

I. Building Update and Church Growth

We kind of laid out that the reason why we have been so long in working out the building situation. I told you this before, but just to give everybody a heads up where we are at: we were looking at getting the downstairs, and the upstairs has the antique thing on one end and then the craft store on the other end. A couple of months ago, the man that owned the craft store passed away unexpectedly. He had a heart attack, and his wife was left with all of this to try to do herself.

What happened was, immediately Larry called us and he said, "Hey, wouldn't you rather have the upstairs?" Obviously, the answer is yes. The upstairs is already there. The only thing we would have to do to the upstairs to move in would be to put down chairs and maybe just fix a few things. It is ready to go, versus putting in \$20,000, \$25,000 in rehab in the downstairs. So, absolutely.

He was giving her time to work all this out because he didn't want to put pressure on her after losing her husband. She didn't know whether she was going to sell the place or she was going to just get out of the business altogether and just shell it out that way. She obviously would like somebody to come in and buy it because that way she gets more money out of it for her security. But then that puts us downstairs again because somebody is going to keep it going.

Well, she has been trying to work through this, and he has been very patient. I told him, "Hey, look, Larry, it is not like we do not have a place to meet." I said, "I want to do what is right all around. So you just take whatever time you need." Larry, I guarantee you, this church is not out of his thoughts much during his days now. He is absolutely committed to getting us in there. In fact, he is going to go ahead and start rehabbing some of the downstairs at his own expense that will already be done when we do get in there.

This lady is going to have to make a decision here in the next couple of weeks, at least the next month, just because of the financial things that are going on. So, it is right on schedule. It is on God's schedule, and that is the most important thing. We have to move out of here in time. It would be great to have our own place. Larry has been so good to us. He is the guy that owns everything around here. He built it all, and he has bent over backwards for us. It is a situation where it is going to happen; it is just a matter of when and where, upstairs or downstairs.

I would be willing to wait another six or seven months if it ensured that we were going to get the upstairs because it is the way to go. But God has that force, and so we will just see where it goes. That is where we are at with that. I threw that into the message simply because we are growing. We started with about 14 people, and this is what we have got today, plus the ones that are out of town or wherever they are at. As this thing grows, men and women are going to have to step up to the plate to be able to work with all that goes on. There is no way one man can try to run it or should even try to run it. The ministry is for all of us to do, and it is a key thing.

II. The Grand Plan of God

The Book of Romans is absolutely essential. When you start to look at this in Romans 3, we have been dealing with the fact of God's righteousness. We looked at the last couple of weeks in Romans 3 at the sinfulness of man. We talked about that the greatest aspect of God is when you understand how sinful we are, how God would ever want to have a relationship with us, much less give us His righteousness that we might have everything that God wants us to have.

I know that probably most of you this morning, because some of you are younger Christians and most of you do not probably completely grasp the concept of the overall plan of God. But what a marvelous plan it is. The element from Genesis to Revelation in your Bible, the element of time within the vastness of eternity, the plan that God really has. Certainly, you do not think that all God's plan was for us to be here on planet Earth for this 7,000 years. We have got eternity on both ends with a little parenthesis called time in the middle. That 7,000 years of man's history on Earth is just a process, really.

If you just want to grasp the basic concepts, I can tell you this: there is eternity. If this pulpit right here was the 7,000 years of man from Genesis to Revelation, what we basically have on the other two ends of this pulpit is eternity: eternity past and eternity future. So many times, because we are so, we just do not get from the Bible what we need, or maybe we do not get the help we need, or for whatever reason. We as Christians, we always focus on this time period. On this time period alone, we are just about an inch of that. So many times, we forsake the whole thing that God is doing, and we just focus on that one little inch that really concerns us.

You cannot do that as a Christian. You have got to understand the big plan of what God is doing. God's plan is going to be fulfilled out into eternity. Right now, this 7,000 years, this is this little process of time here. God is working through the process of getting man to that point in his life as God establishes His kingdom. He is getting man His righteousness. He is working with man. He is giving every individual the opportunity to decide what that person wants to do. When God moves out into eternity, He has everybody with Him that has chosen to be there.

Romans 3 helps us understand a little bit better the great doctrine of the righteousness of God. How you and I as sinners, how you and I, people who were alienated from God, who had nothing that God wanted, how in that state God would still give us His righteousness and shows us how that process takes place and how that righteousness is applied. All through Romans 3, really all through the first three chapters, Paul has been laying the foundation for that understanding of that great doctrine.

We have seen this: the Jew and the Gentile may be different as far as culture is concerned, but we now understand that they are the same as far as our sin is concerned. It does not matter that one had the law and one did not; we are all sinners. We fully understand that now. We are going to start reading here in verse 20 and come down through 31 today, and we are going to pick up where we left off last week with man's sinfulness and begin to see the great building blocks of the doctrine of salvation.

III. The Law's Purpose and Christ's Fulfillment

Your life and my life are basically about bearing fruit, and there is going to come a time in your life that you are going to have the opportunity to win somebody to Christ. God is going to put you in the right scenario. God is going to put you in the right place at the right time with the right person, and you are going to be able to be the attending physician at that spiritual new birth.

I talked about a couple of weeks ago the Romans Road, where you go in the Bible. You have seen on Thursday night where people are continually getting saved, and I call on folks to deal with them. As this church grows and as we move into the new building and in all the things that we do, it is going to require everybody getting up to speed with the ability to be able to understand how to win somebody to Christ.

I look at winning people to Christ just like I do the Bible. It is not enough for you just to know the process. It is not enough, as far as I am concerned, to just get up there and be able to go through the Romans Road. What really makes it work for you and the person that you are dealing with, and makes it the depth that it needs to be, is not just the ability for me to give you a sketchy outline of how to go to this verse, this verse, this verse, this verse, have them pray this, this, or this, and they are saved. It is more important to me than that you understand the great doctrines behind salvation.

I can tell pretty quickly by listening to a pastor or a preacher begin to preach. I can almost assess within 15 minutes of his preaching, sometimes less than that, what his relationship is with the Word of God. There are some guys when they begin to preach that the moment they begin to talk about anything in the Bible, you see a real shallowness in what they are saying. There is no depth to it. Oh, it is good, and it is something you can get something out of. I am not saying that, but there is no meat to it. There is no depth to it. It is a thing where you understand that the guy probably what he is preaching, he read someplace or somebody taught him, but he has never experienced it himself.

