

Romans 4:1-8

Sunday 7/6/2008

Romans 4:1-5

What shall we say then that Abraham our father, as pertaining to the flesh, hath found?

For if Abraham were justified by works, he hath whereof to glory; but not before God.

For what saith the scripture? Abraham believed God, and it was counted unto him for righteousness.

Now to him that worketh is the reward not reckoned of grace, but of debt.

But to him that worketh not, but believeth on him that justifieth the ungodly, his faith is counted for righteousness.

I. The Doctrine of Righteousness by Faith

You remember last week we talked about that when we got into chapter 4 we were going to be focusing on how you get God's righteousness and the importance of getting God's righteousness. In Abraham, we find that getting God's righteousness has nothing to do with your works. A lot of people today think that if you join a church and you attend church, that that's some kind of merit with God as far as getting saved and going to heaven. A lot of people today believe that if you get baptized, that's the mode of salvation. A lot of people think that once you get saved, that you stay saved by continually doing good works. Of course, that's not true.

The Bible clearly lays out and makes it very clear that you and I, and this is the great doctrine of righteousness, this is the great doctrine of getting God's righteousness. The Bible makes it very clear that you and I got saved simply by faith in what Christ did on the cross with no works involved. That's what he's saying in these first five verses here. We studied that last week.

II. David: The Second Example of God's Righteousness

Now we want to move on in verse 6, 7, and 8 for today.

Even as David also describeth the blessedness of the man, unto whom God imputeth righteousness without works,

Saying, Blessed are they whose iniquities are forgiven, and whose sins are covered.

Blessed is the man to whom the Lord will not impute sin.

We start off today with verse 6, which says, "Even as David." We begin to now look at the second example that we get in Romans so far about how we get God's righteousness. Last week we looked at Abraham, and I showed you how that in Genesis 15, that's where he got God's righteousness. He got it by faith without works.

Then we saw how that we looked at the so-called contradiction between that and James, and I showed you how that through a 21-year process, he began to perfect his faith to fulfill the scriptures, which the Bible says he did when he became God's friend. Of course, he does that in Genesis 22 when he offers up Isaac and tries to give Isaac to God as the sacrifice God required of him. I told you God always tests you with what you love, and you're going to find that in Abraham's life. We're going to study Abraham's life in a great way as we move through some things in the next couple of weeks.

You're going to find that when Abraham got saved in Genesis 15 by getting God's righteousness by faith, there was a process that he began to go through, and that process was one of perfecting his faith to the place that he could really trust God.

III. Lessons from Abraham and the Proof of Salvation

We learned some great lessons last week on how to study the Bible. I showed you through the so-called contradiction, as I said, between Romans 4 and James 2, how that if you want to come to the Bible with a preconceived idea, then God will give you what you want to believe. But I also showed you how that in those passages where man looks at them and says they're contradictory, there's always a great truth hidden underneath those passages. We saw the fact that every time we find a word in the Bible, it doesn't always mean the same thing. There may be two or three definitions for the same word, and trying to take a word and make it the same way every time you find it many times will get you into trouble. You've got to always look at the context and understand how God uses the word.

We talked about how that when you got saved, and today if you claim to be saved, it isn't about that you claim to be saved. We live in a world where I saw statistics that 70% of Americans claim to be Christian, and yet if you look in America today, America is about as un-Christian as you could ever expect to be and getting worse every day. So one of the things we learned by that, and it's a good lesson for all of us, just the fact that you're here this morning and you say you're saved doesn't mean anything.

I told you last week that the only two things that really talk about your salvation and prove your salvation, we saw it in our lesson last week, was:

1. What's different about you when you got saved?
2. What you do for Christ that you didn't do before.

If there's nothing different about you since the day you got saved, if you're still running with the same crowd, still doing the same thing, your testimony of getting up and saying, "I'm saved," really is kind of ridiculous. Saved from what? Saved to what? Of course, that's the problem we find in Christianity today. The only two things that really prove you're saved is what's different about you now than before when you got saved, and what you have given your life to do for the Lord Jesus Christ.

We talked about how that God's people, we talked about four or five different ways the word "dead" is used in the Bible, and I told you that God's people are either dead in Christ, that's what

you're supposed to be. You're to be dead to this world, and your life is to be hid in Christ, so the Bible calls it dead in Christ. Unfortunately, most Christians, they're not dead in Christ, but they're dead to Christ. God hasn't spoken to them for so long. Their marriages are a mess, their families are a mess, their personal lives are a mess, everything about it is a train wreck. Yet it is because they have some place in their life, or maybe they never started listening to what God said and following the principles and the examples of the Bible.

So we learned a lot from Abraham, and when we get into his life in a couple of weeks, we're going to... I don't know of any greater study than these two men that we're going to talk about. We're going to begin David this morning and look at this one as we come through because he's our second example. I told you way back in Romans 3:21, it said back there, "But now the righteousness of God without the law is manifest, being witnessed by the law and the prophets." I told you there were two men in the Old Testament that manifested God's righteousness. One represented the law, that would be Abraham. The other one represents the prophets, that would be David. We find that those two people are really everything we need to understand about what we're trying to learn today.

Now, when God wants to teach you a doctrine, like the doctrine of what we're trying to put together here of getting God's righteousness, that's exactly what he'll do. He'll go back to the Old Testament or somewhere in the scriptures, and he'll find an example, in this case, two examples, two men's lives. These two men represent, by what they go through in their life, their relationship with God, what they go through with God, they represent in their life how that you and I can get to the place in our lives where we become productive for the Lord. When you begin to study the life of David, you find really the second aspect of getting God's righteousness.

For those of you that are following through this and you're trying to get it down, you want to get this next thing down: you've got Abraham and David. Both of these men represent the concept of getting God's righteousness, but they represent it from two different angles. Let's look at Abraham first. Abraham and his story and his life, when we go back and we study his life, it shows us the aspect of getting God's righteousness imputed to us by faith without works. When you go back and study his life, you find a perfect example of getting God's righteousness by faith plus nothing, and he represents that side of getting God's righteousness.

But now when you come and you look at David's life, David shows the other side of the coin, so to speak, on the doctrine of getting God's righteousness. Because where Abraham shows that I got God's righteousness by faith without works, David shows that I got God's righteousness when I didn't deserve it. Those two men represent both aspects of that great doctrine. One of them shows that you get it by faith through grace, by nothing; you can't do a thing to get it. The other one shows, David, that we couldn't buy it, couldn't earn it, and certainly don't deserve it. Those two aspects make up the doctrine of getting God's righteousness. Those two great concepts are found in number six on your list when you go back there: the doctrine of imputation, where God imputes his righteousness to you and then takes your sin and imputes it to his Son. That's exactly what David and Abraham represent.

That's why, maybe you can see now, it's so important to see how these Old Testament illustrations really make the New Testament principles come alive. I got God's righteousness instead of getting what I deserve, and that's what it takes to understand. Those two men represent that.

IV. The Twelve Apostles as a Model of Christianity

There are some absolutely incredible lessons in the lives of these two men, and in time we're going to get into their lives. I told you we could show back that we are going to really examine these guys' lives because I think they are so key to understanding the book of Romans, which is all about getting God's righteousness. In time, we're going to do that, but what I want to do today, I want to show you the fundamentals of what you've got to have.

