in everything that I do to be a better pastor. When I meet with them one-on-one and help them through the Bible, help me to give them my undivided attention. Help me never to

be in a hurry. Help me never to not listen. Help me always to take and let their problems become my problems, that together we may solve them through the Word of God.

I pray, Father, as I always pray, and I pray this every day, that You will take men in this church and raise them up to be strong spiritual leaders. That You will take the women of this church and help them grow up to be everything that God wants them to be as mothers, and wives, and Christian women, that the older women, Lord, can take the younger ones and teach them like we saw yesterday. Lord, I just thank You for the stability of our church, for the men and the ladies, Lord, who know the Bible, that they are not fooled. They know what the Word of God says. Help us to continue to grow and help today to be a benefit to them, and Lord, we will thank You and praise You in Jesus' name, for His sake we ask it. Amen.

II. The War is Won

I wish that I could tell you today that the Christian life will not have any downsides or any valleys to it, but of course, that would not be true. The Bible is very clear. I have always looked at it this way: I may lose some battles in life. I have, and I will continue to lose some, and so will you. We may lose some battles in life, but the great news today is that the war has already been won. The war has already been paid for. The battle has already been won, and everything that God needed to do has been accomplished for you and I to have the victory.

Today, it is going to be a very basic outline. It is going to basically be your traditional three-point outline. We have been talking about identifying the problems that you have. Remember I told you that you will never solve your problems until you admit to the problems that you have. You will never solve your problems or fix your problems until you see the problems you have, and then you have to attack that problem. You have to quit putting it aside that this is really not my problem. I really do not have this problem, when you know deep down inside you do. You have to begin to attack those issues, and deal with those issues from the biblical principles of the Word of God.

To help you to do that, I have given you all kinds of easy ways to break down tough passages. I myself, as someone who, when I started out, the Bible was a very complicated book. So I had to break it down where I could grasp it. Basically, what I do for you is help you break it down just as I broke it down. I gave you some key words that you ought to have in your repertoire or your vocabulary about the victorious Christian life. We talked about the word consistency, how important it is to be consistent. That is what I talked about when I said you may lose some battles, but you are going to win the war. That is consistency.

We talked about the ability to know, to reckon yourself dead, and to yield your members unto righteousness. I explained some complicated terms like the baptism of Jesus' death. You should understand that now. The baptism of the Holy Spirit. In fact, this morning, one of my little gals came up and asked me a very good question about the Holy Spirit of God and the Holy Ghost. Everybody, on whatever level you are, seemingly is grasping some great truth, and that is what it is going to take. We talked about the old nature and the new nature. We talked about how that you battle these things through your spirit with your flesh.

III. God Understands Our Struggle

Now today, we are going to look at this section here starting in Romans 6:19. Honestly, it is one of my favorite places in the Bible that helps me personally. I know that people, any pastor, people who preach all the time and teach Bible studies and work one-on-one, it just goes with the territory that some of you think that I do not have any problems, and that I have all the answers to life, and that I do not struggle just like you do. That is simply not true. I have the same issues that you have, maybe on a different level, but certainly we all struggle with the same things. There are places in the Bible that have been very profitable to me to help me in my own personal relationship with God.

Sometimes it is not even a biblical principle that you apply to your life. Sometimes it is just a concept that once you understand something about God, it really makes a difference in your life. Thursday night, I think, was one of the best Bible discussions we had. Between Thursday, which is Friday and Saturday, I probably have had twenty-five phone calls. We talked about, not about the end of the world, because that got thrown in there too, but about talking about your relationship with Christ in the book of Song of Solomon. I looked at that and I thought to myself, when God began to really work in my heart, and I am praying about this, and I want to see what God does. But I want to have at some point, and I am thinking about, on New Year's Eve we always have a time where we spend some time in the Word of God together, and then we have a meal together, we have the Lord's Supper and all of that stuff. I am really thinking about that New Year's Eve, that we get together and start off the New Year, because you are all almost right where you need to be for the most part. To take that night when we have about three or four hours where we can spend some great time, and I want to bring you through the book of Song of Solomon, not doctrinally, but from a practical application that you can start the New Year by understanding how to have a relationship with God, that I can maybe break down some of those barriers for you, that you can get to God and you understand.

I think that is most of God's people's problem. I think we are trying to have a relationship with somebody that we do not really know. Oh, you know Him as your Savior, but you have never got to the place in your life that you understand some of the great concepts about God. I think I am going to work through some things, I am going to look at some things, and I think that on that night to take that, to start the New Year, to give you a complete understanding and kind of like a syllabus that you could go through the rest of your life and fine tune that relationship that you need to have. Understanding how He looks at you, understanding how you should look at Him. Understanding what He expects, because I think many, many times our expectations of what we think God has for us becomes unrealistic. I think many times in our relationship with God, we are our own worst enemy. I mean, I know we have the flesh and we have all of those external problems that we all struggle with, but once you get to a point in your life, you have got to understand God conceptually. You have got to understand God in the basic concept that He is.