Then you hear somebody get up there, and whatever they say, whatever they do, they could be the most simple, basic thing in the world, but it just drips with depth, with material underneath the surface that is waiting to get out. I like to build people that are like volcanoes, and underneath the surface of that young man or lady, it is like a boiling volcano of Bible doctrine that is just trying to ooze out of every crack in your body. Everything that you say, everything that you do, it is like it is just pushing power behind you that you can tell that what I just saw and what I just got was really good. There is a force behind that, that that person has a depth in the Word of God of understanding, not just what they are saying, but the depth of it as far as the Bible is concerned.

I do not want to train people just to go down the Romans Road. I want you to learn to understand the great truths of salvation. So you, like that volcano, are just completely filled with the great teachings and the doctrines of the Bible, that whatever you say, wherever you preach someplace, or you give your testimony, or you are one-on-one with somebody talking with them at work or whatever, what you know about the Bible is the driving force behind everything that you say.

Let us begin today and look at Romans 3, and we will pick it up in verse 20.

Romans 3:20-31

Therefore by the deeds of the law there shall no flesh be justified in his sight: for by the law is the knowledge of sin.

But now the righteousness of God without the law is manifested, being witnessed by the law and the prophets;

Even the righteousness of God which is by faith of Jesus Christ unto all and upon all them that believe: for there is no difference:

For all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God;

Being justified freely by his grace through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus:

Whom God hath set forth to be a propitiation through faith in his blood, to declare his righteousness for the remission of sins that are past, through the forbearance of God;

To declare, I say, at this time his righteousness: that he might be just, and the justifier of him which believeth in Jesus.

Where is boasting then? It is excluded. By what law? of works? Nay: but by the law of faith.

Therefore we conclude that a man is justified by faith without the deeds of the law.

Is he the God of the Jews only? is he not also of the Gentiles? Yes, of the Gentiles also:

Seeing it is one God, which shall justify the circumcision by faith, and uncircumcision through faith.

Do we then make void the law through faith? God forbid: yea, we establish the law.

Father, we thank and praise You today for the Lord Jesus. We thank You for all that You do for us, for what You have given us. We pray, Father, today as we look through Your Word, You will help us understand these great truths. Lord, I pray they will build men and women in this church, men and women that will want to not just learn what the Bible says, but they want to know the whys. They want to be able not just to repeat something that I say, even when teaching them the Bible. I do not want them to go home on Thursday night and just be able to call up somebody on the phone and rattle off what they heard. I want them to have the depth of understanding every aspect of the Bible, every aspect. Truly, Lord, the great doctrine of salvation. Lord, it is the number one doctrine that touches everything in our Christian lives. When we look at this today and we break this down into the great 12 characteristics or the doctrines of salvation, Lord, they will have a better understanding of how this great concept affects every aspect of our life. Not understanding it first is a tragedy. Lord, that is why so many of God's people do not have the characteristics and the qualities of Christ in their life. We ask now to bless us. Lord, help me to speak the things that need to be said. We will thank You and praise in Jesus' name, for His sake we ask it. Amen.

You can see that we are already in Romans again, and we are into that tough way it is written. Again, I have said it many, many times, Paul writes the Book of Romans much like a lawyer writes a legal brief or a legal document. It is for you just to sit down and to try to figure it out. It is the terminology, the way he says things that makes it appear to be so complicated. What we have done through this book, and I encourage you week by week, I have basically taken these passages, we have taken them in small blocks, and we have broken down the verses and told you verse by verse what he is saying. If you hopefully are getting a running commentary that every week you are going home and putting those in the Book of Romans by these verses, that will really help you put it all together. Well, that is what we are going to do today. We are going to break down these verses and see what he is saying here and how it fits into the overall concept of what we have learned in the Book of Romans.

Now he says in Romans 3:20, "Therefore by the deeds of the law there shall no flesh be justified in his sight: for by the law is the knowledge of sin." This verse is a really good defining verse on how the Old Testament law applies to you and me in the Old Testament. This is one of these places in the Bible that is a very good place that helps us grasp some things.

What he is saying here, and he is saying a couple of things. First of all, he says, "Therefore by the deeds of the law there shall no flesh be justified." What we are talking about in this chapter is getting God's righteousness. When you get God's righteousness, we get justified. What he is saying here, the first thing he is saying, is simply the law cannot save us. You cannot get saved by the law. Today, by the time we are done with this, you are going to fully understand how God intended the law to work and how it does work.

There are people running around this world today who think if they keep the Ten Commandments or they do unto others before they do it to them, and the Golden Rule, that that is going to cut them some slack with God. The truth of the matter is, he says right there, and it is a great place to understand, that the law, the Old Testament law, the things that were written to the Jews, they cannot save us. They could not save the Jews. They cannot save anybody. The thing that you have to do if the law was going to save you, it could only save you if you could keep it. The Bible says that you and I cannot keep it.

Somebody said, "Well, I keep most of it." You start to witness to somebody sometime and you say, "Hey, have you died today? Do you know for sure if you are going to heaven?" Sometimes they will come back and they say, "Well, I do not know." I will say, "Well, do you realize you are a sinner?" They will say, "No, I have never killed anybody. I have never done this. I never did that." But you see, the truth of the matter is nobody keeps all the law. You want to know the downside to that? The Bible says over there in James 2:10, "For whosoever shall keep the whole law, and yet offend in one point, he is guilty of all." The law cannot save you and me. Keeping the law will not work. One, you cannot keep it. It will not work for you.

The law was not strong enough to save anybody until Christ showed up.

Romans 8:3

For what the law could not do, in that it was weak through the flesh, God sending his own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh, and for sin, condemned sin in the flesh:

In other words, what Christ did, and this is where you begin to understand the basis of salvation. We have talked about in Romans 3 a lot of gloomy things. Now here comes the bright spot. The gloomy thing is this: we are terrible. We are rotten. We are vile. The terrible thing is we all should be in hell this morning screaming for water. We all should be burning like a torch for all of eternity. That is the downside of things. The good side thing is, "For God so loved the world." The good time of it is that God made a way. That way is not through anything you can do or I can do.

