

Romans 8

Sunday 1/25/2009

We have seen all the way through now, and you can basically better understand, I hope, why the Book of Romans is such an absolutely incredible book for you to begin to learn and really understand. It deals with all the different aspects of the Christian life that you and I really need to see and understand. We talked about how salvation, how man gets saved. We've talked about sanctification. We've certainly focused on your walk with God and how all the things that we do for God play into that. We saw the aspect of the indwelling and the infilling of the Holy Spirit of God, and we looked at that great example. We talked about the process of how God imputes His righteousness to us and saw the great chapter on the flesh versus the spirit, the old nature versus the new nature. Remember, I gave you how the whole Book of Romans is basically built around twelve principles of salvation, and we went through those a couple of times and talked about that.

Now we've kind of landed in chapter 8, and what a great chapter this is that really shows the two aspects of the redemption of you and me: the redemption, one, of your soul, that's the day you got saved, and then of course, the redemption of our body, that's what's coming in the future rapture of the church. We've really been talking about all of the future events here that really figure into that and how we should walk after the Spirit now and not after the flesh. I think that Romans 8:5 was a great key where it talked about that we were to mind the things of the Spirit, clearly showing you and I that it's the mind of Christ that we have to get in us that we can really accomplish that.

And then remember last week we talked about the millennial reign of Christ, and we really detailed that out much like we did the rapture when we began to start Romans chapter 8. There's no use trying to understand all the aspects of how you and I were redeemed and how it applies in your life and my life without understanding those great two concepts. Obviously, the rapture of the church deals with the day that you and I get our glorified body. We went through that and laid it out very clearly and very plainly as we talked about that.

I. The Millennial Reign of Christ

Then last week we talked about the millennial reign of Christ. I showed you that the millennial reign of Christ, God has a millennium. When we defined the word millennium, I showed you, and you should know now, that that represents the thousand-year reign when Christ comes back on this planet. I showed you that God has a millennium for three reasons:

1. To put His Son on the throne, and we talked about that.
2. That Israel gets back all the land that God had given to them. We talked about that.
3. Where you and I get our millennial inheritance, and we talked about that.

That's the whole basis of what we were looking at last week. I broke it down not only in Romans chapter 8, but remember I took you back to Revelation 19-20. I showed you the two great chapters in the New Testament that basically show you the Second Coming and then take you right into the Millennium so you can get a context of it. Then we went back to Ezekiel 40-48.

You remember I broke those down almost chapter by chapter. I told you that Ezekiel 40-48 are the eight greatest chapters in all the Bible on the millennial reign of Christ, an incredible amount of detail in every aspect of what God is going to do when He comes back and establishes His kingdom.

But we particularly, when I got to chapter 47, and chapter 47 deals with the river, the water of life. I told you that this week we would take some time with this. I think this is probably one of the most incredible passages in the Bible that really helps you and I understand not only where we're at with the Lord, but really what God wants to accomplish in us and give you an understanding of it. I don't know how you deal with things, but I understand and I deal with things better when I understand what's going on around me. No one likes surprises. No one likes to be in something that you really don't understand what's going on. Christianity for many, many of God's people has to be one of the most confusing things that they've ever gotten into, and I feel bad about that because God never intended it to be that way.

So I think today, no matter wherever you're at in your relationship with the Lord Jesus Christ, I think you're going to go out of here today and you're going to understand what situation you're in and how you can improve that and just basically understand better where you're at in your own relationship with the Lord Jesus Christ. I think it'll help you. I told you last week that I'd take some time because of so many of you where you're at in the Lord. My week overflows. It's hard for me to find enough time to get every, in fact, in many cases we're meeting every other week, but in the last year or so, our church got to that point where it kind of hit the five-year mark. I began to see an underground movement in our church, basically an underground revival. It wasn't very flashy. It wasn't accompanied by lightning bolts and thunder and all of those things. Very quietly, without a lot of fanfare, people began to come to me and began to talk about the fact that they really want to accomplish something with the Lord. Many of them come from different backgrounds. Many of them have issues that they have to work through, some more severe than others. But it showed me that teaching the Word of God and the Holy Spirit of God, doing the work that He does, is really getting into some of your lives and bringing you to the point where you really want to accomplish something for the Lord before He comes back.