This morning, I want to give you one, and this is a great one to me. This helps me. Last week, we talked about the aspect that we get tagged with as being Baptist, the aspect that once we get saved, we know that we cannot lose our salvation. We believe in eternal security. The thing flying around, everybody always says, "Well, you know what? You Baptists believe that once

you get saved, you can live your life any way you want.” We talked about how that that is not true. Yes, I am saved eternally, and eternal security is the key in my life that is really the foundation of my salvation. But the bottom line is this: I do not want to sin. Every time I do sin, every time I disobey God, I do something against God, it grieves me terribly. You never want to come to the place in your life where you get where you can sin and it does not bother you, because that is a very dangerous place to be in.

I want to talk to you today about a concept. I want to talk about one of my favorite places in the Bible that helps me personally. It is very simple. It is not very profound, but it is profound, but it is very simple. There is no theology to it. It is simply aimed at every guy and every woman who wants to live for God and basically get to the point that you live above the circumstances. I thought it was funny in the last election. If you ever notice how politicians always do this, they always want to identify with the common people. Yet they never do. So they will pick out somebody that basically, that they can make, like, they are like them. In this case, it was our old friend Joe the Plumber. It was a strategic deal. Joe the Plumber got his fifteen minutes of fame. He will probably make a movie, “I am Joe the Plumber.” Yet Joe the Plumber represented just an ordinary guy. The politicians gravitated to him because they wanted to, they used him as a ping-pong ball. One of the candidates wanted to show how the other, he thought the other candidate did not really care for Joe the Plumber and was going to hurt Joe the Plumber. The other candidate wanted to show how he was going to help Joe the Plumber. In reality, neither one of them were really going to help Joe the Plumber. The one thing that is going to help Joe the Plumber, that is that book and the Lord Jesus Christ. I do not know where Joe the Plumber is at with the Lord, but if you think that you are going to be able to trust the government no matter who is in power, you are sadly mistaken.

In Christianity, we are all just Joe the Plumbers. What I am about to give you is not something from some heretical hierarchy of the pastorship down there and throwing out things so you will get like me someday, hopefully. No, I am in the same struggle you are. I told you Thursday night that this church is like a lifeboat. If things go down the way it looks like they are going down, all we are going to have is each other. The very person that you may have something against tonight, or today, that you may have a problem with, may be the very person that God will have you lean on. It is every time that we as a church need to pull together and understand where we are at and realize that this is a lifeboat. Everybody has to have an oar in their hand. We reach as many people as we can, but at the same time we have to take care of each other. Because that is where we are at. There are some tough times coming. What I want to give you today is something that really helps me.

This verse starts, a great concept starts with a statement in Romans 6:19. Look what he says: “I speak after the manner of men because of the infirmity of your flesh.” The thing that always impressed me about God, and I did not understand this or did not grasp this until probably maybe ten or twelve years after I was really saved and in the Bible. You go through a process and you learn things and you make dumb mistakes and you get up and you keep moving and you grow and you learn and you do things for God and God shows you and then you begin to work with people and that has another whole dimension to it. One of the things that I have come to the

conclusion with, it is such an incredible concept for you to grasp. I know it is for me. It is the concept that God understands what we are struggling with today. I think sometimes we get the idea that God is up here, and He is, and we are down here, and we are. God is so holy and righteous that He has no compassion for what we are going through. Let me say something: God understands your struggle today.

Some of you struggle with things in your life, and very honestly, you want to change your lifestyle. Some of you have issues in your life that you are standing all by yourself on, and it is tough. Some of you have personal issues of things you have got to get past in your life, and it is tough. Sometimes when we do not have a handle on it the way that we should, we get a defeatist attitude. We think, "Ah, I screwed up again. Why should I continue on?" Or we get our nose out of joint about towards something else or somebody else when in actuality we have our own issue we have to deal with. The thing that was the greatest comfort to me that I have ever really had in my life as a child of God is the fact when he says, "I speak after the manner of men." God knows what kind of people we are, and God takes me where I am at and will help me get from where I am at. He never condemns me from where I am at as long as I am trying to do better in my life and get to where God wants me to be.

I think Psalms 39:5 is one of the greatest verses in the Bible.

Psalms 39:5

Behold, thou hast made my days as an handbreadth; and mine age is as nothing before thee: verily every man at his best state is altogether vanity.

Boy, that is so true. We think because we learn a little Bible. We think because we know some concepts or we work with people. We think because maybe we are a good disciple or a good preacher. We think because that we have some Bible knowledge that sometimes we get the idea that we are better than other people. Sometimes we get the idea that I am up here and you are down here and, "Oh, the day you will be so happy today you become like me." The Bible says, "Man that is very best state is altogether vanity." Notice he threw the word in there, "altogether." Altogether vanity.