I believe, I was thinking about this this week, I've preached a message to you guys a couple of times, and many times, in fact, if you've been around me for many years, you've heard me use it in Bible studies, and it's such an impacting thing. When I first saw it, it really changed my perspective. You remember how I told you many times that if you want to get a capsule view of Christianity, the greatest model I know to show you Christianity and the way you and I are is to look at the 12 apostles. You've heard me use this example many, many times.

You had 12 men. Those 12 men, like you and I, were men and women, but they were all men, were picked by God. They all had the same job, they all had the same task, they all were given the same commission in Matthew 10. They all were saved by the same Lord and all sent out to do the exact same thing, even though each one of them was different in their makeup and their character, much like this. In fact, when you look at the 12 apostles, you find a capsule view of what I find when I see Christians or Christianity as a whole.

Have you ever analyzed them? Out of that 12, you got one of them that was a phony; he wasn't real. His name was Judas, and you're going to find that Judas would represent for us today in Christianity that not everybody that says they're saved is truly saved. It just goes without saying. In fact, this model was so powerful that I've used it over the years in many, many different forms and fashions.

Then you have three of the apostles that would be Peter, James, and John. Peter, James, and John come to the place where they seemingly, when you look at the Gospels, they have a greater relationship than the rest of the apostles. They're always where the Lord is at when the great miracles are being done in the New Testament. Watch the next time you come through the New Testament when he raises up Jairus's daughter over there, or he does this, or he feeds the 5,000, or on the Mount of Transfiguration. The Bible clearly tells you that who he's got with him are Peter, James, and John. Peter, James, and John represent those three men represent in the body of Christ that not everybody's going to get it figured out.

Then you got one that goes all the way. He even stands head and shoulders above the three, and that's John. When everybody else leaves the Lord when he's being put on trial at Pilate and he's being before he's being crucified, and obviously if you were back then at that day, you were getting tagged with being one of his followers, there's a good chance you'd wind up dead too.

When push came to shove and the reality came down, when Christianity really meant something, when you look at the Lord's ministry, when Christianity met its greatest enemy and where it had to stand in its greatest time, everybody fled but one man. Everybody fled. Peter denies him, James takes off, and the only one in Christianity's greatest hour, when Christ was standing alone before the world, when he really needed people to stand up behind him, when he really needed somebody to stand up and say, "You know what, I'll die with you if that's what it takes," only one man goes all the way to the end, and his name is John. He represents for you and for me exactly what my life and your life should be.

So you have one that was a phony out of these twelve. Seven are worthless, three are involved, and one goes all the way. I've preached that message so many times, and I have just never really put it in the perspective of where we're at and what we've got here. Last Sunday was a rough message. I can't promise you this one won't be any better, but it brought home the reality to me. I don't know what it did for you, but what it did for me is I thought of this this week, and I thought to myself, "You know what? I have never put that in an analogy for what I'm trying to do in ministry." I've preached it a thousand times, I've used it many, many different ways, I have looked at it and used the examples, but I never have thought about it in the terms of our church right here.

If we get everybody together, and we get everybody in, everybody here, and everybody's well, and everybody is there, so everybody, we're probably running about 180 people. When I thought about this week, I thought to myself, "Now, that's the standard. Out of every twelve Christians, you got one that's a phony, seven are worthless, three are involved, but only one goes the distance." I took that same kind of analogy and I thought to myself, "Now, what does that say for our church if you're going to look at it that way?"

You know what it says? When you take that same, and I know that there's, everything's disproportionate and works its way through the thing, and I know that's Christianity, but just for the sake of argument this morning, let's take that little analogy and let's put it right here at Old Paths Baptist Church. You know what that means? That means out of 180 people that meet every Sunday, out of 180 people that choose or not to choose to come to Bible study or do whatever they do, out of 180 people, 15 of you are lost. You only think you're saved. If that model holds true, that out of the 12, and that is a picture of Christianity, that means out of every 12 Christians you find, that means that one of them is lost. When you break down 12 and 180, that gives us 15 people that meet every Sunday, 15 people that come and they've got a nest and to do that, that are probably lost.

Now, when you look at that and you put the model, that also means that 105 of us are worthless. We fit into the group that just was along for the ride, so to speak. Now you notice when I said this, I said that some of 15 of you were lost. You know why I said "you"? Because I know I'm saved. You know why I said 105 of us are worthless, or not "you"? Because I'm just as worthless as you are. I want you to catch that. I'm putting myself into this boat. That means 105 are worthless. You're along for the ride, you're sightseeing, you're just like the seven that were with the Lord. You never really got involved, and you're not going to. You're just kind of hitchhiking through life. You've got it as a fire escape, and I'm not even sure why you show up, but you're

here. But 105 of us here are absolutely worthless. That would mean, taking our model, that 45 of us get involved out of 180 people. 45 people, according to the New Testament model of the 12 apostles being a model of Christianity, and 15 go all the way.

In a ministry, and some of you guys will pastor, I want to give you a little piece of advice. So many times when you get into the ministry, and so many times when you start trying to build a work for the Lord, and you try to take the thing and get it together, what happens is this: you miss your own focus. I understand, it's so easy today to lose your focus. There are so many things out there that compete with Christianity. I'm just telling you, there are so many things that are up for grabs in your relationship with God that you put him over here and take this. I know that. I was telling somebody this week, I don't envy anybody coming up in Christianity today the way it is. It's tough, it really is.

I told you when we started this year, this was going to be the year of the Bible, and when I said that, I had no illusion in my mind because I've been in this business long enough to know how this stuff always plays itself out. I understand in a 180-person church, or a 5,000-person church, or a 2,000-person church, or a church of 400, I understand that the work gets done with a minority. That's not right, but that's just the way it is. It's always been that way, and it'll always stay that way. That's the way it works. God always gets it done by the minority. But you've got to learn in the ministry that what you do is you, when you find those 45, and within those 45, you find that 15, those are the ones you pour yourself into. Those are the ones that you build the relationship in the Word of God with because they have what it takes to really take the Word of God and do something with it.

Now, the key to getting to the place in your life where your life makes a difference, and remember I told you last couple of weeks that this church is here for a reason. The only purpose for this church is to help make a difference in people's lives. We are a lighthouse on a seaside with ships being shipwrecked out there because they have no light, and the only reason we exist is to make a difference in people's lives. If you're saved this morning, the only reason God put you in this church is so that your life can make a difference in this church. The only way this church will make a difference in people's lives is if the people in this church's lives make a difference in this church. It has to be that way. On a church of 180, that's 45 of you or us, and 15 of us at the maximum.

Abraham and David show us their lives. It shows us the balance that it has to have of understanding God's imputed righteousness. Not only does it do that, but it also shows how to get to the place in your life and in my life that we do make a difference. I really believe with all of my heart that in this church there are men and women who don't just say it but really want to make a difference for God in their life. I really believe that.

V. The Law of Last Mention and Fulfilling God's Will

I've taught you over the years some of the laws and the rules of the Bible. One of the laws I told you was the law of first mention, and I showed you how that when you find something for the first time in the Bible, it usually is very significant. But there's also the law of the last mention in

the Bible. In other words, what I'm saying is this: the last thing God says about a man usually is very important because it gives God's perspective on the situation.