I know that we've talked about it. Some of you older Christians that are working with people or discipling them or working with them in the Bible, we've talked about it that you see it too. It's a great thing to have. It's a great problem to have if you want to look at it that way. But it's people like you, and I speak to most of you here today because most of you are kind of in that boat that I want to help you today. I think this will define a lot of things for you if you're someone who's just trying to get into this and trying to see how this process of spiritual growth really works. My goal for you is that you get everything out of the Bible and everything from God that God has for you. That ought to be your goal. Your goal ought to be such today that once you become a child of God, you want everything that God has for you.

Now there's a process by which that happens. It just doesn't happen by you coming to church for 20 or 30 years. It doesn't happen because you don't give so much amount of money or you – it doesn't even happen because you study the Bible a lot, though that's obviously an intricate part of it. It happens because a process begins in your life. I don't know of any place in the Bible that

explains this process better than Ezekiel chapter 47. Now I know you've probably, some of you, read Ezekiel chapter 47 last week and you're saying right now, "Oh, I just read it and I don't see where it's got anything for me." Well, hang on, you will before we're done today as we go through the Word of God.

You know, as a pastor, and I think every pastor ought to do this, as a pastor I try never to miss an opportunity to give you something that's really going to help you. Part of my job, even when I'm teaching you the Bible, and we're coming through something in Romans chapter 8, when I see something in there that is so pertinent to where many of you are at, my responsibility is not to just gloss over that. I'm in no hurry to get out of Romans. My job in Romans will be done when we understand as a church and you understand as individuals these great principles that you need to have into your life. But I never try to miss an opportunity to really give you something that I think will really help you. I think that this is really going to help you.

II. The Pastor's Role

I remember years ago I sat down with my father in the Lord, Mel Sabaka. Oh, I didn't even tell you this. Only Mel could do this. It would have been three Sundays ago, three Sundays ago on a Sunday afternoon, Mel died. I'll let you get that out of your system for a minute. He died and they brought him back to life. He had a massive heart attack and they brought him back to life and went into the hospital and they put a pacemaker in him. He had been really tired and really going through where he was just fatigued. He couldn't, I mean, he'd get up and he'd try to preach and he had no fire like he used to have, and he'd just get up and preach about 15-20 minutes. He'd have to stay in bed for two days just to recoup. Well, I guess three Sundays ago, I guess it would have been three Sundays now, three Sundays ago he had a heart attack and they lost him. He actually died. And then of course they did whatever medical profession do and they brought him back to life and they put a pacemaker in him. Doctors said that probably the pacemaker will restore him back to what he should be, that he will have all the energy that he didn't have before. But I neglected to tell you that. I didn't want to make a big deal about it because I didn't have all my facts. It was kind of drilling into me and I finally got a complete thing together and I didn't want somebody else to hear it other than hear first. But they lost him and found him again all in the same day, and only Mel Shabaka could do that. I don't know what he's going to ever preach now because I grew up hearing him preach his famous messages about dying and going to heaven. I bet you a hundred times I've heard him say, 500 times I've heard him say, "If I ever die and I'm dead there flipping around on the floor, don't bring me back. And if somebody does bring me back, I'm going to hunt that person down who kept me from going home to heaven." So I'm sure there's a doctor someplace in hiding wherever he's living at down there in Florida.

But anyway, I remember I sat down with him years and years and years ago, and we would go through things where he would tell me great concepts about being a pastor. He's probably of all the pastors I've met in my life, I've seen some good ones. He's probably the one that in my mind stands out and I really pattern my ministry after. He told me, I remember him saying, "You know what? The job of a pastor is basically eight things." He says, "If you want to be a pastor," he

says, “learn how to do these eight things well.” He says, “These eight things all have to do with the Bible, but it just isn’t the fact that you can get up and teach the Bible. It isn’t even a fact that a pastor gets up and even has to know the Bible.” He said, “That’s all important, but a good pastor has to do eight things really well.” I never forgot that, and I really worked in my own life, not that I think that I have all these eight down, but I really took that to heart and really looked at that. To me, this has always been the standard for me for ministry.

He used to tell us that when you preach a sermon, you need to have multiples of these. He said, “Maybe you can’t have all of these in there, but every sermon you preach as a pastor, you had to have goals out of these eight that you try to accomplish.”