Psalms 78. You do not have to turn back to it today. I would like you to read this chapter this next week. Psalms 78 is the great chapter in the Old Testament. It shows basically from a historical standpoint where Israel loses the kingdom of heaven. Psalms 78 fits into the great time when God says, "I have had it with Israel," and God puts them on the back burner and casts them off temporarily. But it is a great passage, and it is one of the most awesome tender passages in all the Bible for me because I look at it and I understand it. God is talking to Israel historically, but I also know that it applies to me because just as Israel was God's child in the Old Testament as a nation, I am God's child today as an individual because of my commitment to Christ. I wish I could read it all today, and I do not have time to do that. It is a very, in fact, it is the longest chapter in the topic, it goes on forever. But it is one of the greatest chapters.

In understanding that when he says, "I speak after the manner of men because of the infirmity of your flesh," in understanding what I am saying, how God recognizes where you are at. Many

times you are harder on yourself than God will be on you. I want to read just a portion of this starting in Psalms 78:30. He comes down through here and he talks about how that basically here is the gist of this passage. So when you read it this week, he talks about how God has done everything for Israel. God had a plan for the nation of Israel, and he orchestrated everything in their life. When you read this, it is kind of like a history lesson of where God has brought Israel from. What he basically says is, "You know what? I allow these things to happen in your life. I put these things in your life because I was going to bring you through them, and I was going to be there for you every step of the way. I gave you everything that you needed. I took care of you and every need that you had."

Psalms 78:30-39

30 They were not estranged from their lust.

31 But while their meat was yet in their mouths, the wrath of God came upon them, and slew the fattest of them, and smote down the chosen men of Israel.

32 For all this they sinned still, and believed not for his wondrous works.

33 Therefore their days did he consume in vanity, and their years in trouble.

34 When he slew them, then they sought him: and they returned and enquired early after God.

35 And they remembered that God was their rock, and the high God their redeemer.

36 Nevertheless they did flatter him with their mouth, and they lied unto him with their tongues.

37 For their heart was not right with him, neither were they stedfast in his covenant.

38 But he, being full of compassion, forgave their iniquity, and destroyed them not: yea, many a time turned he his anger away, and did not stir up all his wrath.

39 For he remembered that they were but flesh; a wind that passeth away, and cometh not again.

Now that is, if there is any picture of you and me today, that is it right there. If there is any picture of the nation of Israel in the Old Testament, which by the way is a great similitude of what you and I are and what we go through. This is the passage. But if there is any place in the Bible that shows the way you and I are with God, boy, this is it. Yet look at Psalms 78:38: "But he, being full of compassion, forgave their iniquity, and destroyed them not: yea, many a time turned he his anger away, and did not stir up all his wrath." Why? Why did he call them to be his holy nation? Yet when he kept turning his back on him, when he kept doing what was wrong, when he would not get away from their sin, when they lied to him and they flattered him with their lips but they lied to him with their tongues and their heart was not fully after them, why did he still have compassion? The next verse is your answer. "For he remembered that they were but flesh: a wind that passeth away, and cometh not again."

Paul says, "I speak after the manner of men because of the infirmity of your flesh," and I want you to understand this today. God understands what you are struggling with. God understands where you are at. Many times, as I said, we are harder on ourselves than God is. God knows and

sees your heart. God reads your thoughts. I have told you before, the Bible is the only book in the world when you begin to read it, it begins to read you. You see, you can lie to me. You can fool me. You can pretend that you are one thing when you are not. You can pretend you are spiritual and have all kinds of issues inside. But the one person you cannot hide from is this book and the Lord Jesus Christ.

We all have our issues in life. We all struggle in life. I watch some of you in your struggles, and I watch some of you who are basically all alone. Your husband is not saved, and you are by yourself, and you are trying to do the best you can do. You are at a disadvantage on one side because the Bible says that your husband should be the spiritual leader, and you do not have a spiritual leader. In many cases, I am your spiritual leader, or this church is. In that sense, it is kind of not the way God intended it. I know sometimes you struggle with that. I know there is a time probably when you feel like, “Why should I continue on? Why? Why would I give it? It just seems like everything I do, it does not turn out the way that God wants or the way it should. Why am I continually in this struggle?” I understand that. I understand that there are some of you out there that are in with personal things in your life. You have an issue. You are trying to get past. I understand that.

Now, none of this is a license to go on and do it. You know when you will get through and stop whatever in your life is really your hindrance. You know when you will get past it. It is so clear. You will stop whatever in your life that is keeping you from being used of God at only one point in your life, and that is when you hate it as much as God does. When you get so sick and tired of the sin that so easily besets you, that you just are marking time. You are not going anywhere. You are not doing anything. When you see others getting around you, moving ahead of you and doing things that you want to do, but this whatever it is in your life is not going to allow you to do that. You are going to come to the place where you hate it so desperately because it becomes the thing that not just steals away your millennial inheritance. It becomes the single thing that stops you from being effective with God.

But God understands, folks. Kids, I am going to tell you, “For he remembered that they were all but flesh.” That is where we are at. That is where we are at. In the midst of their disobedience, in the midst of their struggle, in their midst of their constant battles within themselves, God remembered that they were flesh and had compassion. You need to understand that. I am not saying that as a license for your sin. I am saying that so you do not beat yourself into oblivion with some issues you are trying to work through as long as you are trying and you are doing what God wants you to do. Now, if you are not doing what God wants you to do, then my verse for you is Job 9:4. It is a great verse for you. You know what it is? It simply says this: “Who hath hardened himself against him, and prospered?”