You go back to Genesis 49, you know what you find there? You find the last thing that Jacob said before he died, one of the most profound places in the Bible, not only doctrinally but prophetically. Moses writes the first five books of the Bible. You know what book shows the most understanding of where he's come from and how he's grown in his perspective? The last book he wrote, Deuteronomy. The whole book of Deuteronomy is a reflection back on what he's learned, where he's come from, and you really see what God had done in his life and his perspective on where he was at and where he was going.

I think the last thing that John, the Bible says in Revelation 22, the last thing that John says, is one of the most powerful things that you're going to find anywhere in the Bible, and most of God's people don't even know what it is. I think when you go to 2 Timothy 4, you find in that chapter, that book, the last thing that Paul says, the last thing that Paul writes about in 2 Timothy 4 before he died, one of the most powerful places anywhere in the Bible. When you see what he's doing, what he's dealing with, and who he's saying it to, of course, the law of last mention is a very important doctrine. The last thing God says about a man really sums up his life as far as God's concerned and gives us a perspective.

Now, I don't know if you've ever seen it or not, but the two great last statements on Abraham and David really form the foundation for us being able to fulfill what God wants us to do. Understand that when God saves you, he saved you for a purpose. There's something that he wants you to accomplish. It wasn't about that he just wanted to save you from hell; there's more to it than that. He had absolutely something that he wants you to accomplish and fulfilling his will in your life. These two men and the last statements that God says about them are the examples that you and I need. These are the last direct statements that God makes on their lives.

In James 2, where we looked last week, you'll find down there in verse 23, he says the last thing he said about Abraham in a lengthy passage after Hebrews, after the Old Testament, the last thing that he says is that he was God's friend. Acts 13:22, the last telling statement about David, where God goes in and he really lays out David in a protracted way, the last thing he said, he said, "David the son of Jesse, a man after my own heart, which shall fulfill all my will." Those two men's lives and the last thing God says about them are the key to what I'm trying to show you this morning about fulfilling God's will in your life. God has something that he wants you to do.

Did you catch what he said there about David? He said, "David the son of Jesse, a man after my own heart, which shall fulfill all my will." God wants you, after you're saved, to fulfill his will. If you've been around here any length of time at all, you know that that means not doing anything. The will of God is not what you do; the will of God is what you are. In other words, once you get saved, he wants you to do two things: he wants you to get God's heart, and through that process, he wants you to become God's friend. God wants you to become his friend.

Let me just say this to you: you're deceiving yourself if you think you can become God's friend without getting God's heart. That's why these two men are found in the book of Romans, and

that's why their lives stand for that, and the last thing God said about them was one of them was God's friend, the other one had a man after God's own heart.

Can two walk together, except they be agreed?

You know what happened today? You got saved, going back to our doctrine of reconciliation, our doctrine of imputation, our doctrine of getting God's righteousness. When you got saved, before you got saved, you were God's enemy, and if you're unsaved this morning, right now, you are alienated from God. When you got saved, God reconciled you unto himself. He did that through Christ's death on the cross. But when you got saved, your soul, and this is called the doctrine of standing in state in the Bible, when you got saved, your soul and your sin death, through the application of the Word of God and the blood of Christ, came into an agreement with God. That would be your standing. Once you got saved, your soul is now in agreement with God so you can have fellowship with God.

But the next aspect of that is once you're saved, that you're supposed to perfect that faith in your life so your walk, that would be your state, your lifestyle, your conversation, the things that you do, the people you hang out with, the places you go, the way you talk, also comes into an agreement with God so the two of you can walk together. You see, if you're going to walk with God and be God's friend, you've got to have both elements. You've got to have the knowledge of God in your heart in the Word of God, but it's got to translate out into your life, not just your soul, but into your very walk with God, because the Bible says, "Can two walk together, except they be agreed?" The problem with most of God's people is their soul is in agreement with God because they've been saved; it's their walk, their daily walk through life, that's not in agreement with God, and that becomes the problem.

VI. The Problem of Being Unequally Yoked

The real issue, and if you ever get into the place where you're dealing with people, dealing with people can be some of the most frustrating things you ever do in your life. It takes a lot of patience, it takes a lot of long-suffering, because people have issues. In a perfect world, I know you're supposed to take a perfect Bible, you got a perfect God, you got a perfect Holy Spirit, so you put it in people and become perfect people. Well, that sounds really good. Now, God is perfect, the Bible is perfect, the Holy Spirit of God is perfect. We are the problem. Just because you get saved and your soul's in agreement with God doesn't mean that your flesh is always, and that's really where the work needs to be done. Your job and my job is to bring this flesh in line with the agreement of the Word of God that we can walk together and be agreed in our lifestyle. That's the issue.

But if you begin to deal with people and you get into people's lives, and some of you have already seen this, I think it's really good. I like, I got many of you working in small groups with people, and I think it's really good. This is going to sound terrible, but I think it's really good when people bomb out on you and quit coming. I think it's really excellent that when you put so much into it, arrange your schedule, so much work out, somebody watching your kids so you can go disciple this person or work with this person or help this person. I think right now in your life,

the greatest thing that can happen to you is for them to stand you up. Now, that sounds terrible, but the bottom line is you better get used to it because that's what the ministry is. People don't want to do right today, and you're going to find very few people really, really want to do what the Word of God says.

Most people when they come in with problems, you're going to find this is so true, they want you to treat their symptoms. They do not want you to solve their problems. They've had a bad relationship, they've had this, they've had that, something went awry in their life. They're upset, they're emotionally unstable, they got all kinds of things, and the moment, the very moment they start feeling better, they're out of here. I think that's bad for them, but I think that's good for you because most of your life you're going to find people that you're going to work with in the ministry are people who just simply want you to treat their symptoms but never solve their problems. You need to understand that the problem is, and it always will be, the problem is found over here in 2 Corinthians 6.

Be ye not unequally yoked together with unbelievers: for what fellowship hath righteousness with unrighteousness? and what communion hath light with darkness?

And what concord hath Christ with Belial? or what part hath he that believeth with an infidel?

And what agreement hath the temple of God with idols? for ye are the temple of the living God; as God hath said, I will dwell in them, and walk in them; and I will be their God, and they shall be my people.

Wherefore come out from among them, and be ye separate, saith the Lord, and touch not the unclean thing; and I will receive you.

Every time you usually hear this verse, it's talking about a Christian should not marry an unsaved person, and that's obviously true, and that verse is a great verse to teach that. If you ever sit down and are dealing with people who are planning on getting married, and you're going to marry them, one of the first things you want to find out is if they're both saved, or which one is and which one isn't. It goes without saying, that was not my intent, I'm not preaching on that this morning, but it goes without saying that a saved person marrying an unsaved person, when you read the passage, it becomes a no-brainer.

But there's even more to it than that, and my point in this passage this morning is not that, it's this: that verse also tells you the number one problem you've got when you start to work with people today. You know what it is? They're yoked to this world. They're yoked to this world. Your soul's in agreement with God, but your walk's not, your conversation is not. This is why you're going to find that people have such a tough time; they're literally married to this world.