You begin to understand the basics of salvation. You grasp the great concept that Christ came down and kept the law for you and for me when I could not keep it. He came down here and He lived His life. He never violated the law. You ought to go through the Gospels sometime and look how the scribes and the Pharisees, that is exactly what they tried to get Him to do. In Matthew 4, the devil tries to get Him to break the law. All through His life, the scribes and the Pharisees are coming up and they are asking Him about the law, but they are changing the wording of the law that if He commits to it, He would break it. He was faced with everything imaginable that human man could try to get another human man to break the law, and yet the Bible says He did not break the law.

You know why He did not break it? He did not break it because we needed Him to keep that law because we could not keep it for ourselves. The first great concept of salvation is the fact that I could not keep the law, and Christ came down and kept it by fulfilling the law. How did He fulfill the law? By not breaking it. He fulfilled the law, and by fulfilling that law, He did what I could not do for myself. He did for you what you could not do for yourself.

How does the law affect me as a New Testament Christian? If it cannot save me, if it does not have the power to save me, what can the law do for me? What good is it to me? Of course, this is the second thing that you find in this great verse of Romans 3:20. The law affects me as a Christian; it shows me that I am a sinner.

Galatians 3:24

Wherefore the law was our schoolmaster to bring us unto Christ, that we might be justified by faith.

People walk around today and they say, "Well, you have got to keep the law. You have got to keep the law." Well, first of all, nobody, we have already seen, you cannot keep it. The second great concept: God never gave the law for you and me to keep. God, when He gave the Ten Commandments, it was not like, "Well, somebody out there surely will keep five or six of them. Somebody out there will keep nine of them. Somebody out there will keep most of them." He never intended for you and I to keep them to begin with.

What the law originally did, and God's intended purpose of the law, you need to understand this: God intended the law to show you and me how far we fell short of the glory of God. It is my schoolmaster. You know what a teacher does for you when you go to school? He or she keeps

you accountable. They not just tell you and show you what you need to learn; they also show you what you have not learned. They call them tests. The law, like a schoolmaster, shows you and I where we fail. It was not given so you and I could keep it. It was given to show you and me an absolute standard, an absolute standard that no human being could keep. God gave that law to show me and to show you how far I fall short from what God expected, and then fulfilled it through His Son, and He kept it for me when I could not keep it for myself. What an incredible concept. As this thing begins to build, you begin to see and understand this great, great, great.

IV. The Witness of Abraham and David

Now look at Romans 3:21: "But now the righteousness of God without the law is manifested, being witnessed by the law and the prophets." Even the righteousness of God which is by faith of Jesus Christ unto all and upon all them that believe, for there is no difference.

Now you say, "What is He saying here?" He is saying in Romans 3:21, "the righteousness of God without the law." That is what He is saying. "But now the righteousness of God without the law is manifested." You know what He is saying? He is saying the one who kept the law is now manifested as the righteous of God. That man is Jesus Christ. Jesus Christ was the manifestation of God.

1 Timothy 3:16

And without controversy great is the mystery of godliness: God was manifest in the flesh, justified in the Spirit, seen of angels, preached unto the Gentiles, believed on in the world, received up into glory.

When He is saying there, "but now the righteousness of God without the law is manifested," He is talking about Christ coming. Then look what He says: "Being witnessed by the law and the prophets." What is He saying there? He is saying that in the law and in the prophets—the law now is the first five books of the Bible basically; the prophets would represent from Samuel all the way up to 2 Chronicles in your Bible—He is saying that there is a witness in the law and the prophets of this righteousness coming by Christ and affecting a man like it affected you and me.

Obviously, if you get a little bit later on, and we will in Romans 4, you will find that the man that represents the law, from the law, would be Abraham. You will find that in Romans 4:3. In Romans 4:6-7, you will find the one from the prophets will be David. Those two men, and we are going to study their lives in a great way when we get a little bit into Romans here, because you cannot understand the righteousness of God in the Book of Romans without understanding these two men's lives.

I am going to tell you something else. I do not believe you will ever be the man or the woman God wants you to be in your totality as far as really understanding the concept of your relationship with God until you understand the life of Abraham and the life of David. That is why when we get into that part of Romans in a couple of weeks, I am going to take the time and build their lives into this. They are an incredible concept.

You know what Abraham represents? Abraham represents how that we get God's righteousness without doing anything. The Bible says that God took Abraham out there in a starry sky. God saw his heart, and the Bible says that He said to Abraham, "Someday your seed is going to be like the stars of heaven." The Bible says that Abraham believed God, and God counted it to him for righteousness. You know how he got saved? Believing what God said about the stars. You know how you got saved? Believing what God said about His dead Son on the cross. You got salvation with nothing. Abraham got it with nothing. That is why he is a witness of God's righteousness in the Old Testament pointing toward the New Testament.

David, you know how David under the prophets fits in? David is a great example. Abraham represents getting God's righteousness by faith without works. David represents keeping it by faith, keeping God's righteousness with faith without works. You know the story of David? The story of David was the fact that he was a king. David went out and he saw Bathsheba, got involved with Bathsheba. Through the process of time, he gets her pregnant, and then he figures out and concocts a plan, and he winds up killing her husband so he can save his own reputation.

The problem with that is simply this: under the Old Testament law, there was no sacrifice for murder or adultery. If you went out and popped your neighbor in the nose or stole his cow or stole his dog or stole whatever, or broke this or broke that, you could make amends for that. In the law, there was provision for the transgression against men to a certain point. If you kill a man in the Bible with premeditated figuring out how I am going to do that, there is no sacrifice for that. You could not bring a sacrifice for that. The only penalty for that was death. If you commit adultery in the Old Testament, there is no sacrifice for that. There is nothing you can do to appease God. The price tag for that is death.

What happened? When you study the life of David, you will find in Psalms 89 and Isaiah 55:1-3 a little concept, what a concept. You will find a little phrase, "the sure mercies of David." God said to David, "Because of your heart and what you have done with My Word, I am not going to kill you." Even though there is no sacrifice you can bring, and this is what got David in his great prayer in Psalms 53. This is what really changed David's life. David saw that he deserved to die. On two counts, there was no sacrifice.