- The pastor needs to relate to his people. That means like when I get up and teach the Word of God, that I’m not up here and you’re down here someplace and we miss each other in the middle.
- A good pastor needs to be able to educate. The Bible talks about a pastor needs to be apt to teach and educate you in things that you need to know.
- A good pastor needs to be able to elevate, and that is to bring you from the depths of whatever you’re struggling in and get you to the point where you feel like you’re worth something.
- A good pastor needs to be able to motivate.
- A good pastor needs to be able to regenerate.
- A good pastor needs to be able to duplicate.
- A good pastor needs to be able to accelerate.
- A good pastor needs to be able to placate.

Now if you don’t know what the word placate means, it means bring the younger Christians along or baby Christians along to get their notes better and enjoyed about something, and sometimes even older Christians when they don’t have a handle on the principles very well. But that’s basically what the ministry is, he told me. He says, “A good pastor is a guy who finds out how to do these eight things and then accomplishes them.”

Now I looked at today and coming through this, and today we have a great opportunity. We have a great opportunity to first of all, educate you because I want to help you see your spiritual growth in a way you probably have never looked at it before. I think it’s going to educate you. It’s going to help you. The next thing we’re going to be able to do today is relate to you. I’m going to show you how you take this thing in Ezekiel chapter 47, which by at first reading looks like it has absolutely nothing to do with you and I, and show you how it relates to where you’re at. Obviously, my goal through this is to motivate you, to help you come to the point where you see yourself as you are, that maybe it helps you through your struggles, and I’m sure that some of you have struggled this week. So I want to accomplish the fourth thing then by this is I want to elevate you. I want to lift you up. I want to edify you. I don’t want you going out of here today with your tail between your legs. This is not one of those kind of messages, and sometimes those messages need to be preached. This is not one of them. My goal today is to educate you. My goal today is to help you relate. My goal today is to help motivate you. My goal today is to help elevate you. But most of all, my goal today is to help accelerate you.

There are certain things that I can do or a good pastor can do. There are certain things that a pastor can do that will save you a lot of time and a lot of work for you to get what you got to get. It took me probably, I'd say, 25, maybe 30 years to really learn the Bible. It took me that long to get my Bible where I'm as comfortable with it as I am today. I got a long way to go, and I certainly don't know much of, I mean, there's a lot of people know it no better than I do, but the bottom line is this: I know it a lot better than when I started, and it probably took me, you know, 25, 30 years to really get my Bible to the place where I'm comfortable with it, that I can stand on a Thursday night or stand on a wherever I go and let anybody shoot questions at me about the Bible and feel relatively secure that I can go to the Bible and give them an answer. It probably took me that long to get it all together. I could take a young man or a young lady out of this crowd, and if I had them to the degree that I would like to have them, I could take that 25 or 30 years that it took me and I could get you to that point where you had a very good working knowledge of the Bible probably in five to ten years. Certainly have you well on your way in five.

Now you know what that's called? That's called me spending 25, 30 years getting something and then finding a way to accelerate it to you so you don't have to spend the same amount of time to get it, and then you can move out and do something for the Lord. That's the way it's supposed to work in ministry. Now, the reason why it doesn't many times is because I can do my part. I have designed our ministry and everything about it to help you facilitate, to help you accelerate it from the discipleship for you coming over one on one to the Institute that we have and all the things that go along with that, from the books of the Bible we come through to everything we do, and including Thursday night where you have a chance to vent your questions about where you're at and what you're studying. All that is designed for these areas right here, but most of all to help you accelerate. I can do my job, but if you don't do yours as far as taking the material and putting yourself into a structure where you begin to study and learn the Bible, you'll never have it.

Most people study the Bible like a guy shooting a shotgun. There's a big blast and a big loud noise, but it all spreads out very quickly, and you got a lot of little pinholes everywhere, and all those little pinholes, all those little BBs and different things in the Bible that you're trying to study at the same time, and you just jump from place to place to place to place to place. Some of God's people have never figured it out that that's not the way you learn the Bible. The Bible is not a shotgun. It is a rifle with telescopic sights, and you have to put the crosshairs on one subject at a time. You have to learn it one book at a time, one issue at a time, one doctrine at a time, and then you put it all together. Of course, my ministry by design, that's what I try to accomplish, and you know, it's my goal is to accelerate you.