IV. Three Infirmities of Man

This verse in Romans 6:19, going back to Romans 6 now, understanding that great concept, says, “after the manner of men, the infirmity of your flesh.” I told you this was going to be a three-point outline today. I want to take this time that we are in Romans here, and in the Bible you will find three infirmities that you and I have. This is the three-point outline. You will find three

infirmities that you and I struggle with. These are the struggles that we have constantly. In these three areas lies the battle for you and for me. If you are willing in time to recognize these three things in your life, if you are willing in time to define these three things in your life, if you are willing in time to attack these things in your life, then you are on your way to a victorious Christian life. Many of you already are. That is why I am telling you, do not get so hard on yourself. There will be things you have to change. Hey, there will be things you have to change that you do not want to change. It is okay. It is as long as in time you change them. God does not matter when you argue with him as long as at the end of the day he wins.

We think that to argue with God is some blasphemous thing. You do not know very much about God. You should have saw Moses and God go at it. You should have saw Abraham and God go at it. You should have saw Jacob and God. Jacob and God got down to fisticuffs. They were wrestling in the ground. Those things in our lives are how you build the right relationship. God does not want a robot. God wants to hear what you think. You can tell God what you think even when it is wrong as long at the end of the day you come back around and say, "Yeah, You are right." That is part of the building of the process. I think many times we think we cannot have a good argument with God. Boy, you watch Moses, he did. Job did. Jeremiah said one time, he quit the ministry. Him and God had a conversation because he was not getting out of it what he thought he should get. Jeremiah just flat quit. You ought to see what happened between God and Jeremiah once he quit. A real relationship with God is one that you and God speak of face to face like a man speaketh with a friend. You will find in your Bible three infirmities. When you define these, you recognize these, and you are going to lose some battles along the way. But bless God, we are going to win the war.

- The Infirmary of the Flesh
- The Infirmary of Not Knowing How to Pray

V. Five Reasons Prayers Go Unanswered

Now we talked about the five aspects of our prayer life. Let us look at him one more time: her position, she knew she was a sinner; her perspective, she knows who he is, "O Lord, thou Son of David"; her purpose, her daughter vexed with the devil; her persistence, three times she is rejected and yet she hangs in there; why? Because of her promises. This is why, ladies and gentlemen, I tell you over and over and over and over again, you have to learn the principles, the promises of the Word of God. If you have been in this church three years, I will give you the first two. If you have been in this church three years and you do not have a list of promises in your life tonight, today, this morning, wherever we are at, if you do not have those promises in your life, that is why you are not going where you are anywhere you are going. That is why three years from now you will be right where you are at now. That is why when you do not get what you want or something does not go the way you want, your reaction is the fact that you just, you just, you get mad at God. You are mad at God, you are mad at God, and the truth of the matter is it is the promises that you have to have.

Now I gave you five reasons or five aspects of our prayer life. Now let me give you five reasons why your prayer always does not get answered in the time you and I think it should. Now remember now, we have an infirmity, we have an infirmity, and that infirmity is we do not know how to pray. We do not know how to pray. Now let us look at this, five reasons why it always does not get answered in your time, and these are not hard. It is not hard.

- You are not in charge anymore. Now let me give you the first one. The first one, my favorite, it is my favorite because it is my problem, and yet I know it, it will become your favorite because I guarantee it is your problem. You know, like sometimes God does not answer it in the time frame that we want to. Let me tell you why: because you and I are not in charge anymore. There comes a time in your life, in my life, we have got to give it up, folks. Hey, you have been in charge all your life before you met Christ. How did you do? Dr. Phil says, "How is that working for you?" You know what? The mess you are in tonight, this morning, I keep kicking this nighttime, the mess you are in this morning, nobody got you in but you. If you have a problem this morning with drugs or you have a problem with alcohol, you have a problem with this or without or you have some problem in your life or some error in your life that you cannot get victory over, I guarantee you one thing before we go any farther, I do not even know what it is, you caused by bad choices that problem you got. Nobody twisted your arm and made you do it. You looked at it, decided to do it, and then went right through the thing, and your being in charge is what got you in the mess you are in right now. Simple as that. You know what? When you come to God and you have a problem in your life, God operates upon one concept: you are not in charge anymore. I am, and I will do it my way. Oh, that just grates us. It just grates us. You are not in charge. Look what it got you. Look what it got you. Learning from mistakes is so absolutely vital, but you better learn one thing right now, one thing right now: it takes longer to fix it than it took for you to break it. I am just telling it, it takes longer for you to get right something out of your life than it took for you to put it in because when you get it in, it attaches itself to your flesh and it does not want to let go. We pray to God and ask God to do this, ask God to take this, ask God to fix this, ask God to fix that, and you know what? You are not in charge anymore. You want everything to happen right now. I want everything to happen right, right now. Oh, I know what we want to do. We want to sow our wild oats and then we are all going to pray for crop failure. See, no, no, no. Galatians 6:7, "Be not deceived; God is not mocked: for whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap." Sometimes it takes a long time to clean up the mess. Oh, we want it like that, and we want to order God around to do it right now, but that is what happens when we are in charge. You know what? If God came down and fixed every problem you got right now and every problem I got right now, we would never learn a thing from it. You know why this country is just doomed economically? You know, your 401ks, I do not know if you got yours yet. I told you a couple weeks ago we got one, and mine lost \$12,000. I got one yesterday, mine now has lost and counting to \$12,000 last time, \$45,000. That is pretty good for me because I only had ten bucks in. Anyhow, I got confused with somebody else. I just hope it stays and comes back. You know what? I know why this country is doomed if no other reason, if the Antichrist was not on the scene and it was not the end of the world and we were not there in the front of the Middle East and all this stuff. Oh, hey, somebody, and I do not know who you are, somebody is sending our Thursday night CDs to Fox News. Thank