I've watched people come in, and they've got issues in their life, and you try to help them, you try to put them in the Word of God, and the bottom line is something keeps pulling them back. I've seen God's people come in, and their marriage is a mess, their lives are a mess, their kids are a mess, everything's a problem in their lives, and they just keep getting pulled back. They cannot solve their problems, and they can't get the victory in it. The bottom line is, if you go into their life, you'd see they're yoked to the world somewhere, some shape, some form, and it's the fact

that they're not dead to the world in Christ, but rather they're dead to Christ in this world. If you went into their private lives, they'd act no differently than the unsaved people do, and they wonder why they have problems with their children or their kids. They wonder why they struggle with so many things in their life.

People make really bad decisions today, and because of that, many times, because of the over-impending problems that we have in our own society, in our own world, and the way this thing is so caught up in everything, sometimes you can't survive those bad decisions. I'm telling you, if you're a young person in here this morning and you're sitting in the sound of my voice, you better listen to what I tell you over and over and over again: learn the Bible to make the right choices in your life. There was a time in this world where you could make several bad choices and maybe survive. We're living in a day and age where you just make one wrong choice, one bad choice, and in the world we live in, the consequences are so great, the compounding interest is so heavy, that you'll never get out from under it.

I see it all the time. I've dealt with people in this church over the last five years that I can simply tell you they're not going to make it. It's not because I don't want them to, it's not because I don't love them, it's not because God doesn't love them. It's because they have got their soul connected and yoked to the world, and they are not going to let that thing go. They have missed the great principle: "Can two walk together, except they be agreed?" Of course, the answer to that is no, you cannot. Trying to have your soul in agreement with God while your own lifestyle is in a disagreement with God will never work.

Of course, the fulfillment of God in your life, of the will of God, what God wants you to do, falls on two things: you get God's heart, being a man after God's own heart, and then through that process, you become God's friend.

VII. The Nature of Friendship with God

I like the aspect of God's friend. I like the aspect of friends. Have you ever analyzed? I did a lot of analyzing this week. I just, it got my mind going. I had four or five of you give me some phone calls, and it kind of got my mind going a little bit, and we talked about some things. It was all good. I thought to myself, "Did you ever look at and analyze friends in your life? Just stop and look at friends and really what they all mean."

Now, I'm a people person. I like people. I'm like Will Rogers, "Never met a dog I didn't like." I'm a people person, and I love people. I like being around people. I mean, I just do. I think people are great. I think I enjoy talking with them. Over my lifetime, I've tried to develop my broad range of a little bit of my understanding that I can intelligently talk with somebody, or if I don't know, I can intelligently listen while they enlighten me and learn something. I can learn from everybody, and I like people, I really do.

In my style of ministry, everybody gets a chance. I mean, when somebody comes in here, I never look at that person because of the baggage they brought in or because where they've been or what they've done. I never consider that. One thing that God has given me the ability to do, and that's when I look at somebody, I see them just the way God sees them. I see them with a, "You

can have a fresh start in this church." You can. I don't care what mistakes you've made, I don't care what dumb things you've done. We've all done dumb things, made terrible mistakes. I don't care about that. I say it over and over again, I only care where you're at now. I don't care where you've been. We can't live in the past. We've got to pick up and move on from here. The only thing that determines is, are you willing to change about you what you've got to change to get to where God wants you to be?

But you know what, I have friends. I have friends in my life. I mean, I have unsaved friends. I have unsaved friends, but I know where to draw the line with unsaved friends. I talk to them. I see them different places, and I try to minister to them, and I try to help them, and try to work through things with them, and be a testimony to them wherever I go. I go up here to a fitness center a couple of days a week and have been going there since the late 70s. After a while, you learn people up there. Everybody goes about the same time, so you get your little groups. I've met some nice, there are some nice saved people up there, and I'm a pastor, and I try to be a testimony to everybody, and I just try to love people and help them and talk with them.

I'm like my dad. I get that from my dad. My dad never met a stranger in his life, and he could be friends with anybody in five minutes. That's just, and I got that side of him, I guess. Anyway, I know up there, and some of them will talk about the Lord and the Bible. There's this one little grandma up there, and she's a sweet little black lady. She's about 80 years old, and she's a mother to everybody, and I love this woman more than anything in this world. She is one of the godliest women I have ever met in my life. She's probably 85 or 86, a little gray-haired little gal, frail. Her son and his wife bring her up there, and she, I don't know, she walks around the track, and all she does is give out hugs. I'll go over there, she'll hug on my neck and kiss me, and I'll kiss her. We'll talk, and she'll ask me how the Lord is in my life, and I'll say, "He's just fine in your life." There are some good people out there that you meet.

But you know what? You meet some bad ones too. Sometimes they're not always as sweet as that little gal. I had a guy up there that, we, three or four of us, I don't really work out with them because I kind of do my own thing and get out of there, but I always run into him, we're always talking to the old guy. He's probably 86 years old, he's probably in better shape than most 25-year-olds. He's an incredible guy, and we talk all the time. There was a guy in there that was his buddy, workout buddy for 27 years. This kid was, I always try to witness to him and always try to tell him about the Lord. I know you've got to, the Bible says, "He that hath friends must show himself friendly," and I know that building a relationship is so key in dealing with unsaved people. We're past the point where we can just go out and yell at the world to get saved. You've got to invest that time, but there's got to be a line that you draw. I witnessed to these guys, but there's always a line that you draw. Some of them really love God, some of them don't.

But I've got unsaved friends. I just don't take them too seriously because I know that at the end of the day, it's a dead-end street. We don't enjoy the same things, we don't talk about the same things, and as much as I want to pretend, we're not going to have a good time together. I'm sure you've got friends like that. Then you've got saved friends, and you know what? You can have fun with them anytime, anyplace, anywhere, and it's just one of those things where wherever you're at. But then within your friends, somebody said this one time years ago, he says, "You

know what? At the end of your life, you can probably count the true friends you have on one hand of a guy who lost three fingers in an accident." That is so true.

Do you know that God has favorites in the Bible? I know that, but you know God has favorites. Remember those 12 I told you, those 12? You know who his favorite was? It was John. John's the only apostle in the Bible that the Bible says Jesus loved. Now, I know he loved all 12 of them, I know he did, but Jesus had a special love for John. I preached this message one time, a little lady came up after me, pointed her finger in my face, and says, "Well, you know, how can you say that Jesus had a special love for John? You know that he loved him. I know he said, 'Why would you say that Jesus had a special love for John?'" And I answered, I said, "Because John had a special love for Jesus."

Now, I'm going to tell you right now, God loves all of you, and Christ loves all of you, but you know what? There are some of you that, this is going to sound bad, I don't know what to tell you, some of you are more his favorites than others. Do you know that? Do you know what the bottom line of that is? It's getting his heart. You know the Holy Spirit of God lives inside you. You think he enjoys seeing all the things you see, all the things you put into your body, all the things you put into your mind? You think that's really in agreement with him? You think that his walk with you is just one of the most special things he loves all day long?

Now, some of you, there it is. I guarantee you, and this is going to sound stupid to some of you, but I make things real simple. With my two daughters, I love them both. One is older than the other. How do you love one more than the other? You see different qualities in one, you see different qualities in the other. You love them both, so you've got to come up with a plan because you can't love one more. So you love one, "You're my favorite oldest daughter," "You're my favorite younger daughter."