Now one of the early things that I learned in the Bible as I was a young man was the importance of types in the Bible. Types illustrate great Bible truths that help put the Bible and our Christian life in perspective. Types in the Bible, and I'm going to explain them here in a minute, and I'm going to show you what I'm talking about. Types in the Bible accelerate you. Types in the Bible takes a story that matches up with a biblical principle that when you read the story, the principle is illustrated in the story, therefore grasping it faster than just somebody giving you the principle.

I don't know how it works with you, but with me, I like books with pictures in them. I like things that are illustrated. That's why I love that chart, and that's why, you know, everybody wanted everything in the church and that was fine, but I only wanted one thing, well, two things, and I wanted my pulpit. I need to put a hundred and first airborne eagle on the front of the Bible. I wanted my pulpit and I wanted that chart because that chart is a visual of the whole Bible. Now in time, that whole chart right there needs to be in your mind, and that needs to formulate the type and a picture of what the Bible represents. When you ask me a question on Thursday night or when you come over, my chart is in my mind, and when you ask me a question, it relates to that chart, your question, and I visualize it, and then because of that, then I can accelerate into the Bible when I get the answer and I show you what's going on. That's what you need to do in time. That's what types do for you. Types in the Bible accelerate us and our ability through a story to grasp great truth or many times multiple truths at one sitting.

Now what you're going to get today, I don't know of any other place I can go in the Bible, and I would be hard pressed to show you a better passage or a better type in the Bible than Ezekiel 47:1-9 that illustrates how you as a young Christian right now, where you're at, show you the process of spiritual growth. Today I'm not going to just give you a lot of theological terms. I'm not going to send you out of here today with a lot of things that I just give you that you have to go home and try to crack the nuts yourself. No, no, no, I'm going to show you by one of the greatest types and typologies in the Bible, every aspect of your Christian walk and walking in the Spirit and the process of your spiritual growth in your life where you can grasp it, better understand it, and then understand why you're going through some of the things you are, and I think it's going to really help you, and I think it will really accelerate you.

III. Ezekiel 47: The River of Life

Now we're going to go to Ezekiel chapter 47, and I said I'd be hard pressed to find any other place in the Bible that really accomplishes this or really does this. Now I'm going to get into reading here in verse 1, and we didn't get into this last week. I basically told you that what you have here is a picture of the sanctuary and the river of water that comes out of this. I'm going to start reading here in Ezekiel 47:1.

Ezekiel 47:1-9

1 Afterward he brought me again unto the door of the house; and, behold, waters issued out from under the threshold of the house eastward: for the forefront of the house stood toward the east, and the waters came down from under from the right side of the house, at the south side of the altar.

2 Then brought he me out of the way of the gate northward, and led me about the way without unto the utter gate by the way that looketh eastward; and, behold, there ran out waters on the right side.

3 And when the man that had the line in his hand went forth eastward, he measured a thousand cubits, and he brought me through the waters; the waters were to the ankles.

4 Again he measured a thousand, and brought me through the waters; the waters were to the knees. Again he measured a thousand, and brought me through; the waters were to the loins.

5 Afterward he measured a thousand; and it was a river that I could not pass over: for the waters were risen, waters to swim in, a river that could not be passed over.

6 And he said unto me, Son of man, hast thou seen this? Then he brought me, and caused me to return to the brink of the river.

7 Now when I had returned, behold, at the bank of the river were very many trees on the one side and on the other.

8 Then said he unto me, These waters issued out toward the east country, and go down into the desert, and go into the sea: which being brought forth into the sea, the waters shall be healed.

9 And it shall come to pass, that every thing that liveth, which moveth, whithersoever the rivers shall come, shall live: and there shall be a very great multitude of fish, because these waters shall come thither: for they shall be healed; and every thing shall live whither the river cometh.

Father, we thank you and praise you for the Lord Jesus. We love you today. Lord, help me to make this plain. Lord, there's so many good people in here today that really want to give their lives to you. There's so many good people here today that really want to grow and do everything in these last days before the Lord comes back. And Lord, help me today. Help me to accomplish those eight things that many, many, many years ago I was told as a young man, as I said, at my mentor's feet. And he taught me and showed me all the great things that I needed to do. And Lord, help me today to be able to communicate. Help me today, Lord, to be able to put all of these things together, that these people, your people, Lord, may grow spiritually and have everything that they need. And Lord, we'll be careful to give you all the honor and the glory and the praise. We'll thank you for it, and we ask you now in Jesus' name to open up the book, open up our hearts, open up our minds, and show us these great mighty things. And show us how this book is put together with all these great pictures that you have that will help accelerate us in understanding how to have a relationship with you. We'll thank you. In Jesus' name, for his sake we ask it. Amen.

