

I. The Process of Spiritual Growth

Last week, we started Romans chapter 5, and we talked about the first five verses. Just to give you a quick briefing on it, we talked about the process in your life and my life of not just learning how to rejoice in the good things—the glory of God—but also how it talked about going through our tribulations. I think one of the greatest concepts in that whole passage in Romans chapter 5, which is just loaded, is the concept where he says, "wherein we stand." We sing a song, "Standing on the Promises," and that is so true. That is what we stand on; we stand on the Word of God in its absolute truth that it never changes. Our standing in Christ Jesus is really the key to our individual victory in our lives.

We learned a great truth last week, a number of great truths, but we learned the fact that there is a process to learning how to work with people. That process comes into your life as you make yourself available in this local church, in this ministry, and you grab the vision of my work and you make it your work. Together, we work together, and the process comes into play in your life. The Bible calls it the perfect work of patience. When we have a relationship with God and we are in the ministry, we have tribulation—godly tribulation for standing for the Lord—and that leads to patience. When you develop patience, patience then leads to experience, which leads to hope. These are the great concepts that we all need to have in our lives as we try to minister in these last days.

We saw how that as you and I go through these things and experience these things, that is how God builds character in your life and gives you those things that you need. I talked last week about the two absolute greatest things you have to have in working with people and working in ministry: patience and then experience. That only comes from working with people, getting the right guidance, the right help, somebody showing you how to do what not to do. We talked about all of that last week.

Then we talked about how that leads to the fact that we are not ashamed of what God has called us to do. The number one reason I have found over the years that most of God's people really do not get plugged in and do what God has called them to do is because they are ashamed of it. That may not sound like a terrible thing to say, but it is true. You are ashamed of what your friends will think at work if you show up tomorrow and have to carry a Bible and start witnessing. You are afraid of what your family will say when they find out that you are really going to take a stand for God. Many times, that is where the tribulation comes into your life. Many times, it is the people in your life that are closest to you who give you more of a problem than the people that are just good old unsaved people out there. But that is where you learn the patience and the experience. That is where you get to the point where you begin to understand the Bible's concept of what it means when it uses the word hope.

We talked last week that hope, the word hope, is not like, "I hope I am saved," but it is the fact that Jesus Christ and the glory of God and all the things that He has written us in the Bible are

our only hope. My hope today is built on the fact that Jesus Christ is in charge of everything that goes on. That hope will get you through not only when you look around the world today and you see all the impending disasters. I do not think I have ever been in the world in my forty or fifty-some years where I have ever seen the world scene scenario in such a bleak, bad situation. This place is just, as Bob Jones Senior used to say, "an insane asylum run by the inmates." But when you understand the Bible concept of hope, you understand how all that works.

II. Knowledge, Wisdom, and Understanding

In the Bible, you will find three key words, especially in what we call the wisdom books. You find the word knowledge, you find the word wisdom, and then you find the word understanding. When we look at those three words, they are very important in your life.

When you get knowledge about something, you basically have the facts. You listen to the five o'clock news or you listen to something on the radio where somebody explains something, then you have knowledge. You can speak somewhat intelligently about it. You have the facts, or what appear to be the facts anyhow, but you have knowledge about it.

When you take that knowledge and you do something with it in your life, that knowledge then translates itself into wisdom in your life. When you have wisdom, you not only have the facts, but you understand how the facts work to bring about and give you an insight into it as far as the world is concerned.

Now, let me just say this: an unsaved man or an unsaved woman, any unsaved man or unsaved woman on this world, can have knowledge and can have wisdom. Wisdom is not something that is relegated only to a child of God. There is a worldly wisdom out there, and there are worldly knowledges that are very beneficial. I am sure that you guys that were in your trades that you do for your living, I am sure an older guy showed you how to do that. Probably the older guy maybe he was not saved, and you learned from that person about and made yourself the trade that he had, and now you are good at it because somebody had wisdom about how to do it and put it together.