But you know what God said? Based on your attitude of heart with the Word of God, even though there is no sacrifice, I am going to impute My righteousness to you, and I am not going to take it back. I am going to give unto you the sure mercies of David. You know what that was? The sure mercies was the fact that God was not going to kill David, even though under the law God was obligated to. He stepped in and intervened in David's sin in his life, just like He did yours and mine. There was no way to pay the price. David in an Old Testament scenario, he is under the law. There is no way he can get that fixed. You and me, under the law, there is no way we can fix our sin debt. God looked down and said, "Because of his heart, I am going to come in and stay the death sentence." In your life and my life, when nothing else could do, when there was no offering, nothing you could do, no sacrifice could be made, Christ came down and said, "I will make a way for Bob Alexander to get to heaven." Glory to God. Amen.

When you look and you understand that concept, you realize, "But now the righteousness of God without the law is manifested, being witnessed by the law and the prophets. Even the righteousness of God, which is by faith of Jesus Christ, and to all upon them that believe, and there is no difference." You were Gentile today. God gave you two examples. One in the Old Testament, God got righteousness by faith without works. The other one kept God's righteousness by faith without works, and neither one of them had anything to do to get it. That is the example of what is coming. That is the example of what Christ did for me. That is why it is absolutely so important for you and me to understand the lives of Abraham and the lives of David. I do not know of two other men in the Bible that probably represent the normal scheme of our lives and the ups and the downs and the ins and the outs and the problems that we all go through more like those two lives. That is why, of course, he picked those.

V. The Doctrine of Free Salvation

All right, look at Romans 3:23: "For all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God." That is a great verse. That is a verse when you are winning somebody to Christ that you can pull out of Romans 3 and bring back up there when you are talking about them being a sinner. But in the context here, it is a great verse. I thank God every day of my life, and you will too probably once you understand what I am about to say.

You know why God, when it says, "For all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God," you know the reason God used Abraham and David as an example? Did you ever stop and consider in this chapter, maybe a little farther along than most people, did you ever stop and consider why he picked the lives of Abraham, the lives of David, to represent what he is talking about here or their lives in general? Did you ever wonder why he allowed them to go through the things that they went through, dealt with them the way that he did? Did you ever wonder why God leaves those examples, and there are many more all through the Old Testament? Did you ever wonder why it is? I will tell you why. It shows you that every man is going to fail.

By understanding that, you are going to recognize it in life, ladies and gentlemen, we are going to fail. We have weird ideas of failure in Christianity. We really do. We are so judgmental about other Christians. It is like that we see somebody struggle in a problem or a sin, and you know what, we become so self-righteous in it, and we become so puffed up because in our minds, we could never do that or never accomplish that. The bottom line is simply this: let me tell you something, everybody fails.

The reason why God picked two men in the Bible, and Abraham's failures are, we will see it when we go through it. It is one of the greatest studies that you watch how he gets two steps. He is a perfect picture of every Christian. He gets God's righteousness. He makes three or four steps forward. Then he takes two back. Then he makes five or six forward more. Then he takes two more back. Then he goes a little bit farther. Then he goes back again. His whole life is based on five steps forward, two back, and the two back are not pretty. Sometimes they cause problems in his home, problems in his home life, problems with the people around him. But through studying his life, you see that he, and so many times people focus on the, when somebody fails in something.

You know what failure is to me? Failure is two things to me. When I look at your life, and that is why I say all the time, I do not care where you have been, what you have done. It is immaterial to me. As long as you are where you need to be with God right now, that is all I ask, and we take from here and move on. You know why? I am going to tell you why, because failure in my mind is two things:

1. It is getting saved and never doing anything in your life.
2. It is getting saved, starting, going along, getting knocked down, and not getting back up.

Now that is failure. Failure is for you to get saved, start coming to a church, this church, any church, or just begin your relationship with God and never meaningfully putting your life on the line or doing something that is going to cost you something or put you in jeopardy and growing, never taking yourself out of the equation and putting God first and just never doing nothing. That is failure.

I heard a man give a talk one time, and he said, "You know what a successful man is? A successful man is a man who takes the bricks that life throws at him and the bricks that people throw at him and takes the Word of God and molds them into a sure foundation." Boy, there is a lot of truth in that. Failure is you never getting off the launching pad. Failure is getting saved, and some of you have been saved for 10 years, and you are no farther along spiritually than the day you got saved. That is failure.

I do not care how many times you fall. I do not care if you fall down. You may have some particular thing you struggle with, or you may just struggle with a number of things. I do not know. It gets easier as time goes on. You may fall down 500 times a day. I do not care as long as at the end of the day you are still standing. That is all that matters. That is all that matters. That pious attitude, that you know you need to not do this, and then failure because you fell here or you fell there. Let me tell you something, everybody falls. Do you get back up? That is all I ask. That is all I ask.

Do you really want to go into the judgment seat of Christ? Do you really want to stand before God with a starched uniform, with a glittering sword, and a spotless shield? Do you really want to stand over Him with your boots shined and your uniform pressed and that shard and that spear and that sword and that shield glittering and all that? No, I do not. I want to walk in there with dents from that shield from one end to the other. I want that sword rusted. I want it nicked. I want it beat up. I want the handle coming off of it. I want God to know I am here, and I am here, but I used it. Walking in there, "I did not get dirty at all." God should say, "Hit the road. You are going to get dirty now for a thousand years. Get on out there and play in the dirt."

I do not want to go in that way. I want to have my uniform ripped. I want to have my knees out. I want to have nicks and band-aids all over everything. I want God to know I fell and I got down in the mud, but I am still here. That is failure when you cannot do that. Sometimes it is hard to get back up. Get up anyhow. That is why He put those men in there. That is why He used two men, Abraham and David, and a lot more, to show you two examples that men that failed all their lives. Their lives are totally imperfect. Their lives are an absolute disaster in many cases. But in both cases, they kept moving forward. In time, they got to where God wanted them to be.

I am not going to say you are going to be that way all the time. You will get to it. But brother, there are some battles you have to fight. There are some things you have to determine in your heart you are going to do for God, and then get up and do it.

When God looks at you and me, really, when God looks at the human race, you know what He sees? He sees two kinds of people when He looks at mankind: He sees sinners in Christ, saved people, and sinners outside of Christ, unsaved people. If you want a nice analogy of that, get up early on a Saturday morning. Get in your car and just drive around your neighborhood. You know what you will see? You will see exactly two examples of that, and you will get a better appreciation of what I am saying.