Now this passage, as you read it here, you're probably asking yourself, "What in the world, how in the world is he going to get my spiritual life out of this passage?" Well doctrinally, obviously, and we talked about this last week, and so we need to see this, doctrinally this passage is dealing with Christ coming back into the Millennium. In the Millennium, over in Jerusalem, they built a temple. Right now on the Temple Mount, the Muslims have the Dome of the Rock. It's built on that piece of ground that Solomon's Temple was built on. It's built on a piece of ground, and all the way back in Samuel, David bought the thrashing floor from Araunah and then built the altar there, and that became the altar and became the temple. Today the Muslims have it, and on it is built the Dome of the Rock. But when Christ comes back, the Millennial Temple is going to be built on that exact same spot. What else you have here, and in these eight chapters, is a picture of this Millennial Temple.

Now in Ezekiel chapter 47, here's what you have. When He builds this temple, there's an altar, and underneath that altar comes out a flowing river of water. Remember when Christ met the woman at the well over there in John 4, and she was lost, and He told her about He had water that if she would drink the water, she'd never thirst again. Water in the Bible is a picture of two things: it's a picture of the Holy Spirit of God and it's a picture of the Word of God. This literal temple in the Millennium has a river flowing out of it, and that river flows out of it, and the Bible says it comes down into the Dead Sea. Right now the Dead Sea is dead. It's dead because the salt content is so high in the Dead Sea that you can't even drown in the Dead Sea. If you jumped off a ship way over your head, you'd float like a cork. You know why? Because there's so much salt content in the Dead Sea that you can't sink. You just bob up and down. Of course, nothing can live in it either. In fact, the Dead Sea is probably where Sodom and Gomorrah was, and the reason why it's called the Salt Sea or the Dead Sea is because of the fact that that's where Sodom and Gomorrah were when God rained fire and brimstone down on them. It turned that water and that place, and then it filled up with water and it became the Dead Sea today. I think it was back in 1976 that they actually found two of the cities. There were five cities that He destroyed. They found two of the cities on the north end of that, which would represent where Sodom and Gomorrah probably was. One of the great mysteries of the Bible that is cracked through the Word of God.

But anyway, this water comes out of the throne. Now remember the theme of the Millennium is Christ is on the throne. Everything is running perfectly. Perfect weathers, perfect animals, everything is fine. We get our glorified bodies back. We talked about it last week that the manifestation, that even the creation and the creatures are waiting for the manifestation of the sons of God, you and me to get our glorified bodies. When that kingdom steps up, that water comes out of that altar down to the Dead Sea. The Dead Sea gets life, all that comes back alive again. This is where the Bible says the desert now blooms like a rose, which is one now today. If you go over to the Middle East, it looks like a cat's litter box. When Christ comes back, it looks like the Garden of Eden. And then that river comes out of the Dead Sea. It goes eastward into the Mediterranean. The Bible says in that passage that wherever the water goes, it gives life and it heals. See? Now that's literally. That's literally. And that's what you have.

IV. Seven Stages of Spiritual Growth

You know, a while back I preached you a sermon. It's been quite a while ago. I preached you a message on the seven stages of your spiritual growth. I told you that every child of God goes through these seven stages. We talked about how that the Bible relates to them, talks about them. But when you put them into a contrast study, it'll show you and me that when I got saved, I began immediately to move through these seven stages of spiritual growth. Not very fast, but we all should move through them. We talked about that when a person first gets saved, the Bible talks about that they're like babes in Christ. As babies, they desire the sincere milk of the word. So we have Christians that are just like newborn babies. Now you have to take care of them.

Then we talked about the fact that those little babies grow up and become like little children, much like we have in our elementary division, Maddie's age and some of your other kids' age

and Kinsey's age, and they're little children. Then they grow to the next stage to become like children. That would be, you know, probably in their adolescent years, I mean like eight, nine, ten, eleven, somewhere in there, twelve. And then the Bible talks about young men. The characteristic about young men is their strength. This is where in your Christian life and in my Christian life, when you come to that point that you begin to exercise your spiritual gifts. You begin to be used of the Bible. You begin to, the Bible begins to take hold in your life. You begin to do something with it. You don't miss any opportunities. As a guy said, when a guy preached a sermon the other night, and it was a great sermon, and he said, "You know what?" He says, "Most Christians never miss an opportunity to miss an opportunity." He said the mark of someone that has got to the point in their life where they're really doing something for God is someone who never misses an opportunity to witness for Christ or to give a testimony wherever he can. Of course, that would be the young men.