I can look at a brick wall and look at the cinder blocks, a brick wall, and I can say to myself, "Well, who couldn't build one of those? I mean, you just get the mud, lay it on, and just lay the bricks on it." But there is more to it than that. When I look at the brick wall, I say to myself, "That is really easy." I built a brick wall one time. By the grace of God, I was not in it when it fell in. But I did not understand the fact that you have to... Have you ever seen on a brick wall where the seams do not match up? They are offset. They call that, I love talking tech with you, they call that tying it in. What you do, you gain strength from not putting all the seams in the same place. You do not have any stability in it. Well, to me, I see a brick wall, I have knowledge: put one brick on top of another and slap the mud on and wait until it dries and you have a wall. Well, somebody experienced says, "No, you have to tie them in." There are all kinds of things that they do. Somebody who has experience sees that. Somebody who just has knowledge, like myself, will build the wrong wall. Yes, you are right, you do not want me to help you build your

house or anything like that. I help build your character, help build your soul, help build your body, but when it comes to building your house, better get Bubba to do it. I cannot handle it.

So, an unsaved man, an unsaved woman, can have knowledge and they can also have wisdom. But what they cannot have is the third ingredient, and that ingredient is called understanding. In fact, you will find the word in Proverbs and in the book of Psalms. You will find the word knowledge, wisdom, and understanding used all through those books.

When it comes to the book of Ecclesiastes, and you have to kind of understand how these books relate and what they really show, the book of Ecclesiastes in your Bible is really a book that Solomon wrote that shows the worldly perspective of everything. The book of Ecclesiastes is a book that shows you that Solomon explored every ology, every idea, every philosophy man ever had, and then comes to the end and shows you that it is not any good. It is an amazing thing that when you come through Proverbs, you will find the words knowledge, wisdom, and understanding all through the book. When you come through the book of Psalms, you will find those three words. But when you come to the book of Ecclesiastes, you will never find the word understanding. I think you find it one time, but it is just a reference to something in general. You will never find the word understanding in the book of Ecclesiastes.

You know why? Because Ecclesiastes represents worldly wisdom, and worldly wisdom has no understanding. You listen to great radio guys, and I know you all listen to them, and I listen to them when I am driving back and forth. You listen to a guy like Bill O'Reilly and guys like Rush Limbaugh and Sean Hannity and all those guys. You listen to those guys, and I have got to tell you, there are some guys that will give you some great knowledge and some great wisdom. You listen to Bill O'Reilly all day long, he will be able to go in and detail out for you what is wrong with this country as far as the liberals versus the conservatives, and show you who is right and who is wrong. He does a great job of that. But what Bill O' Reilly cannot do, nor can any of them do, is put God in the equation. You see, they do not understand how God is the author of this confusion out here in the world, even though the Bible says that He is not, not in the same sense, but He is allowing this to happen because God is right on a plan and God is right on schedule. Of course, when you know the Bible, you can see the things as they really are.

I just saw it last week, and I thought one of my favorite movies because I like science fiction movies or I like movies that have science fiction things in them. A last couple of weeks, they were showing this movie on TV called They Live. How many ever saw that movie? You know what it is about? Harry saw it. Anyway, it is about a story like this: it is a story about a bunch of homeless people that are living under a bridge someplace, and they have a little community there, and they are all kind of living together. Across the street, there is a church, and the one guy is kind of hungry and wants to go find what is going on at the church and hear some music over there. So he goes over. When he comes into the church, he finds out in the back room there is really nobody there, and the music playing is on a tape so everybody will think the church is full of people. So he goes in the back room and he finds all these cardboard boxes with glasses in them, sunglasses. So he says, "Well, I will just take a pair of sunglasses with me." He looks around a corner, and people have got big boxes of these sunglasses that they are going to do something with. He just takes a pair and skedaddles out of there.

The next day, he is walking down the thing and puts the sunglasses on, and when he looks up at the billboard, the billboard is a billboard for like something else. When he puts the glasses on, there is another message on it. He takes them off and he looks at it, and he puts them back on again, and it keeps appearing and disappearing. When he puts the glasses on, and people are walking by, some of the people look like demonic things. I mean, they are ugly, like skeleton faces. He takes them off, and the person looks normal. He puts them back on again. The end of the story is this: aliens have invaded planet Earth. Of course, we already know that aliens have invaded planet Earth in this movie, and these people are trying to wipe them out and find them. So they have developed a pair of glasses that when you put them on, it lets you show you who the real aliens are and who are normal people. They look like normal people, but when you put them on and aliens have taken over this person, the alien figuration just comes out of them, and it is very obvious. The aliens are scrolling messages all around that you cannot see, but you put the glasses on and it says, "Obey," or something like that. But it has got all these messages on there.