I've got three dogs, most of you know that. I've got three labs. I've got a black one, I've got a white one, and I've got a brown one. I love those dogs. Our dogs, they're my constant companion. But I've got to tell you this, and don't everybody go back and tell them I'm saying this, okay? Buddy is my favorite. I play with him a lot. I play with him a lot because I say to him, "Daisy, you're my favorite white dog. Tinker, you're my favorite black dog. Buddy, you're my favorite brown dog." But deep down in my heart, I love them all, and I'd do anything for any of them. But I've got to tell you, I'm going to be honest, Buddy is my favorite.

All three of them have their own little personality, just like people. Tinker's the oldest, she's what, nine or ten now. Daisy and Buddy are brother and sister, they're probably about five. I love them all. They listen to me. I could, we can go out in the front yard, take them out, and there'll be a kid down the street or a rabbit right out there, and they'll both bolt for that rabbit, and I'll just scream their names, they'll stop dead in their tracks. They hang out with me. I'm all they've ever known. They've never been upstairs in the house, they live downstairs, you know where I live. They're just, I don't know what to tell you. When I take a nap in the afternoon, or sometimes when I'm beat, Buddy will be around my feet, one will be around my neck, they'll be behind my back.

But the black one and the white one, they have their own independence. Tinker has been around now for a long time. She'll come over and love on you, and then she'll go do her own thing. When I sit down on the couch sometimes, she'll be over on the far couch, and she'll just lay down there. I'll walk down there and even look. Daisy's a little more. Daisy will come up and sit with me at certain times, and then she'll go over to find her spot. Buddy, wherever I'm at, Buddy's there. I don't care if I'm sitting at my desk and he wants to take a nap, you know what he does? On my rolling chair, he'll lay down with his back arched around my chair so if I move that chair back, I wake him up. He knows I'm moving. When I'm up there on the couch, he's right there by my side. When the other two dogs come over, he growls, saying, "Get away, I'm with you. This is my time with him." Buddy thinks all time is his.

Wherever I go, he's there. I'm down there working on something, and you know how you sit at your desk like this, and all of a sudden I'll feel something down here in my hand, and he'll be sitting right there, and he'll, and you move back, and he'll go in that little cubby hole underneath the table there. I'll put the table back up, he'll just sit right there. It's got to be the most uncomfortable thing in the world. He just sits up there with his big rear end in there, doesn't even fit, and he weighs 120 pounds, and he'll just put his hand right on my chair like that for me just to study. Now, see, that sounds dumb to some of you, but I don't know how many times I've sat there and I thought to myself, "God, I want to be just like he is with me, with you. I just want to be like that. I don't want you to move that I don't get bumped and know you're moving. I just want to lay in your lap. I just want to sit down between the throne and put my head on your knee and just sit right there."

I was preaching one time, and I remember I told you a couple weeks ago, I was talking about, "Did God have something he wants to do, and you can't, you know, go do it? You can't spell God without 'go,' you can't spell gospel without 'go.'" I was preaching one time, and at the end of the thing, a guy came up, he wasn't a believer, and he said, "I don't appreciate your sermon very much." He says, "I think you make a lot of things up." Well, you had that right. I said, "What didn't you like about it?" He said, "Well," he says, "you know, this stuff," he said, "you can't spell God without 'go.'" He says, "You can't spell gospel without the word 'go.'" He says, "That's goofy stuff." He says, "You know what? You take God, turn it around backwards, it spells dog. What do you do with that?" I looked him right in the face and I said, "Anyway you spell it, he's still man's best friend. Can't beat him."

I want to be like Buddy. Buddy's my favorite. He wants to be everywhere I am, everywhere I go. Sometimes I'll get over there, and he just, I'll be over there at the desk, and the two, Daisy's on her back sound asleep, Tinker, she hangs her head over, she's gone. I look around there, you know what Buddy's doing? Buddy's just laying there watching me, just looking at me with those doleful eyes, just saying, "I'm waiting. Wherever you are, whatever you want to do, that's the way I want to be with God." That's what it means to be God's friend. That's the kind of friend you need to be to God.

VIII. The Ministry's Purpose and the "Fabled 15"

In the ministry, in time, as you grow, you find people. You know what really makes the ministry work? You find people who understand what the ministry is. They understand what you're trying to do, and in getting God's heart, you know what they do? They get my heart. The most valuable people to me in the ministry are people who have spent the time to learn and understand what I'm really trying to do and try to help me instead of try to hurt me. I don't mean hurt me bad, I mean just hurt me by indifference. That's the key.

I'm telling you, you have all kinds of friends in the world, but in the ministry, the friends are the people who get God's heart. They get God's heart, they walk with God, and they've come to the point where they fall in love with the same things that you love. You know what I love? I love two things in this life outside my family in the area of ministry and the area of the Word of God. I love two things: one of them, the Word of God, including the Lord Jesus Christ, and the second thing is this church. Those two things are the most important thing in the spiritual world I've got.

I told you many, many years ago, there are only two things in this world worth investing your life in, only two things. Now, I know we invest our lives in a lot of things. We do a lot of things, go a lot of things, be a lot of things, but I'm going to tell you right now, the bottom line is, there are only two things in this world worth investing your life with because they're the only two things that are going to last for eternity: one of them is the Word of God, the other one is the souls of men. Those two things are all that it's worth.

You know what the ministry is to me? It's going through 150, 200, 300 people, trying to find 14 that'll get that same mindset, to love the same things that I love. That's the ministry. This is not a social club, not a popularity contest. We have a job we have to do, and that job is to reach outside, and the first thing we do is we get, we begin God's friend. We get the thing working, and we pull it together.

You know, loving God and being God's friend is a lot like being married. The longer you're married, the better it ought to get, not the worse it ought to get. I've met people that were married for 30 years, and they're really not married anymore. They live two separate lives. They never talk, never do anything. They're absolutely at odds with each other. They're living in the same house, they never think of getting divorced, but they just don't, they gave up knowing each other and growing together a long time ago. That's the way a lot of Christians are with God. You come to that point in your life, and you're satisfied, you're not going any farther. I know what happened to that point. You see, in a marriage, you can just stay there, and I dealt with a couple years ago that they'd been married 40-some years, and they no more knew each other now after 40-some years of marriage probably than they did when they got married. They never advanced beyond. You see, in a marriage, you can get there and just maintain it, but when it comes to God, you can't maintain it. You slip back to the world. The devil ain't going to let you just maintain it. It ain't going to happen.

When you realize that a relationship with God should get sweeter as it goes, just like marriage, marriage gets perfected as you go through time, and a relationship with God gets perfected. That's why he uses that over there in Ephesians 5, and he lays that whole thing out for you. We were driving down the road the other day, coming home from somewhere, and we pulled up

behind a traffic light. It was kind of dusky, about 7:30, 8 o'clock. We pulled up behind a light, and we came up there, and it looked like a big guy sitting up the front of that thing in the light. Then suddenly, right before the light changed, they kind of went apart like that, and they kissed, two people sitting together. Now you know what's coming. My wife says, "Remember we used to do that?" I said to her, "Well, I haven't moved."

But that's the way marriage is, that's the way your relationship with God is. The problem is, God hasn't moved. We've moved. God is right where he was the day you got saved, and when you got saved, you two were just like that. You know what happened? In time, you moved to the other side of the car, you moved away, you moved somewhere else. To walk with God and to be in agreement with God constitutionally, you must know what he thinks and what he wants. I'm telling you, Abraham was a friend of God, and David was a man after God's own heart. Those two characteristics are what build the foundation in your life for you and I to fulfill God's will in your life.