you. I do not know who is doing it. They are now using our Thursday night Bible study as a critique of world events. What did I tell you last week, two weeks ago, three weeks ago? I told you that Israel was going to whack Iran before the president got in. This morning on Fox News, some general got up there and said, "We are looking for them to hit sometime in the next four weeks." They are going to do it when the nation has got a lame duck president because politically it is going to be the end of everything, and they do not want to have, they do not want to have, you know why they are doing it? Because Obama now wants the first thing you can do in office is sit down with this Mahmoud Ahmadinejad guy and have direct talks, and Israel is not going to put up for that because they know what is down the line, and they know now, and they are coming to the conclusion that they are going to have to stand on their own. Let me tell you something, ladies and gentlemen, Israel will stand on their own. You know why? Because they always have been on their own. They are used to it. But if that was not enough, we did not have all that facing us, I will tell you why economically this country is shot. You know why? Because the automakers went last week with a hat in their hand. We just gave them \$21 billion. Now they want more. The banking industry destroyed everything and ruined everything and put the economy in a mess. We give them a \$700 billion bailout, and now they are saying it is not enough. You know why it is not enough? You know why it will never be enough? Because if you keep giving people the answer to their problems without having them be accountable to fix their problems, it is money not a hole. This country is not going to learn anything. You know why God leaves some issues in your life so you will learn by your mistakes? You know why I preach to you the way I do so you will identify those problems in your life? You will get honest with yourself, and then you will deal with them so you can move up to the next level and get past it. That is why God does not take it away just like that. That is why God allows you to struggle. He wants to see if you are honest. He wants to see if you are just going to be honest with everything that he does. That is what he wants. He wants to see how you are going to do it. He wants to see if you are going to give him lip service with your mouth and then chase up and out with your tongue. Oh yeah, you are not in charge anymore, friend. When you start dealing with people, some of you folks that work with me in counseling, when you start working with people, you see this in a very clear way. I do not put up with it for five seconds. You will find people that will come in and they will cry great crocodile tears and they will say, "Oh, I am ready to do this, I am ready to do that. I will do whatever you want me to do." We had a gal call last week, Mark, we had a girl, I had a girl call me last week, and she said, "Oh," she says, "I need help so bad. I will do everything, I will do anything, I will do anything, I will do whatever you want me to do." And I said, "Okay." So I got a hold of Mark. Mark ran over and saw her. We got it set up, and it was not twenty minutes later she got a better deal someplace. No, I love all of you. Can I just say this? Can I speak the truth in love? I love you all, but this, if you are ever going to get in the ministry, you need to learn this. You need to learn what I am about to tell you. It is not a bad thing. Do not take it bad. It does not mean I do not love you. It does not mean I would not die for you. It does not mean you cannot have my time. But I have been in this business for almost forty years, and I know its ins and outs. I know it better than I know anything else in my life, and I have come to this conclusion, so do not take this personal. When you sit in my office and you cry big crocodile tears and you flap

them gums about what you are going to do for God, just like this kid on the phone, she was crying so loud I could hold the phone out here and still hear every word she said. In fact, just for a test, because she went on for twenty minutes, I asked a stranger, "Would you hold this here?" I backed off fifty feet, you could still hear it. I am not impressed, nor do I necessarily believe what you tell me. I only believe what you show me. I have been lied to by more people than anybody in this whole planet. I hear it all week long. I hear this, "When you are really going to do this." I hear that, "When you are going to do something else." I have had them sit in my office and say, "I am going to do this, I am going to get rid of this, I am going to do that, I am doing this, I am doing that," and two weeks later they are right back out again. I have come to conclusion that I do not believe anything anybody says to me. I only believe what I see you do. I am safe there. You know why? Because people will flatter you with their lips, lie to you with their tongue. If you do it to God, remember that thing we read back there in Psalms 78, if you do it to him, you think you would not do it to me? You are not in charge anymore.