I watch that movie and I think to myself, "You know what? That is exactly what the Bible does for you." You see, the world appears one way, does it not? We can listen to guys like Bill O' Reilly and guys like Rush Limbaugh, which I enjoy listening to them, and Sean Hannity and those guys. There are some great guys on there that you listen to, and it gets your blood all fired up and all that stuff, and they talk about this, and they have got facts and they have got wisdom. But what they all lack is the vision through the Word of God that shows you and gives you the understanding of what is really going on.

If you got Bill O' Reilly and this guy here and this guy here and all the conservative commentators in one room and got them to sit down and try to explain to them that what is really happening is not a right-wing conspiracy or a left-wing conspiracy, but what is really happening is we are approaching the tribulation period and the rapture of the church and the second coming of Christ and God establishing. Isaiah says that all the nations of the earth are going to go and do this and run him down the verses. They would look at you like you were nuts. You know why? They have got knowledge and they have got wisdom, but if you want understanding, you have to put these glasses on here. These glasses show you what really is going on, not just what appears to be going on. I think that our lives, when you get into the Word of God, you really begin to see all the things and understand all of the things that are really happening out there in the world.

III. Christ Died for the Ungodly

Let us begin reading here where we left off last week in Romans chapter 5, and we are going to pick it up here in verse 6.

Romans 5:6-12

For when we were yet without strength, in due time Christ died for the ungodly.

For scarcely for a righteous man will one die: yet peradventure for a good man some would even dare to die.

But God commendeth his love toward us, in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us.

Much more then, being now justified by his blood, we shall be saved from wrath through him.

For if, when we were enemies, we were reconciled to God by the death of his Son, much more, being reconciled, we shall be saved by his life.

And not only so, but we also joy in God through our Lord Jesus Christ, by whom we have now received the atonement.

Wherefore, as by one man sin entered into the world, and death by sin; and so death passed upon all men, for that all have sinned:

Father, we thank You and praise You for the Lord Jesus. We love You. We thank You for the time we have today to study Your Word. We pray, Lord, that You will give us wisdom and insight into the things that we have, and Lord, give us understanding. Lord, that is the thing that we need. We need God to show us what is really going on, not only in the world but in our own lives, in our own world. Lord, we pray today that You will help us and help us to see and understand the great truths of this book, how they unmask the things that are not really real and show us the reality of life, not only in the world as I said, but in our own lives too. Help us, Father, help us to learn the great truths in these passages today. Lord, there is so much in here, it is so rich, it is so hard, Lord, just to try to get all of this laid out. Pray You will bless this week. Pray You will bless next week as we go to Joplin, as the young men preach and the young people, Lord, and the moms and dads just meet people that love God and love the Word of God and fellowship around them, Lord, and just pray You will give us a good time there and bring us back safe and take us down safely. Then, Lord, as we come back next week in Bible study and the mission tonight and all that we have that we are trying to endeavor to do for Thee, pray Your blessings upon and in Jesus' name for Your sake we ask it. Amen.

Now, you remember a couple of months ago, I gave you basically twelve major Bible doctrines, and I gave you what they were. We talked about:

1. The doctrine of justification
2. The doctrine of redemption
3. The doctrine of propitiation
4. The doctrine of remission
5. The doctrine of expiation
6. The doctrine of imputation
7. The doctrine of regeneration
8. The doctrine of reconciliation
9. The doctrine of spiritual circumcision
10. The doctrine of your spiritual and physical adoption in Christ
11. The doctrine of sanctification
12. The doctrine of glorification

Back then, I gave you what they were and gave you the definitions of them, and I told you how the book of Romans is built around these twelve fundamental Bible doctrines that in time in your life you need to understand what they are and what they mean. At some point in your life, you

need to be able to verbatim lay these out and explain these so that everybody in your own life knows them and you can lay them out to somebody else.

Now, I want you to look at verse 6 here as we start, and you are going to see so many doctrines intertwining here as we have already seen through the book of Romans because Romans is just built around these twelve. But look at verse 6. Let us start with where we started reading here, and it says this:

Romans 5:6

For when we were yet without strength, in due time Christ died for the ungodly.

Now, there are a lot of verses in chapter 5 of what I call must-have verses. In other words, you need to learn these verses, you need to memorize these verses. These verses will not only help you in your own life, but they will help you when you are working with people. When you win somebody to Christ or you are witnessing to somebody about them being lost, this is an incredible verse. It really shows the state that we were in and what God has done for us, and we are going to detail it out here in just a second. But this is a great verse: "For when we were yet without strength, in due time Christ died for the ungodly."