I drive down my street, and there are three or four garbage cans out. Your trash day is coming. Those garbage cans are all beat up, rusted. Some of them, you cannot even pick them up because the bottoms are rusted out. They are all beat up and rusted, and they are just absolutely a mess. Then you drive around the corner, and boy, somebody, very obvious, somebody just went to Home Depot or Walmart, bought a brand new garbage can. Oh, it shines. No rust. Beautiful. Galvanized. Oh, it is the most incredible garbage can you ever saw in your life compared to the old one. You know what the reality is? They both have garbage in them. Who do you think you are, Miss Galvanized garbage can? Who do you think we are? Just because you shined up on the outside? Just because you look at some garbage can over here, it is all dented and beat up, and you think you are better? You both have garbage in you. That is how God sees it. That is how we need to see it. One sinner in Christ, one sinner out of Christ.

You know what the example in the Old Testament is? Genesis 6, a story you know in the Ark. You know that Ark in Genesis 6 is a picture of Christ? You realize that? That Ark is a picture of Christ. Did you ever notice that study back there that there was a door in the side, and that is where they went in and that is where they came out? Going in through that door is what preserved them from the disaster. You know when the church started, and you know when you and I got in Christ, and the concept is when that Roman soldier took that spear and put a hole in His side? Because the blood came out, we got to go in. When they were in that Ark for 360 days, when they were in that Ark all that time, the raging world of God's judgment was coming down on everything and everybody in the world. Were they any better than the people that drowned? Absolutely not. Should they have been out there just like everybody else? Absolutely. Is there any reason why Noah and his family and his wife were any better? Absolutely not. The only difference is one got in the Ark and one did not. You are either in the Ark this morning or you are not. But I am not any better than you. I am not any better than you.

I like what Bubba said down at the mission the last time. I have used it many, many times, and do not give him any credit for it all; he stole enough of my stuff. He is preaching to those unsaved people down there, and he says, "You know what?" And unsaved people think that. They think, and he says, "I am not better than you. I am just better off than you." I am better than anybody. We are all garbage cans. We just like to shine ourselves up. Sometimes in the process of rubbing ourselves and shining us up, we forget what we smell like on the inside.

Romans 3:24

Being justified freely by his grace through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus:

I want to tell you something. The greatest concept about getting God's righteousness and the greatest concept of my salvation, the greatest concept in the world, is free. You could not pay for it. You could not buy it. You could not work for it. It is free. It is free. God gave it to you from Genesis 2:16 with the tree of life. He said, "Freely eat." To Revelation 22:17 with the water of life, He says, "Freely drink." Everywhere in between there, God's righteousness is free.

I thank God we had to pay for it. We could never merit it. We had to buy it. We could never afford it. I thank God that God in His providence looked down and saw us as beggars without hope, without Christ, and gave us the ability to get in freely. The first thing the devil does when he shows up in Genesis 3:2 with Eve—Adam was not there—the first thing he does, God had just told her that of the fruit of every tree in the garden you may freely eat. As soon as the devil shows up, he countermanded what God said, and the devil took the word "freely" out. From that point in history, man has been trying to tell you, "You can work your way to heaven." Man has been trying to tell you, "There is something you have got to do."

These idiots are walking around this world saying, "Well, you have got to be baptized to get to heaven." My dear friend, what in the world did Christ have to come down and agonize on the cross for if all you had to do was get baptized? Why did Jesus just say, "Boys, get baptized"? You know what you are telling me? One, you do not know the Bible. Two, you do not understand the substitute and the agony that He paid on Calvary's Cross to make that kind of statement where you have got to be baptized to get to heaven. What was the death for then?

Somebody says, "Well, you just joined a church. You go to church, and that makes you a Christian." Really? Why did He just say, instead of Him hanging on the cross, why did He just put two signs up there on the cross and said, "You want to go to heaven, get baptized and join a church. Be back later, God." What is the point? The point is those will not save you. That is something you do. That is something you try to buy your way in with. You cannot. It is free.

VI. The Ministry of Giving and Receiving

It is an incredible thing. Some of you, as you move up the ladder here spiritually and you start working with me, or somebody already there, you start working with me with people on a counseling level. You know what you are going to find? I had a lady call me one time. I used to run an ad in a phone book, and I used to get a lot of people saved through this little ad. We are going to do it again sometime when we get ready, but we are not ready for the deluge. But I used to run a little ad in here that says, "Biblical, Bible-based counseling will help you with any problem, marital, whatever the case may be." I used to get phone calls with people that were obviously going through some tough times. We would talk about it, and I would try to help them, and they would say to me, "Well, how much does your counseling service cost?" I would say, "It is free." They would go, "Oh." You know why they go, "Oh"? Because in this world, if it does not cost a lot of money, it is not worth anything. That is the mindset of this world.

So I changed my whole deal, my whole approach, to get around that. The next time that person asked, I said, because I was tired of the "ughs, ugh, ugh," so I figured I can do better than this. So

then next time the lady asked me, she said, "Well, how much does it cost?" I said, "You know what? It will cost you more than all the money in this world, all the money in 10 worlds. But you know what? It is already covered the cost for you if you want to come in." That worked a lot better. So I got the one idiot who said, "Well, I am not coming. Can I just have the money instead?" No.

These charismatic preachers, I love it. They love it. Did you ever go to a healing service? Did you ever go someplace where they put up the tents or in some churches? There have been some churches that when they do the healing thing, and they get you all hyped up, and everybody runs through coming through this thing, you know, there have been some places. There have been some churches, a couple of churches, where somebody told me this, it is not making enough. Somebody told me, they went to one of these churches, and they locked the back doors until they got enough in the offering. Nobody got out. They are looking at things that are not enough, "Plus, God, run her by one more time." People were coming forward and getting healed, and people with crooked legs were getting straight legs out of it, and the whole nine yards. I look at that stuff, and the only thing dumber than the people doing it are the people sitting there.

My Bible says in Matthew 10:8, Jesus Himself said, "Freely ye have received, freely give." How in the world do I charge you? Honestly, you come into me, I know churches and I know pastors that with their own people at their church, they come in and they have some serious problem because the guy has got a PhD or he has got some kind of shingle on the wall that he will help you, but then he charges you to do it. How in the world do I charge you to fix your life when God did it for me for nothing? How do I charge you anything when the price was already paid? There are some of the biggest crooks in Bible Christianity in the world today. They are not in prison; they are in churches. They are in churches.