- God wants to see how sincere we are. I will tell you the second thing. Oh, I am not done with the first one yet. You see this, when you start working with people, they are going to tell you something, and then like this lady, we started talking to her, and in the moment we got something set up, she was going to tell us how it went like she is the expert. I mean, she has got problems up the kazoo, and got more problems than Carter has got liver pills, and now she is going to sit there and she is going to tell me how she is going to, what she is. What I said, "Lady," I said, "You know what? God bless you. God bless you. Just go on and see yourself someplace else." You know what? I do not want you. You are not in charge anymore. Your being in charge has got you in this mess. Someplace in your life, you have got to come to the end of self and say, "I am done. I am done with me because me is me." You have got to say, "Lord, take it over. Take it over." The second thing, sometimes you do not get your prayers answered, and I do not get my prayers answered because God, he wants to see how sincere we are. He wants to see if we are really, really, really sincere. One of my greatest verses in the Bible, and I have it etched in my heart, it is simply this: "A lack of planning on your part does not necessitate an emergency on my part." You say that is not in the Bible. Oh yeah, it is. You just do not know where it is at. Another favorite verse of mine, and I tell you all the time, and it is in there, and you never find it. It is not in there in exactly the same word, but it is in there in concept, and I live by it. It runs like this: "He either sits by the on the riverbank long enough or watch the body of his enemy float by." That is in Proverbs. It is so true. That is why you do not have to, you do not have to react when somebody does something to you. You, in God's time, you have got to learn to wait on God, and prayer is where you learn to wait on God. Sometimes God wants to see how sincere we are. He wants to see if we are just, we are in a panic mode. He wants to see if we are really assessing the situation.
- God wants to show us how helpless we are without Him. The third thing is sometimes we do not get our prayers answered because God wants to show us how helpless we really are without him. You know what? I really believe that when we get to heaven, there will be things that God wanted to do with you and I that he couldn't do because we were too strong. You see, God uses us best when we are in our weakness, and sometimes not getting your

prayer answered and not getting what you want when you want it in a time of a dire need or a dire strait is when God can use you at your best. But because we are, it is all about us, isn't it? It is all about what we have, what we, what we are going through. It is not about what anybody else is going through. It is all about where I am at. Revelation 3:17, talking about the great Laodicean church where you and I are at, he says in that verse, talking about that church, that church stating, "I am rich, and increased with goods," and the church states, "and have need of nothing," including God. That is where we are at today. We are in, we are the Laodicean church. We are in it, and the attitude of Christians is, "I have got everything I want." Maybe when you understand why we are the way we are because of all we have, maybe you understand the only way sometimes God can get your attention by taking it all away. Let me ask you a question: when you are a parent, you have a little child that little child has a toy that he is playing with and he is hurting others with it or he is doing what he should not do with it, what do you do with it? I am sorry, excuse me, I have got, you know what, in the war a grenade went off right over here and blew this eardrum out and a bullet went through this side and come out the other side. I do not hear very well. What was that again? Oh, okay, take it away. "If ye then, being evil, know how to give good gifts unto your children, how much more shall your Father which is in heaven give good things to them that ask him?" If you can figure that out. You think God cannot? Are you his children or not his child? Okay, when you get something and he gives you all these things and you start playing with it and you start putting it more important to him and you start fighting over it, "Now it is mine, not mine, not mine." What good parent would not come down and say, "Let me have it. Let me have it." See how easy life is when you just get back to the book? That is where it is at. That is where it is at. Now do not misunderstand me, I like strong people, spiritually strong. I like disciplined people. I cannot stand undisciplined people. Undisciplined people, I just, I mean, I love them, but I mean, I just, it just drives me nuts. I cannot stand people who are not, have self-discipline. I just cannot. I mean, I like strong people. I like people who have strong convictions. I like people who are resolved. You can, they are disciplined, they are self-disciplined. But all of those things can be a problem for you. Now we do not have any what I would classify rich people in this church, but you know what riches does? Riches obscures faith with God because when you can buy your way out of anything, you do not need God. We live in a society in the Laodicean church as Christians where we have everything we want. We do not need God. You know where God in the twentieth century has really flourished and really been strong and powerful? It has been in the countries like Korea, countries like, well, it is not a country, but it is a continent, Africa, places where they do not have anything and all they have is God. Places like China where the communists come in and in the by the collective good take everything that you have and give you back what they think you should have. It is places like Russia under Stalin and soon to be under Putin where they take everything you got and tell you and give you back what they think you should have, and you do not have the luxury of a plasma TV. You do not have the luxury of all the things that we have. You do not have the luxury many times of having a bathroom inside. You do not have the luxury of having lights on twenty-four seven. Electricity is on only certain times of the day and never at night. There is an advantage to be in a situation where we do not have all that we have because the things that we have make us self-sufficient that we do not even need