Now, let us look at this verse as we are going to try to take all these verses, and we will see how far we get today. This is a great concept, as I said, especially dealing with people. This truth, as in all Bible truths, goes against all the teaching of the world system today and also goes against the teaching of most churches. But what are you going to do?

What it starts out saying is this: an unsaved man or an unsaved woman has no strength within themselves to change their life. You are going to find people who are good people who maybe get involved in alcohol, they get involved in drugs, they get involved in something in their lives, and what happens is this: they want to change their lives. They want to be different. They do not want to be bound to what they are bound to in their life. But the truth of the matter is, they have no strength to change anything about themselves. A man or a woman without Christ is bound by their sin and cannot break any stronghold on him.

Let me give you an example now, and this is certainly not a criticism, but we take the situation with a group called Alcoholics Anonymous. I am not criticizing them; I think they do a lot of good work, so please do not misunderstand me. I have actually had people that I put into Alcoholics Anonymous. I went through the classes myself, as I did Narcotics Anonymous, even though I never used drugs and never drank. I wanted to understand the program, so I am not speaking out of turn here. I have been through both programs. I took twelve steps in both cases, and I can appreciate it for what it is, and I think that they are a good organization, and I am certainly not bad-mouthing them in any way, shape, or form, so please do not think that.

But here is the downfall of it, here is the bottom line: in Alcoholics Anonymous, they teach this: they teach that if you are an alcoholic and you go to Alcoholics Anonymous, they teach you that you are always going to be an alcoholic. They will tell you that you may be dry for forty years, but the bottom line is you have to keep in your mind that you are still an alcoholic. Now, I know why they do that. I know why they do that because they want to instill in that person that once

you get off the wagon, you cannot ever go around it again. You cannot be around the booze. The very smelling of it will drive you back, or if you just have one, you are off the wagon, and most of the time that is true. So they go through their whole lives, and they will get up and they will give their little testimonies, and they will talk about the fact that they are a recovering alcoholic, and they will put the emphasis on that, that you are always the rest of your life going to be an alcoholic, and you might as well deal with it. So you cannot ever be around it, you cannot ever associate with it, you cannot ever have anything to do with it in any shape or form whatsoever because of the fact the moment you do, if you are still an alcoholic in your mind, you are going to fall back off the wagon.

Now, that is their philosophy, and I am not arguing with it. I am just saying the Bible takes the other position. You see, the Bible says when you get saved, old things are passed away, and all things become new. The difference between Alcoholics Anonymous that says you are always an alcoholic, therefore you have to be careful, where the Bible says that once you get saved, you are no longer an alcoholic. You are a new creature in Christ Jesus, and it does not matter now if you are around it the rest of your life, 24/7, or somebody you run into a brewery truck, rear-end a brewery truck at a railroad crossing, and all the beer spluffed up inside your car and you automatically get drunk from the smell, it does not mean anything. You know why? Because the new person about you. You see, where the Alcoholics Anonymous guy, he walks around being afraid of it, saying, "Well, I am a recovering alcoholic, I cannot." I have actually had Christians that went places that were afraid to tell people they were Christians, and when somebody offered them a drink, their way out because everybody feels sorry for a recovering alcoholic, the guy would come up and say, "Hey, would you like a beer?" And instead of the guy saying, "No, I am a child of God, I do not drink," he says, "No, I am a recovering alcoholic, I cannot be around the stuff." And the guy says, "Oh, that is okay. You know what? I want some orange juice." But the truth of the matter is, you have to say, "No, I do not want one. I am a born-again Christian. I do not need that. I have got the Word of God, and I get my high from that. You get your buzz from that, I get my buzz from this." Sometimes you want to go down and compare buzzes, come on over and sit down, and I will help you through the thing. But most people cannot do that because they are ashamed. They do not have the hope we talked about earlier.

Anyway, I am not sure what that had to do with anything that I am saying today, but I just thought I would throw that in there. But a guy in Alcoholics Anonymous, he is always got to be afraid of the thing because of the fact that in his mind he is a recovering alcoholic, and once an alcoholic, always an alcoholic. The Bible says once you get saved, you are no longer an alcoholic. After three or four years, maybe six months, eight months, as you grow in the Word of God, you know what? You do not have to be afraid of being back in that scenario where you go to a wedding and maybe somebody is drinking or you are around your friends and they drink. You know why? Because at that point, you just look back and you see how stupid it really was to begin with. Why? Because you have got understanding now. You are a new creature in Christ Jesus. Old things are passed away. God took that out of your life, and then He gave you something better.