You know what my beef is with pastors in churches? My biggest beef? When I stay away, I do not get involved in it. I just like my own little world here, and I am happy in it. As far as I am concerned, there is nobody in the world except me and you guys. You know what my biggest beef is? 24/7, churches and pastors are always asking their people to give, give, give, give, give, give, 24/7. They are not willing to give you back anything. I know churches in this town that send you letters out for wanting money. There is one church in this town, when you get, they are already sending a letter out, "When you get your rebate check back, we are in financial help. Would you send that in to us?" They will get up there and preach 15 minutes on the Bible and 45 minutes on giving money, and next week it will be the sermon on giving money, and if they have not got that, that will be the sermon on giving more money. Yet you want to go in and talk to them or get a problem in your family and your marriage or your individual life, you know what? They have not got time for you. If you want to get married in that church, "Oh yeah, you can get married. This is your church. We are glad to have you get married in it. It will be \$800." My biggest beef with churches and pastors, it is all about taking from the people. Give, give, give, give, money, money, money, money.

Yet, at the same time, there is a balance in that, and I understand the balance. I really do. I understand the concept of the Bible and giving. The bottom line is this, and I just tell you this, you may not like it, but I do not care. If you have been in this church for a year and you call this

church your home and you are not tithing yet, you ought to be ashamed of yourself. Excuse me. Amen, brother Bob. That is telling it really good. Somebody said, "Well, I do not think you ought to sit down." What are you going to do? Quit giving?

A couple of people are so funny. About two years ago, a couple came into my thing, and they were not nice people, but I knew from day one they were not going to make it here. They were here for like, you know, I have been around forever. They come in and they said, "Well, we are going to leave the church." Then I said, "Okay, fine, praise the Lord." I mean, you know what? You did not come to say, "Should we leave your church? We have a problem with you. Help us so we do not leave your church." I mean, I figured you had your mind made up. See, I am not going to fall into that trap. Because normally when you do, then they want to hit you with something. So I just said, "Okay, thank you." They said, "Well, are not you, do not you, do not you want to know why?" I said, "No, no. The bottom line is you would have told me if you wanted me to know. You just came in and said, 'You are leaving.'" They said, "Well, why do not you care?" I said, "Well, I do not, it is not that I do not care, but evaluating our conversation, and now that you have told me what you are going to do, I just thought this thing through. What ministry do I shut down next Sunday because you are not there? You do not do anything."

Realize that there are some of you that if you come to me and say, "Hey, Bob, I am leaving the church." If you come tomorrow and tell me, "I am leaving the church," I have got to scramble by next Sunday to get probably four or five people to fill in what you do. You realize that some people in any church, they come up and they say, "We are not going to be back next week." It makes no difference. I mean, I do not want to see you go. But the bottom line is it does not affect the ministry anyway. You are not working with anybody. What ministry shuts down? What ministry shuts down next week because if you die? I mean, if I got a call from your wife or your wife says to me, "Bob, so and so died today." The first thing I am going to say is, "Am I in the will?" No, the first thing I am going to say is, if it is the right person, I am going to say to myself, "Wow, I feel terrible. But you know what? That guy was doing nine things for me." The bigger this church gets, the more you are going to have to take responsibility.

You know why you do not do anything in this church? Some people. I am not saying you guys. I am just saying people in general. You know why people, I better have been afraid. You know why people in general do not do things in churches? You know why they do not get involved in ministry? I am saying this, have you been in this church at least a year? I am not even talking to you. Please, and this is the way it always happens. You know, you have had somebody who has been in the church for six months, and they think I am talking to them. I am talking to you. Man, you are in here, you are getting your feet on the ground. For the most part, you are all doing wonderful. I am not even talking about that. I will give you a year, year and a half, but I am just saying is this. I mean, when you look at this whole thing and you put it together, you have got to look at this thing. This church should make a difference in your life. You know what else? Your life ought to make a difference in this church. Is it?

You know why I work with you going through things that you struggle with? I have told you guys this before, many times one-on-one. You know why when you come in with problems and heartache? How many times have I told you this? You come into problems and heartache, and

you have got some issue in your life you are struggling with. You know why I spend so much time with you? You know why I get people around you to help you? You know why I will do anything in the world to get you where you get back, you know why? I have got an ulterior motive. I might just be honest with you. You know what my ulterior motive is? I want you to get through this. I want you to have the victory. I want you to get this thing worked out in your life. So down the road, when I have somebody else come in who has got the same problem, you can help me with them. That is all. That is it. This church ought to change your life, and your life ought to change this church. It just should.

I mean, if your wife called me on the phone and said, "So and so died," or even the husband called and said, "My wife died," and the first thing I am thinking in my mind, "Wow, what am I going to do getting this covered? They did such a good job. They did the work that is going to take five people to cover the thing. What am I going to do?" You know why? I will tell you. People do not get involved in churches. They do not get involved in those things because they do not make any investment in it to begin with. Not important to you. Not important to you. It is a two-way street. It is a two-way street.

The first thing I look at around here, you know, we went out to Las Vegas a number of years ago, and we were speaking in a church out there. We had never been in Las Vegas before, and everybody says, "You have got to go see the, I guess, in the casinos in Las Vegas, they have some of the greatest buffets that you ever had in your life." You know, they are open 24 hours. I mean, they are just like the grandiose of things. So, we said, "Hey, we want to go eat at one of those buffets." I mean, you know what? I want to go. And, you know what? So, we were in there, and, you know, I told the barber, looked around, and she was over gambling. I go, "All right, I got her out of there." "You can have all you want." I put my, we had one, Bill said, "We are going to put one quarter in, and then we are going to end." I put mine in, and it was over. She put one in, and all these cherries came up. She won \$6,443,000 on one quarter. I am just kidding.