God. You know what? As a Christian, this is what I look for. I look for men and women that are self-reliant but not self-sufficient. I look for men and women that are steadfast but not stubborn. I look for men and women that are unmovable but never stationary. I look for men and women that have come to the end of self, that in the midst of everything that we have, everything we have, we realize that nothing is more important than God. I am reminded a little kid years ago, somebody told me this story, a little five-year-old kid. I always think of, you know, I do not know why I do this, I always think of Jack when I hear it, when I tell this story. You know, somebody just like Jack, you know, Jack is all boy, but you know, I watch these little kids pray, and I watch when you guys, we go out to eat and you have your kids pray, and how sweet it is, and how you tell me they pray. Well, this little kid was about five or six years old, and his mom, his mom, and it says it all, and his mom and dad, you know, took him in the same good bed, and you know how the kids go, kids pray for the greatest, greatest stuff. I mean, they are praying for their puppy, they are praying for their goldfish, they are praying for their turtle, you know, they are praying for mommy and uncle and everybody, you know, and they, they, they have not, they have not learned to make enemies yet. They even pray for people that you do not like sometimes. I mean, the purity of a child, you know. This little kid, you and mom and dad put him in there, he is down here, he is praying, you know, the bed down on his knees there. Oops, sorry about that, Pat, son. And he is down there and he is saying, "Dear Lord," he says, "Now please bless mommy, bless daddy, bless my brother and my sister, and Lord, bless the little puppy we have, and bless the goldfish, and bless Aunt so-and-so, and Uncle Tom, and bless this, and bless that, and and bless mommy and dad." You know how to do the same thing five or six times. You want to make sure to get through, you know, and bless mom and they bless dad and bless all of that. And in Jesus' name, amen. "Oh yeah, Lord, and take care of yourself too because if anything happens to you, we are shot." That is the truth. That is the truth. That is the truth.

- We have selfish motives. Sometimes God does not answer our prayer in the time that we think that he should because he wants to show us how helpless we are without him. I will tell you the next thing, number four. Sometimes we do not get our prayers the way we want until we get the selfish motive out of our lives. She would like to use prayers in ordering form. It is all about us. The real child of God, you know, I saw a bumper sticker, I see it quite often. You know, it used to be big back in the seventies, now it is kind of coming back again. It was a bumper sticker that said, "Prayer changes things." You know that is not true. You know that is about as big as lies you could ever concoct and put on a bumper sticker. I like the one much better that says, "Kill them all, let God sort them out." I think that is much more biblical. You know, prayer, you know when somebody says, "Well, prayer changes things." You know that is not true. You know right now you could, you see peace bumper stickers. I just bumped a sticker, another fair says, "Pray for the peace in Jerusalem." You can stay up all night long and all day tomorrow and the rest of your life and pray for the peace of Jerusalem. There is not going to be any peace in Jerusalem until the Prince of Peace comes back. A lot of two biggest wars you ever saw in your life still have to come about Jerusalem, maybe three. You know what I am saying to you? The older you get, and I know you are not here right now, most of you, I do not think any of you probably maybe are, but you know what? The older you get in the Lord and the more you learn those principles and the more

you learn about God and the more you do and learn and get through your infirmities and the more you build a relationship with God like Song of Solomon, you know what you learn in time? You learn as a child of God there are some things that you have a right to ask God to change, and then there are some things in your life you do not have a right to ask God to change. You know that. If sitting here this morning you do not know what they are, you need to find out in time. I am not castigating you, most of you probably are not ready to understand that yet. God takes you where you are at and deals with you in the attitude of your heart because God understands we are all flesh. But I am going to tell you something, there are some things that shout at God, you do not have a right to ask God to change. We think prayer is our way in to get God to change his mind so what lines up with ours. Where does that come from? God has a sovereign will. God has a sovereign plan, and many times he allows things that come into our life that are pleasant things or things of our life that we have caused or maybe sometimes we have not caused them or maybe sometimes we get this or we get this or something happens here. You know what our first thing is? We will go to prayer and we will ask God to change that. Why? Because I do not like that. You do not have that right. In everything in your life, the mark of a child of God as far as I am concerned, the mark of a mature child of God, male or female, is a child of God who understands in every relationship with God in their prayer life what you have a right to ask God for and to change and what you do not. Sometimes we have to get the selfish motive out of our lives. We think prayer is, you know, we think prayer is asking God what we want, what we want, what we want to change because I do not like it. That is not true.

- God's refusal is not always permanent. Then the fifth thing, the fifth thing, sometimes when God refuses our prayer, it is not always a permanent thing. You know, continued prayer, just like in our story in Matthew 15, the lady did not get weaker, she got stronger. It forced her, if you are paying attention, it forced her into the Bible. She started out coming to him saying, "O Lord, thou Son of David," and then by the time she got done, she was in the Bible quoting him an Old Testament passage, not directly, but certainly indirectly. She is holding him accountable to the promise of the Word of God. Sometimes when you do not get what you want the way you want it, sometimes that strengthens your relationship with God because that is what God intends for it to do. You see, we look at because it is us, because it is all about us, because it is self, because it is me and you, because it is what we want, and we are so selfish and we are so spoiled and we are so, we are so caught up in all this stuff, we just cannot simply see beyond the fact that I do not know why I did not get what I want when God, ask God why did he do that, but maybe he has got something else other in mind that we never see. So many times it has to do with your attitude. Many times it has to do with the fact that you and I, we struggle with, we do not see what God is doing. You know, I look at that chart back there. Now, you know, when you stop and look at it, I know you cannot see it and do not turn your neck around, but back there in that last church period, it is called Laodicea. Now I have not measured that sucker yet, but I have looked from out here, I bet that that green line there says Laodicea is probably about a foot and a half long. You know how long that whole chart is? That chart is forty-eight feet. That forty-eight foot chart represents from God what he did at the beginning and what he is going to do at the end and everything in between. You know, just like that chart, you know what we do? Sometimes we focus on the