Then we moved into what we call the, what I call the last three. That would be the fathers. Fathers are someone who now, as the Bible says, has to take responsibility. See, even when you get married and you have, you know, just you and your wife, you're pretty much footloose and fancy free to do whatever you want. But that all changes the moment the first bambino shows up. So once you, that's Spanish for baby, by the way, I am bilingual. You get, once the baby shows up, it all changes. Your life is no longer your own anymore. That little baby, just as small as it is, now tells you everything you're supposed to do. And if you don't do it, you hear about it. And now you have tremendous responsibility. You can't run off and do whatever you want to do. You can't go fishing or hunting whenever you want to. You can't, you got to keep a job. You got to keep responsibility. You got to keep doing this. You got to keep making sure you feed them and take care of them and teach them right. You see where that comes, responsibility in Christian hands the same way. Some of you will grow up to the place where you will become profitable in the ministry. This is where I mark the profitability of ministry, where you start to take some kind of responsibility and you do it well.

Then the next stage we talked about in the Bible is what we call elders. Elders in the Bible are men and women who come to a point in their life. Elders is not an office. It's a, it's a position. It's not like a deacon or a pastor. Those are offices in a church. An elder position is not an office. You have women elders in the Bible, and it talks about the elder women teaching the younger gals and the elder men being a help to the pastor. So there's the elders in it. And then of course, the last one, the seventh one, is the aged. That would be somebody that's been around so long that, you know, they, they, they really understand and, and, and have the ministry and have the aspect of, of the Bible down in such a way that they can really, really be a benefit to everybody that's around them. You know what? Today as we sit here this morning, you can put yourself in one of those positions, and you can put yourself in one of those seven characteristics, and you know where you're at better than I do. I mean, you basically can put yourself in one of those positions.

From my perspective as pastors, when I look at the church, we're a very young church, but around a little over five years, and I look at you, and many of you are growing, many of you are coming to the point of, when I view the church, and if I would be asked by somebody to put my

church into that kind of scenario, I would basically say this just so you know where my perspective is. I'd say that we got a handful of fathers. Now the father position is, is different levels because you're a father of little babies, then you're a father of adolescents, and you're a father of teenagers, and then your father when they go out and get married. So the father aspect has some levels to it, but I'd say that this church has a handful of fathers on different levels, has zero elders, and has zero aged, but in time that needs to change. This is my whole message today. My whole message today is about your progress and your spiritual growth and how you go through these levels and get to the next level and, and put it all together and become profitable as you grow spiritually.

V. The Process of Spiritual Growth

Now inspiration in Ezekiel chapter 47, this is what you have a picture of. This is your type. You have a picture of our spiritual growth, the process that takes us from newborn babies and brings you into the last three, which is all that I'm really interested in. I love little kids and I love, I love babies and I love all of that, but you know what? You can't get anything done with them. You've got to give to them constantly, and that's fine, but nobody wants to go into a nursery. Nobody wants to work in the elementary. If you walked into the nursery and there's a guy that's 28 years old hanging out of the crib, you know, with his big hairy legs out the front and a little diaper on and a, you know, in a bottle in his mouth, and he's 28, 29, 30 years old, nobody wants to, nobody wants to deal with that. Just like you shouldn't want to deal with that in a nursery, churches shouldn't have Christians that are babies for a long time. You need to grow, and as you grow, here's the process, and the acceleration part of this today is you're going to get an inside look at what ought to be going on in your life. It'll help you better understand it. It'll help me better understand how to help you, and it's an, it's one of the most incredible things, and as I said earlier, I would be hard pressed to find another place that would help you in such a short time understand what we're trying to get across in Romans chapter 8.

Now I need to say this, and I'm going to say about four things today that are absolutely essential that you need to get down. You can forget everything else I'm saying except these four things. I will tell you where they're at. This is number one: you've got to understand this aspect. Now this growth process only happens as you and I continue to grow spiritually. When you stop growing spiritually, it stops in your life. Your growth depends on your continual walking in the Spirit of God. Your goal of your life, and we're going to see it here in just a moment, should be to learn to walk by faith and not by sight.