I walked in that place, and it was incredible. You stood here, and then fanning out from all the way around, was everything you could imagine to eat. I am telling you, for \$34 or whatever it was, it was just everything. I am saying to myself, "Man, I wish that I wore my pocket with big pants in them, with a big pocket here." I walk in all the hair, man, and there is barbecued stuff, and there is Chinese stuff, and there is Italian stuff, and then there is whatever this stuff is, and there are salads, and there is shrimp, and there are oysters, and everywhere you look, there is every drink you could want, the dessert bar. It is just, oh, it is like Big Rock Candy Mountain, man. I mean, it is everywhere. Every place you go, and you stand there with your plate, and you are hungry, but now you have got the worst decision in your life. "Where do I start, and when do I finish, man? I mean, I do not want to screw this up. If I eat something that is going to fill me up, then I will not get all the other stuff that I want. I have got to do this strategically. Eat the small stuff first, go on this thing and that thing."

I think when I went in there years later, I thought to myself, "You know what? That is exactly the way I want this church to be with the Bible." I want you to walk in here, and I want it to be displayed from one end to the other. All you can have, all you can eat. "Come and dine, the Master calls, come and dine." You can feast at Jesus' table anytime, the old song says. I never

want you to leave here hungry, seriously. Never. I do not do it physically. We have our barbecue thing out there, you know, Memorial Day picnic. But in my mind, I know this is probably goofy, I am envisioning the marriage supper of the Lamb. Everybody just having a great time, and you think, you know, most churches you go eat someplace, and they give you one little burned up hot dog. No, I am so sick of it. Sick of it.

The pastor gets up there, and he wants to impress you. He said, "What do we have to eat? We are having tube steaks." That is hot dogs. "Tube steaks." That is a cute little Baptist way of saying, "You are going to starve to death, and I am charging you six bucks to do it." So you pay all this money, six bucks a pop. You walk in there, and the hot dog, little weenie, looked like it has been dead for 140 years. You know, Noah had them left on the Ark, and they threw them out, and this pastor found them, and he is cooking them for me. They are the grossest things you ever want to see. When you go down there, you know, I like to eat. I know you guys do. Some of you gals do. It is okay. It is okay. But you go down there, you know, and get the people serving it out, you know, and get the smallest spoon they can find. Then they put this on here. By the time you get done, you look at this thing and said, my wife would always go to her, and I said, "God, do not give me that one."

I made up my mind when I start my own church and have this thing. You know what? You are going to get fed. You get all the ribs you can eat. You get all this. You can eat. Nobody is standing there doing them all. You want to come back for more? You can come back all you want. You know what? Because the church is not about just taking from you. It is about giving you. You do not have a Bible this morning? This church will give you one. It does not cost you nothing. You want a Bible? You do not have a Bible? We will give you one. We will give you a Bible. You want to get a CD this morning or anything we have got? You do not have the money? We will pay for it. Take it.

Churches all the time, they want back from people. They want you to give, you get, give nothing back. It is a two-way street, man. You say, "Well, we are going to play volleyball. We are playing softball, it costs \$25 to get in." Because the cost is \$2,500 to pay for the fields and all this stuff and all the equipment. Somebody says, "Boy, I would like to play. I do not have \$25." "You know, things have been tight." "Play, man. We will take care of it." We do not exclude anybody from anything. You know why? That is the ministry. The ministry is giving, not getting. The ministry is giving. It does not matter.

I know what you say. Somebody is going to say, "Well, you know what? That is a good place to get ripped off." Hey, you want to rip me off? Rip me off. I do not care. We get to heaven. I will stand over there and look at you a lot. I do not know exactly what you did. It is free. It is free. Thus God is free. You could not pay for it. You could not do anything to get it. We do not deserve it. It is free. How do I say to somebody, "Yes, I will solve your problem for \$40 an hour"? "Oh yeah. I will win you to Christ, but it is going to wait, but we have got to pay for this session here." How do you do that? How do you take what God gave you and charge somebody else for it? We have got the little parenting books over there. Six bucks covers the cost of getting them done. You do not have the money? Take it. Have the study of the Bible. Take it. Whatever you need, you cannot afford it? Take it. You cannot say, "Give, give, give," and not give something

back. Does your marriage work that way with your children? Does it work that way? Tell me what in life works that way. But we get the idea that churches work that way. No, they do not. No, they do not.

VII. The 12 Doctrines of Salvation

Romans 3:25-31

Whom God hath set forth to be a propitiation through faith in his blood, to declare his righteousness for the remission of sins that are past, through the forbearance of God;

To declare, I say, at this time his righteousness: that he might be just, and the justifier of him which believeth in Jesus.

Where is boasting then? It is excluded. By what law? of works? Nay: but by the law of faith.

Therefore we conclude that a man is justified by faith without the deeds of the law.

Is he the God of the Jews only? is he not also of the Gentiles? Yes, of the Gentiles also:

Seeing it is one God, which shall justify the circumcision by faith, and uncircumcision through faith.

Do we then make void the law through faith? God forbid: yea, we establish the law.

I am telling you what, Romans 3:26 down through here is a great declaration that God has given His righteousness to man. Now I want to bring you through, and I want you to get these down. If you are serious about understanding, I mean, when winning people to Christ, there are 12 great doctrines that form the building blocks of your salvation. You do not understand them, and you will never fully appreciate nor will you fully complete what God has for you in your life because your whole Christian life is built on these 12 foundational doctrines of salvation. They form your attitude. They form your attitude of heart. They form your purpose in life. They form everything about you. In winning somebody to Christ or dealing in the ministry, ladies and gentlemen, it is a difference between repeating what you have heard me say or somebody say and leading a soul to Christ and knowing what really took place.

12 doctrines, 12 tribes of Israel. The Bible says in John 4:22, "salvation is of the Jews." 12 of the greatest basic fundamental doctrines that you will ever, ever get in your life to show you how and every aspect of your getting saved.

3. The Doctrine of Justification. We hear that word all the time, but what does justification mean? You know what justification is? It is the declaration by God that you and I are righteous even when we are not. When you get saved, He takes you into Him. We are still a garbage can. We are just a shiny garbage can. Yet God declares to all the world that we are righteous because we have been justified when absolutely we are really not. You know what he said about David? He said over there in the Book of Acts, "David is a man after God's own heart." He said, "David did what was right all the days of his life, except in the matter of Uriah the Hittite." You know what? That is not true. That is not true. Now, either God just

blank lied, or God knows something I do not know. When the Holy Spirit of God said he did what was right all the days of his life, except in one matter, Uriah the Hittite, that simply is not true. It does not take into account that he had five other wives. It was a violation of the law. It does not take into account that he lost faith and ran from Saul and hid in the cave. It does not take into account that when one of the kings got him, he was so paranoid and so afraid that he acted like he was mad and spit all over himself, and the king did not kill him because they thought he was nuts. It does not take into account how he ran from Absalom, how he ran from Saul his whole life. It does not take into account how his family was a mess, how he did not do what was right. He never brought any of those things up. You know why? Because once God imputed His righteousness to him, even though he was unrighteous, God saw him righteous, justified. Justification. Somebody says, "What does justify mean?" "Just as if I never sinned." That is what it means. That is what it means. Justified never sinned. God declaring me righteous when I am really not.