two and a half feet that matters to us and never see the whole chart of what God is doing in the old picture of things. Sometimes God has a bigger picture, and we do not see it because all we see is self. Well, the Bible says we have an infirmity, and that infirmity is we do not know how to pray. We talked about two of them today. We are going to hold up there, and we come back next week, we are going to tie it all together and put it all in there and show you that if you work on these things and you attack these things, you will get the victory in your life of what God wants you to do.

VI. Conclusion

Now let me just say this to you, I am here to help you any way I can, wherever you are at in your own personal life, wherever you are at and what you are trying to accomplish for God. If it is not working for you, probably a reason or two behind that with where it is going. Folks, I have never felt the burden in all my life. I am just going to be honest with you. My job as a pastor is to evangelize, it is to edify you, to strengthen you, to be your leader, to be a shepherd, to teach you the Bible, to feed the flock. But my job is also to prepare you to be a leader, to be a shepherd, to help you with your rain. My job is also to prepare you, and I am telling you right now, and I do not say this to scare you because it does not matter to me what happens if you know how to trust God. God will take care of you through the bad times just like he will the good times. I look at the impending things that are going to hit this country in the next two or three years. It does not phase me one bit, and I do not say it out there to scare you. I say it out there that you need to get to the place in your life where you realize that God is the God in the good times and he is the God of the bad times. Somebody said, "Well, what do you think will happen to my kids? What do you think it will happen to this?" We do not have that. I do not know the answers to all that. I just know this: he promised he would never leave us nor forsake us. He said, "Greater is he that is in me than he that is in the world." That is all I need. So I need as long as we are doing what is right as a church, as long as we are doing what is right as Christians, how we are being faithful and holding this thing out and doing what we need to do no matter how bad it gets. You know what? He will take care of everything for us, and no matter how bad it gets.

Did you ever notice that when the plagues came down on the children of Israel in Exodus 12, or excuse me, when Moses called down the plagues on Pharaoh, we notice that the plagues fell on everywhere except where the children of Israel were? Did you ever notice that? Did you ever notice in the tribulation period when God brings the plagues and all the things talked about over there in the book of Revelation that it falls on everybody in the world except where the nation of Israel is? You know why? Because God made a promise that he was going to preserve his people. In the same sense spiritually, no matter how bad it gets, no matter where it goes, no matter how bad a black it may get or what may happen in this world or what we may lose and what we may have, you know what they cannot take from you? They cannot take this book from you, and they cannot take what you have got in your heart. That is why I am telling you, while you still can, you better listen to me, I am your best friend. While you still can, you better hide that word in your heart. You better get it now. You better get something in the storehouse before winter comes. You better get something in your life, and you better get some money in your life that can help you put it together and help you get it there. You better quit playing games and fooling

around and then wake up some morning when it hits you like a ton of bricks and say, "Wow, now what am I going to do?" Too little, too late. This church is here for you. It is your lifeboat. We together and this book can get through anything. It comes as long as we stay true to God in the Word of God, and that is where we are at. So do not get down about it. I say it all the time, you have got a front-row seat to the end of the world. Enjoy it. I would rather have this ticket than to the Super Bowl. This is the greatest thing you are ever going to see in your life. We are going to witness the second coming of the Lord Jesus Christ, and we are going to be right in the front of it. I cannot tell you, I cannot tell you. The only other time I can even think about would be more exciting would be just standing out there that early morning when the fog was still on the ground about 4:30 in the morning. We are all lined up there at that tomb, that big old rock that the Roman soldiers put up there, and we are just waiting there. You know when I could just see it right now. We are all got a little old past coffee mug drinking our coffee. You know, checking it out, sitting down there. Everybody being quiet, and Pam began to talk and, "Shut up, Pam." We are going to get it, the holy moment, you know. Just sitting right there, all of a sudden about 5:30, nothing. Well, quarter to six, nothing. About five to six, not a thing. The birds began to cheer, and a little light begins to crack on the horizon, and at six o'clock, somebody says, "What is that?" We hear a little rumble. We hear something begin to creak, and then that rock rolls away, and out he stands, out he walks. What the greatest time in the history of the world was the day he walked out of that tomb. I will tell you what, because he walked out of that tomb, he saved me. He is in me, and I am in him. As far as I am concerned, I was not there for that one, but I am not going to miss the next one. He is coming.