IX. Standing Up for God and Christ's Advocacy

Have you ever been in a situation, I'm sure you have, where maybe with a group of people or somebody or some circumstance, you needed somebody to stand up for you? Maybe you're in a situation where if you would have stood up for yourself, it would look bad, or it looked like you, or whatever. Have you ever been in a situation where you were the point of some kind of ridicule or abuse or whatever the case is, and you just really needed somebody to stand up for you, to stick up for you at that moment in time, but nobody did? You know how empty that feels? You know how alone that feels? You know how frustrating that is when you know that people really know that you're not that way, but because of a lack of courage, they won't stand up for you? It's one of the most ominous feelings that you'll ever have in your life.

Yet I look at that thing and I think to myself, "You know what? My job as God's friend, as I walk with him, I'm in agreement with him, I'm going to be a man after his own heart, you know what my job is? My job is to take his side against the world's side. You know what my job is? My job is sticking up for him against the world." Now, I know he doesn't need my help, but he does need my witness, and sometimes he gets a bum rap. You know that? Sometimes in your little groups at work or your little friends that you hang around with, he gets a bum rap, and you just stand there and let it go.

I was telling you about my little group up at the fitness center. In that group, there was a young guy, well, young, he's 50-some years old. I'd known this guy for probably four or five years, and I just kind of met these guys who were up there. You know how you say hi, and next thing you know you stop and talk, and then it just develops into a relationship, and then you get to know each other a little bit better, and they found out I was a preacher. This kid is an unsaved kid, and it bothered me so much because when I got to know him, he was in remission of cancer. He had been, or had a tough bout with cancer, and he was in remission on it. He was coming to work out, really taking care of himself.

But this kid, I tried to witness to him. I tried to witness to him, and this kid was, without a doubt, the foulest mouth, the most unbelievable, the most hater of God person I think I have ever met in my life. I can't tell you some of the things. He didn't believe anything in God. He was raised Roman Catholic, and he didn't believe anything about God. He didn't believe anything about this. He believed in reincarnation, he believed everything in the world. He would go and do a library or get on the internet and find all these things, and he'd bring it back to me to test my ability on the Bible. I said, "Dan, you know what? You need to get saved." I said, "Why don't you come to church some Sunday?" You know what his reply was? This is the kind of guy I'm dealing with. His reply was, "Were there any young girls here he could fornicate with after church if he came to church?" That's where he was. Now, you think I'm kidding? He was serious. He would say some of the most filthy, godless stuff you've ever heard in your life about God, about the church, about everything in Christianity in general. I mean, it was incredible some of the stuff he'd say.

Do I get mad? Oh, he's an unsaved man. I understand what he's saying. But the last, and he quit coming to that fitness center, and he went to another one in Lee's Summit because he didn't have any money, and his prescription ran out. He had a friend get him in there. The last time I talked to him, I said this to him in front of everybody, but he'd give it to me in front of everybody. The last thing I said to him, I said, "Hey, look, pal, I want to tell you something. I don't know if I'm ever going to see you again, but I want to tell you this: if you ever decide to drop your sinful ways and you ever decide to do what's right in your life, I won't tell you. I'll set aside everything that you said to me and everything that we, what we have and what we talk. Let me tell you this, the bottom line is this: Christ died for you on the cross, and in your ungodly filthiness, if you're willing to reach out to him at any time, he'll still save you after all the rotten things you've said about him. He'll still save you because he loves you and cares for you, even though you care nothing for him." He blew up, went off for that word.

He died last Monday night. Died last Monday night very quickly. The cancer came back. A friend of mine told me last week, I was there last Tuesday, worked Wednesday, working out. He said, "You know, so-and-so is in the hospital. You need to pray for him." I said, "Well, I've been praying for him," not even knowing he's in the hospital. He said, "Yeah," he said, "some of the gals went up to talk to him, and he's not doing very well." That was on a Wednesday. I came back, I missed Friday, went back Monday, and I asked him, no, Friday, I went back Friday, and I said, "Hey, how's so-and-so doing?" He said, "Haven't you heard?" I said, "No." He says, "He died." He said, "He died." That was Monday. I saw he died Monday night. Died Monday night.

You know what that kind of life gets you? He had been divorced, his wife hated him, his boys hated him, and at the end, when he's dead, nobody wanted to claim the body. Nobody wanted the expense of the funeral. They were trying to get some medical facility to take him, but he was so eaten up with cancer, they wouldn't take him. The cheapest route was to go to be cremated, and nobody wanted to fork out the thousand dollars or whatever it took to put you in a cardboard box and incinerate you. When he died that Monday night, he died about 11 o'clock at night, and at that point, his ex-wife hadn't been up to see him, his boys hadn't been up to see him. He died like he lived, alone. I can almost double guarantee you, unless God's Spirit came down and did something miraculous, that boy's in hell this morning.

I thought about it every day, almost every hour since that day he told me he died, remembering the things that he said about God and remembering things that said about saved and all the things that God did for him. I guarantee you, unless God came down and did something in his world, he's in hell this morning, screaming his lungs out without ever a chance of getting out. You see, I couldn't change the outcome, but you know what I did do? I stood up for what was right with God. It wasn't going in front of that group of people, because you see, I may lose him, but through his death, I may reach somebody else over here because they're all shook up right now. All the people he used to go to the boats with and gamble down there, all the things, all the people he used to hang out with are all looking at each other, and they're saying, "Wow."

You see, so you never, you never be ashamed to stand up and take his side. Take his side no matter what. There were times when there were 15 people there, and I was by myself, and he was hollering at me and laughing at me and calling me things, and I'd be working out on the machines, and he would call people over and say, "This guy's a preacher, you better watch your wallet. This guy's this." I just let it go because you know what? God takes care of it when it all comes down at the end. Now those same people who were laughing at me, at the butt of their jokes, are now looking at the thing and saying, "Hey, you know what?" See, when God's hand comes down and strikes, sometimes the reverberation of that goes a long way out.

But you know what? Your job and my job is to take his side, ladies and gentlemen, not to put your tail between your legs and be afraid, not to, not to bring any. You take his side against this world. He doesn't need me to stick up for him, he can handle himself, but you know what he needs me to? He needs me to be the witness that this world needs. You know how you do that? You do that by having a man, being a man after God's own heart. Not that I am, and you know that by building a relationship with him and not being afraid to stand up. You do it by being God's friend, by not letting any relationship on this earth be a better friend than that one, and don't be afraid to talk about it. That's what you do, that's what needs to be done, and that's what God wants you to do. He wants you to know what his opinion is.

X. Challenges to Perfecting Faith

Let me ask you a question, here's the reality. You want another reality test? Because we deceive ourselves so much. We deceive ourselves into thinking that we really have a relationship with him when we don't. I know it's true. I watch it in God, I've watched it in God's people's lives all my life. I deceive myself with it. We think because we go to church and we spend a little time here, do a little time here, that that really makes it what we're really God's friend and really have God's mind. I've told you over and over again, it's much more than that. It's taking your whole life and realizing that you're going to change your opinion about everything in life, and you're going to make God's cause in your life your cause, and you fulfill yourself in that, God's will in your life, by doing that. You pick up his mantle and you realize that there's a controversy here, and you're going to take it on in this world, and you're going to take his side against it. It doesn't matter where it is, who it is, doesn't matter what it is. It wouldn't matter if it was the President of the United States to me, it wouldn't matter who it was. He's a better friend to me than anybody's ever been on this planet, and he'll be the best friend when everybody forsakes you, and when

everybody is down on you, he's the one. You better take better, better him than you do anybody else on this planet, I'm just telling you, and you better learn to stick up for him.