4. The Doctrine of Redemption. The payment. Redemption is the payment made by God to buy the sinner back from God's wrath. The Bible says, "You are bought with a price." The number one thing that is locking in God's people's minds today, their hearts today, that allows them to be part of the world and live like the world, do the things of the world, is if they do not understand the doctrine of redemption, the payment made by God to bring the sinner back from God's wrath.
5. The Doctrine of Propitiation. Along with that is a great doctrine of propitiation. Propitiation is the price paid to satisfy the demands of a holy God against sin. You say to yourself, "Well, Bob, then what is the difference between redemption and propitiation?" If redemption, that great doctrine, is the payment made by God to buy the sinner, and the doctrine of propitiation is the price paid to satisfy the demands of a holy God against sin, what is the difference? Here is where it comes. Redemption is the payment that is made. Propitiation is the payment accepted by God. It was not enough that Christ paid it. God had to accept it. Propitiation is the satisfying of a holy God as to my sin debt. I will tell you what. If you have been saved, think you are saved this morning, and you have been baptized, and that is your salvation, or you think you do some good work, that is your salvation, or you think you joined some church, some place, some time, and that is your salvation, I am telling you, that is not your salvation. You know the difference between me and you? None of those things would save me. I am a rotten, guilty sinner, deserved to be in hell. You know the difference between me and you? You got whitewashed. You put a coat of paint to cover your sins. You got whitewashed. I got washed white. I got the blood that covered my sins, washed them away. I do not make any pretense. Yes, I deserve to be in hell. Yes, I do not deserve any of this. I deserve to agonize in a lake of fire for eternity.
6. The Doctrine of Remission. The doctrine of remission. You see, the doctrines come down through this. We have got the doctrine that paid for it. We have got the doctrine that accepted it. Now we have got the doctrine that applies it, the doctrine of remission. The payment of sin is now applied to my account. You are forgiven the debt that you owe. I will tell you what, all these are the foundation, but these are the keys of the successful Christian life. When you understand who you are, where you have come from, and then you will realize what God has done for you when you did not deserve it, how do you ever hold anything against anybody

ever again? How do you not view, and this is what you have got to learn to do, every circumstance of life, every brick thrown at you, every downside of life, every problem you have, you have to look at and view it through who you are, where you came from, how God saved you, what He has done for you. Very frankly, after that, the rest of the world does not look bad. The doctrine of remission, the payment of sin is now applied to your account, and you are forgiven the debt that you could not pay, that you owed, but it was remitted. Key to forgiveness.

7. The Doctrine of Expiation. The next one is the doctrine of expiation. Expiation is the act of purging, burning out your sin, of cleansing sin. You see, son, in these doctrines, it shows your sin is paid for. Sin, the payment is accepted. The payment is applied. But when you get to this one, oh, your sin is gone. Gone. That old song, "Gone, gone, gone, gone, now my sins are gone. I have Jesus in my heart, buried in the deepest sea. Yes, that is good enough for me." Oh, bless God, my sins are gone. They are gone. They are gone. They are G-O-N-E, gone. They are gone. Glory to God, they are gone. Praise God, they are gone.

VIII. Conclusion: The Price Paid

The concept of getting God's righteousness and becoming justified in His sight are found and bound within these 12 doctrines of salvation that are absolutely key to your understanding ministry. Absolutely imperative you understand yourself, and absolutely crucial that you understand it how you deal with other people. It affects your viewpoint. It affects your attitude. It will affect your lifestyle. It will affect the friends you hang out with. It will affect who you marry or who you do not marry. It will all come into play when you understand the price that was paid for you and I to sit here this morning. The price that was paid for you to meet and have a Bible that we do not bother to read most of the time. The price that was paid to come to church and hear the Word of God until you get a better deal on Sunday morning. The price that was paid for you to be at Thursday night when you get the Word of God laid out and get all your questions answered. But you have got something else that is more important to be there. We will never understand until we get to that point where we realize the price that was paid.

Those 12 things I gave you, as far as an earthly person can get, as close to what you can get, as far into it as you can get, understanding those 12 things gets you as close to understanding on this side of what it all is, the price that was paid.

We were back a couple of months ago, maybe four or five months ago now. I gave you the seven characteristics of God:

- Truth
- Love
- Light
- Forgiveness
- Longsuffering
- Giving
- Sacrifice

I told you that those seven characteristics need to be the thing that you build in your life. But I want to tell you today, the only real way you can be like Christ and be Christ-like is to have them in your life. The only way, these things in your life, these seven things, and the only way you get them is to fully understand the doctrine of salvation based on those 12 doctrines.

The Bible says in 2 Corinthians 8:9:

For ye know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that, though he was rich, yet for your sakes he became poor, that ye through his poverty might be rich.

Listen, you will never understand and you will never become what God wants you to be for Him until you fully understand what He became for you. It is just that simple. You can talk about it all you want. You can come over and see me 100,000 times a week. You can do everything in the world. You will never, you will never become what God wants you to be for Him until you fully understand what He became for you. That has to be. Life is too tough. There are too many things out there that glitter and glow that you run after or that I run after. Too many things out there to get off point, lose our focus. There has to be a driving force, folks, that keeps you and me right on track with what we have got to do and keeps us not looking at everything on the left and the right. You know what it is? It is the price that He paid for me. How do I do this? How do I do that? How do I let myself do this, think this, go here, be part of this when I understand the price that He paid for me to get me out of that?

You know what our problem is? Every one of us. Every one of us. Every one of us needs a double dose of the understanding of those 12 basic Bible doctrines which mean the foundation of our salvation, understanding the price tag that He paid, what it cost for you and me to sit here today and minister for Him. Every head bowed, every eye closed.