Romans 8:14

For as many as are led by the Spirit of God, they are the sons of God.

Romans 8:1

There is therefore now no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus, who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit.

The first thing I want you to know here, wherever you're at in your spiritual growth, and I don't care, I've never cared where anybody is at. Some people come, they get saved, and then they begin to grow from there. Some people come in, they've been saved for a long time, but nobody ever took the time to help them grow spiritually, and they've been saved for five, ten, fifteen years, but they never really got plugged into the Bible. So when you come here, you see the opportunity to learn the Bible, to get the Bible, and you get plugged in. I never care where you're at, but I always do care that you are continually growing because that is the first thing you have to see. This growth process only happens as you and I continue to grow. You stop growing, it stops in your life, and your growth depends on continually walking in the Spirit of God.

D.L. Moody, one time, who was a great preacher, and I love little quips that I find about great guys that really did a great job for the Lord. He was a great preacher, and Moody was in great demand as a preacher. One time a particular church that had Moody like four or five years in a row, and some of the deacons in the church, some of the people in the church didn't like Moody because he stepped on their toes and ruined their little power struggles and all that. When the pastor and the committee sat down and they said, "I make a ruling and a motion that we invite D.L. Moody back for a revival this year." And one of the old gruff deacons that wasn't happy about it, he says, "We're going to have him back again? Why? Is Moody got some kind of corner on the Holy Spirit of God that he's the only guy we can have?" One of the old deacons looked at him and he said, "You know what, pal? I don't think that Moody has got a corner on the Holy Spirit, but I do believe the Holy Spirit's got the corner on Moody." And that's the difference. It's not how much of you have of God, it's you got all of that when you get saved. It's after you get saved, how much of you does God have? See, that's the key.

Now I'm going to show you how this thing works. Now look at Ezekiel chapter 47, and here we go. Let's read verses 1 through 3. We're going to break this down a little bit so you can grasp it. Here's what it says:

Ezekiel 47:1-3

1 Afterward he brought me again unto the door of the house; and, behold, waters issued out from under the threshold of the house eastward: for the forefront of the house stood toward the east, and the waters came down from under from the right side of the house, at the south side of the altar.

2 Then brought he me out of the way of the gate northward, and led me about the way without unto the utter gate by the way that looketh eastward; and, behold, there ran out waters on the right side.

3 And when the man that had the line in his hand went forth eastward, he measured a thousand cubits, and he brought me through the waters; the waters were to the ankles.

Now let me show you, and this will be a good example for you, that whenever you get into a passage like this, this is where you let the Word of God open itself up to you. Look at the first thing we're going to look at here: the house. The house we find a house in verse 1. Now we already know that historically and doctrinally that house is the temple in the Millennium. But we

also know that the Bible says in the New Testament, you and I are the temple. "What? Know ye not that your body is the temple of the Holy Ghost which is in you, which ye have of God?" So that house there represents historically the Millennial Temple, but it also represents your body and my body because as New Testament Christians today, your body and my body is God's house, God's temple. Now you could take that one step further, and if you're a father and you have children, you have a wife, you're responsible for that, that could also mean your household, who you're responsible for taking care of your house.

The next thing I want you to see is I want you to see that this water, and we don't have time to get into all this today, I want you to see that this water flows out the right side. Remember when the Christ was hanging on the cross and that Roman soldier took that spear and put it into His side, the right side? What came out? Water and blood. I don't have time to get into significance of that. You go over to 1 John, it'll begin to lay it out even more. There's something significant about the water and the blood that come out of His side, and when you put it all together, you find out that everything about Christ and God will always be on the right side. The Bible says when Christ went up to heaven, He sat down on the right hand of the side of God. You're going to find that it always represents, it always represents something connected with the Word of God.

Now look at the next thing. Look at verse 3. Now this is where it really gets good, I think, anyhow. Of course, that's just me. The next thing you see, "And when the man that had the line in his hand went forth eastward, he measured a thousand cubits, and he brought me through the waters; the waters were to the ankles." You know the next thing you see if this thing represents, now here's what you got. Here's what you got. I'm going to give you the answer, then we're going to come back. Here's what you got. You got it. The picture here, the type here, is a man wading into this river that is a type of the Holy Spirit of God, and him by going by faith farther and deeper each day of his life shows you and I the process, the process of our spiritual growth because this river is a picture of the Holy Spirit of God, and that picture here is a man wading into this river that represents God's Holy Spirit and getting deeper in his walk every day as he walks through this, and it's a picture of your life in my life as we grow spiritually and walk into faith.