Let me ask you a question: are you trying to really perfect your faith every day? Now, don't shake your head yes, just listen to me. Are you really trying to perfect your faith every day? Are you really using this church to the advantage that it's supposed to be? Are you really here this morning because you really care, or were you worried about your brother, your sister, your mom, or your dad will be on the phone this afternoon saying, "Where were you?" So it was easier for you to come than explain you didn't want to come. Do we really try to be everything that God wants us to be? Do we really try to perfect that process?

Let me ask you a question. I know that some of you young Christians, this doesn't even apply to you. You're going to learn this. You haven't been around long enough, so don't take this personal. But if you've been around two years or more, these are some things that you need to look at. You want to take God's side, you want to, are you the man after God's own heart? Are you God's friend? Let me ask you a question: the Bible lists three infirmities in the Bible, three infirmities, three problems that we have that erode every day of our lives, keeping us from having those two things in our lives. Do you know what they are? I've given them to you probably ten times in the last two years, at least ten. Could you take me in your Bible and show me the three infirmities that you and I have?

You see, it's just something else that Bob says. It isn't like, "Wow, I've got something now I can take into my life, and I'm going to go home, and I'm going to look at these three infirmities, and I'm going to break these three things down, and I'm going to apply these three things to my life, and I am going to systematically work on these three infirmities that I have that I don't bring into reproach my friendship with God, my relationship with him." These three things will stop the perfecting process in your life. You've been here what, two, three, four, five years? I've talked about it how many times? One, you still don't know them, and two, you're doing nothing with them, and you're still going to tell me you're God's friend? You can't even tell me the three things. It wasn't five, it wasn't ten, it wasn't twenty. He didn't even give you a list of ten like it is in the Old Testament Jews. He gave you three infirmities that you struggle with that will cancel out your friendship with him and cancel out your perfecting your will. Most of God's people couldn't even tell me what those three things are, the three infirmities that we ought to be working on every day in our lives.

Does your life please God? Our first thing is, "Well, I don't smoke and chew or go with girls that do, I'm pleasing him." Okay, the first thing we think of, "Well, I did this, I did that, I don't go here, don't go there, so I'm pleasing him." See, that's the first mindset that we come to. Oh, that is so shallow. Let me ask you a question: give me the definitive verse in the Bible that tells me what it takes to please God. That's what you've got to have. Where is the definitive verse in the Bible? Do you please him? Do you say you please him? Do you think you please him? Do you want to please him? Then give me the definitive verse in the Bible that tells you what you've got to do to please him, and that has nothing to do with coming to church. It has nothing to do with reading your Bible. It has nothing to do with all of the things that we think it is. Yet we say to

ourselves so foolishly, "Oh, I really please Him." There's one aspect of your life and only one that is the foundation for pleasing Him. Without that in your life, you're kidding yourself.

Do you take God's stand, do you? You know one of the biggest problems we have as Christians in taking God's stand? We don't know when to choose our battles. We stand for stupid stuff and let the good stuff slide by. Do you stand for God, do you? Do you take His side? Let me ask you another question: there are three controversies listed in that Bible, three that God has. That Bible tells you in three separate places that God has a controversy with something in this world. You know what? When you understand it and you know what it is and you understand those controversies and you make them your controversies, you now stand for God. It covers every aspect from the political arena to the world arena to your own personal relationship to who you hang out with. It covers every base you need covered. You know what? You can't stand for Him because you don't even know what He's standing for Himself. Three controversies. God has a problem with three things in this world, and He tells you what they are in the Bible. Here we are saying, "Oh yeah, I love God. I want to please God." Oh yeah, I told you last week, it's not about what you say, it's about what you do.

I've got people that can, we know people, I know people that can read the Bible and apply the Bible and teach the Bible. You know what? It isn't about that. Can you apply to your own life what you know? Three infirmities you and I have. What does it really take to please God? And you're going to take your side, are you? You're going to be a soldier, onward Christian soldier. That's going to be us. You're going to be in the battle, raise the answer back to heaven, let the battle cry. All this stuff, you're going to stand for it. You don't even know what the controversy is about. Three of them in the Bible. Three different times. God says, "I've got a controversy with this. I've got a controversy with this. I've got a controversy with this." There lies your fight. There lies your stand. You see, that's why, you see what I mean? It's so hard, it's so hard to take so many of God's people seriously. I mean, it really is. You look out with just a little bit of understanding. You look out to the Christian world, and it's absolutely, absolutely better than any cartoons on television. Nobody understands what the issues are today. Nobody understands what it takes to please God. Yet the Bible makes it so clear. If you're sitting here this morning, bless your heart, and you've been saved five years or more, I've been in this church two years or more, and you don't know that, you ought to be ashamed of yourself.

How do you perfect your life? How do you make your life on a protracted way of getting through and better and closer to get that relationship to work through the issues? How do you do that when you don't even know what the three infirmities are you have? It's a joke. I'm sorry to say it, it's a joke. Everybody, "Well, I'll stand for God. I'll stand for God." You don't even know what the controversies are. You're the idiot out there standing for God. Everybody says, "Well, that's Christianity. I don't want to be one." You pick your battles, folks. When it comes to perfecting your faith to become God's friend, you can't do that without getting his heart. When you get his heart, you understand how to become his friend. There's no becoming God's friend without getting God's heart. There's no getting God's heart without understanding your infirmities, without understanding the controversies, and understanding what it takes to please God. You can just go sell that someplace else because it will not work with God.

XI. The Standard of Abraham and David

These two men are the examples. Abraham, when the Jews looked at Abraham, they called him Father Abraham. He was the standard for a relationship with God of being God's friend in a life of faith. The standard, the absolute standard. Everybody in the Old Testament and the law even past that looked back at Abraham and says, "Abraham, our father." Everybody understands the relationship that he had with God, Isaac, and how he came to the place that he became God's friend, everybody but us.

David, you go back through there, my friend, and you go back through the Kings in 1 and 2 Kings, 1 and 2 Chronicles. You go back through those Kings, and you look at those, some of them are good, some are bad, some are indifferent. I'll tell you this, if you ever want a study of human nature as far as God's people are concerned, they're found in the Kings of Israel. I tell you what, God is one of the greatest places you'll ever find where you'll find yourself. Those Kings represent men who God put in charge of his kingdom. Yes, I know it's the Kingdom of Heaven, I understand that, but let me tell you something. Right now, you are the stewards of the Kingdom of God.

When you look at those Kings back there, you'll find some, you'll find what he says about them are the most unique, something about unique statements you'll ever find in your life. Every one of them, time after time after time, it says this: "He was not perfect in his heart like was his father David." When you look at the context, it's 120 years since David died. David was the standard. He was the standard. When you look at those Kings down there, if you want to find yourself in there with what kind of heart you've got toward God, it's in there. Some of you are Ahabs, some of you are Hezekiahs, some of you are Zedekiahs, and very few of us, if anybody, is David, the gold standard for what your life and my life should be.