I think that is a problem that a lot of pastors have with their people. They stand up in the pulpit and they yell about all the things you ought to get out of your life, and I am not saying that people should not get some things out of your lives. But what the downfall is, they do not ever replace in that person's life what they are trying to take out. Around here, I will tell you to give up the world, and I will give you something ten times better. I will give you a pair of glasses, and you can see who the aliens are sitting next to you today. The Bible gives you the insight and the understanding that you are not still an alcoholic. You now are a new creature in Christ Jesus, and now you have the strength. You have the strength to overcome any issue in your life. We have talked about drug addiction and alcoholism, but in anything in your life, it does not matter what it is, you now have the strength to overcome and get out of whatever you could not get out of before. You know why? Because Christ and the Word of God make the difference. An unsaved man and an unsaved woman have absolutely no strength, absolutely no strength.

IV. Three Examples of Spiritual Death and Resurrection

Now, there are three great examples of this in the Bible and the New Testament. I want to kind of walk these through with you very quickly, but they show you a great concept. We have a lot of younger kids in here, and I say younger, you are in your late teens or twenties, and probably some of you may be sixteen or seventeen. You are a younger person. Then we have some that are middle-aged, and then we have some that are older people that are in their senior citizen age. Yes, when I go to the grocery store, I do go on Tuesday because senior citizens do get a discount there. I gave it up. I will tell you what, one of the reasons that I almost did not go back to Joplin this year, and some of you guys were there, witnessed with me when we stopped at that Hardee's on the way home. Remember that? What are you laughing at, Jimmy? You were right there with me. We stopped to get something on the way home, walked through into a Hardee's back there, and walked up. Sweet little girl, sweet little girl. She did not look quite as nice when I punched her front teeth off, but she is a sweet little girl. I walk up, and we order our food, and she looks at me and she says, and the bill was not right, and I said, "Well, you did not charge me." She said, "Do not know, you get a senior citizen discount." I said, "I want to talk to the manager. We are going to get you fired, girl." I am waiting to get a senior citizen discount at the gas station, is what I am waiting for. I think then I will be 105. I will get as much as I get out of it. I have gotten past that. That was rough for me, but I am at the place now where I will take it wherever I can get it. I mean, Bob Jones used to say, "If the devil is going your way, ride him." I just, you know what? We go to the grocery store on Tuesday, we get 10% off the groceries. I eat places where they, and I have even where I even got a pair of them gym shoes with the big Velcro straps on. I do not wear them out with people, but if I am going where I want to get ahead and get a break, I have got them on. I have got them on, Bob behind me carrying a shuffleboard stick. But we have all kinds in here.

Now, let me show you a great concept here, and you need to grasp this. In the Bible, when you find a person that is dead, sometimes in the Old Testament, but many times in Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John, when you find a person that is dead physically, that is always going to be a picture of an unsaved person. When Christ or whoever raises them from the dead, it is a picture of that person getting saved and coming into the newness of life. Because here is the concept: if

you are here this morning and you are unsaved, whether you know it or not, you are a dead man or a dead woman. You are dead in the trespasses of sin. You may be walking around, but spiritually you are dead. So in the Bible, dead people are likened to unsaved people, and when Christ raised them from the dead, or back in the Old Testament one of the prophets did, or when Paul did in the book of Acts, when they raised them from the dead, it is a picture of an unsaved person getting saved and coming from the deadness of the sin into the newness of life in Christ Jesus. You see, that is what is the picture of.

Now, in your Bible, in Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John, you have three people who were dead people and got resurrected, and it illustrates the point that I am trying to tell you here: that as an unsaved person, you do not have any strength of your own to overcome anything that has got a hold on you in this life. In fact, the older you get, the worse it gets. You evolve it around people you know that were one way when they were thirty, and they get forty, and they get fifty, and they get sixty, and they get seventy, and the older they get, the more erratic they become, the more they get worse as they go on. I mean, that is just the way we are. We get set in our ways, we get cynical, stuff sets in, like the old song said, "You cannot teach an old dog new tricks." I mean, it is just the way it is.

- The Twelve-Year-Old Girl (Mark 5:40)
- The Young Man (Luke 7:14-15)
- Lazarus (John 11:44)