Abraham, you want to model the friend? I gave you a while back, I gave you the seven men of the Old Testament that dealt with every aspect.

- There's a man in the Old Testament that if you want to overcome the world, you study his life.
- There's a man in the Old Testament, if you want to learn how to serve God, you study his life.
- There's a man in the Old Testament if you want to learn ministry, you study his life.
- There's a man in the Old Testament if you want to learn how to overcome the devil, you study his life.
- There's a man in the Old Testament if you want to study how to overcome the flesh, you study his life.
- And two men, if you want to understand how to have a relationship with God to be God's friend, it's Abraham.
- And if you want to have a relationship with the word of God, it's David.

You take those seven together and mold them into your life, you are perfecting yourself, and you'll be everything God wants you to be, and the fulfillment of your life will be fulfilled in God. They're both saved like us in the sense of faith. They both get God's righteousness. They both

don't deserve it. They both struggle with some real issues in their life, and they overcome them. They both have what I don't see in most of God's people. One, they have what I don't see today, as I don't see a hunger to know God and a hunger to do what's right no matter what. That's what's missing.

XII. The Ministry's Purpose and the "Fabled 15"

180 people in this church. Get them all together. Get them all together. 180. The model says in the New Testament that one was a phony. So in our perspective, that'd be 15 of you are going to meet my old buddy down in the lake of fire. 15 are lost. 105 of us are worthless. 45 of us got involved, and only 15 are going to be counted on all the way to the end. That's what this church is about. I don't know what you think it's about, but that's what it's about. Everything we do is about one thing. It's not a social club. Oh, I know we do a lot of social events, but it's not a social club. It's about one thing. It's about helping you, giving you the tools to perfect yourself, to be everything that God wants you to be, that you can make a difference while you're here. Everything.

The fulfillment of God in your life, coming to the point where you become God's friend and you get the heart of God, and you'll never be God's friend until you get that heart. You'll never get that heart until you are willing to change about you what needs to be changed. Quit dealing with the symptoms and start solving the problems. Find out what your infirmities are. Go to work on them. Tackle those things. Don't go to second base until you get that one nailed down. Work on it. Diagnose it out. Take care of it. Fix it. Move to the next one. Work on it. Diagnose it. Get it done. Move to the third one. Get it done. Learn what those controversies are. Find out what it takes to please him. Don't go on your own idea. "I'm going to, well, I'll go to church and I'll throw my little offering in, and I'll do this, and I'll do that, and I won't go here, and I'm going to please God." It has nothing to do with it.

What in the world do we live in? I understand. It's a deceiving time for God's people. A deceiving time. On top of that, most of God's people don't want to change. They like being deceived. They think it's going to be an excuse. "Well, see God, I didn't figure it all out because I was deceived." God's not going to hold you accountable for what you know or what you don't know. He's going to hold you accountable for what you could have found out, but you were too lazy to do it. That's the price. Everything we do. When somebody takes some of you young Christians and we teach you discipleship, you know what that is? That's laying the bedrock in your life that we can build Bible doctrine that you can perfect your faith to the place where you can find out God's controversies and take a stand.

I look at you and the time that we go through, the time we spend, I'm always looking for that fabled 15. I'm always looking for that fabled 15 men and women who really have what it takes to have the hunger for the Word of God, to have a hunger to do what's right, to have a hunger to learn the Bible, who will come in and commit and get what they need and then start the process of perfecting, getting out of their life the things that should not be there and fulfilling of God in their life that they become everything to do God's will. I'm always on the search. How many times I've seen somebody and I've said to myself, "That's exactly the kind of person I'm looking

for." I can spend 15 minutes with those people and find out if you're, and I don't ever tell you, I can almost spend 15 minutes with you and talk with you and ask you some certain questions, look at where you're at, and I can tell you if you're going to make it or not.

You know what? It's not about that you're not a good person. It's not about that you don't have the ability. It's about that you're married to this world. That's what it's about. It's not about whether you're saved or not. It's about what you've got in your refrigerator at home. It's not about whether you love God or not or what you talk about or not. It's about what you do and nobody sees. It's about nothing except what God's not changing in your life, the things that need to be changed. Yet we get up and we talk about this, we talk about that, we talk about how much we love God, and it means absolutely nothing to God. That's why it's hard to take many of God's people seriously. Not that I have all the answers, but I'll tell you one thing. I can guarantee you, and I'm not even telling you that I'm there, but I'm telling you this: it's going to take being God's friend, and you ain't going to ever be God's friend without getting God's heart. It's just as simple as that.

So when you see these two men, we start to talk about their righteousness of God and getting the right God. They lay the foundation that you've got to see and understand to even get to that point. God's got something he wants to do in everybody's life today. If you're saved this morning, he wants to change about you and take you where he wants you to go, and he wants your life to fulfill for him. That's what he saved you for. But you'll never do it without getting his heart.

Christianity is a rough road, and you're going to need a friend that sticks closer than a brother. You're going to need to stick up for him. You know right now, and I know you probably don't understand this concept of standing in state, but you know right now up in heaven, the Bible says the devil is the accuser of the brethren. Right now up in heaven, and all this next week when you're trying to do what's right, you know what the devil's doing? He's pointing out every flaw you've got and I've got. We all got flaws. There are things that will never be perfect, and we're all going to struggle. We're all going to do dumb things. I do enough dumb things to put in a truckload. But the bottom line is that the devil exploits those. He takes them up before the throne of God. You get an example of it in the book of Job. You see, ever see that thing? Job 1, Job 2. There was a day when the sons of God presented themselves before the Lord and Satan himself. What did they do? What did Satan do? He picked out Job, and then he clobbered Job in front of God.

You know what he's going to do next week? He's going to pick you out, and he's going to clobber you in front of God. He's going to say, "Well, look at Bob Alexander. Oh, look at this. Look at that. Yeah, look at this. He's your, he loves you. He does this, he does that, he does this. Yeah, right." He sticks it in God's face. That's what he does. You know what Jesus Christ does? He sticks up for you and me. About the time the devil was going through the last part of his rant, Christ walks over to the throne and he says, "Father, he's nuts. He doesn't know what he's talking about. All those things that he says that those people did down there, those people are in me. My blood covered their sins. None of that's true. I'm sticking up for them." God says, "Good enough. Satan, out of here." He sticks up for you. Sticks up for me. For the accuser of the brethren, he sticks up for you and for me.

You know what our job is? Stand up for him. Stand up for him. Find out what the battle is. Find out, find out, find out what the issues are. Find out what the controversies are. Find out what this thing is. Don't ask me afterward. I ain't telling you on this one. You find these three out for yourself. You get enough free gratis around here. You dig these out for yourself. I'm tired of giving you stuff you do nothing with. I'm tired of giving you stuff, and you just act like it's a piece of stale bread and throw it over in the corner. Do you get around to it? And then you never get around to it. You work on these yourself. These are yours. These are yours. I have to solve mine. You've got to solve yours. This is a fulfillment at birth. Work out your own salvation. Go to work on it. But it's going to take becoming God's friend, and that takes getting God's heart.