Now the thing that I want you to see here is this: there is a way to measure your spiritual growth. Every Christian sitting in this room, and maybe if you're basically a young Christian, you don't know how to do it yet, but in time every child of God needs to measure your spiritual growth. Now there's a way to do that. In fact, there's two ways in the Bible. We're not going to get into it this morning, but you ought to get to the point, we'll cover it in time. I'm sure somebody will ask you on Thursday night or we'll get into it one-on-one if you really care about it. But I'm telling you this, every child of God needs to be able to measure their spiritual growth. Now this guy has a measuring rod in his hand, and it's a picture that as we go down through here, he measures your progress as you walk into this river, which represents the Holy Spirit of God, which represents your, your, your walking in the Spirit and your growth spiritually as you come through.

Now the second thing I want you to see about this part here is it's, it's, it's given in thousand, thousand cubit increments. Now a cubit traditionally in the Bible is the point from the end of a

man's elbow to the top of his finger, and it's typically two and a half feet depending on the size of the man, they say anyway, anywhere from between two and a half feet to three feet. In the old time before they had, you know, the tape measures and all that, if a guy was going to cut something, he had to measure it this way, and he measured it by a cubit. In fact, I got to tell you here, David, this thing is exactly one cubit from here to here. It's even biblically, and it's done. Did you do that with your cubit hand? No, you didn't. Okay, well, God inspired you then through your tape measure. I don't want to tell you.

Now with that in mind, here's what you got. That translates into us 3,000 feet. That translates, a thousand cubits translates to us and our lingo, language of measurement, is somewhere around 2,500 to 3,000 feet. Have you ever tried to wade through the water for 3,000 feet? That's over a half a mile. My 5,280 feet, that's over a half a mile. My point is this: the process is never fast in your spiritual growth. You can't get in a hurry. You can't live a life of what you wanted to do for 20 years, suddenly get saved on Sunday and in Monday, Tuesday, Wednesday, Thursday, and Friday you're going to have it all together. It's a process. It's a process that any good pastor or any good discipler or any good person that's working, he will say, "Don't get in a hurry. Get in a hurry, but don't get in a hurry. Don't be like a days are going out study, but don't take what you study and think I got to be here tomorrow." Well, if Jesus is going to come back, if I don't get out of the world of Christ tomorrow, I don't get in ministry or I don't be a pastor, if I don't be a missionary, but I'll be this and that in the next three weeks, I'm going to blow the whole thing. That's never God's timetable. The first thing you got to realize about this as you begin to look at this type as a man walking in this water and he's moving into this river and this river represents the Holy Spirit of God is that there is a way to measure it, and as you measure it, it's measurement in increments of 3,000 feet. It's never a fast process. The problem with most of us is not what we get. Most of us are great collectors of Bible information. We just never do anything with it. Here's a picture of a man wading into a river that is a type of the Holy Spirit of God, and he is going by faith farther and deeper each day of his life.

Now look at the next thing you got to see. Look at verse 5. This is why I talk about walking by faith and not by sight. You're already told in verse 5 that this river is impossible to pass over. Now why would God send you into a river and tell you to start wading into it and then tell you, "Oh, by the way, you're never going to make it to the other side"? You see how this thing begins to formulate itself once you understand New Testament principles. The first thing you, I mean, if we stay with a thousand measurements, and when a time we get out here, we're three or four thousand, this river is six, eight thousand cubits. This river is over two miles across. Why would God purposely tell you to start wading into a river and at the same time tell you, "Oh, by the way, there's no way you can't ever get to the other side," but go ahead and do it anyhow? You know why? Because to cross this river, here comes the next thing, you've got to come to the end of yourself. You and your, your abilities, you and all the good things you can do, and some of you can really do some good things, and God can use those good things. But my point is this: when it comes to walking by faith, it's you and Him, and your goal and my goal is to begin walking into a river that you are already told you'll never get to the other side because in spiritual growth, in becoming everything that God wants you to be, you have to come to the end of self. You have to put away that human spirit and endeavor. Why? Because there's no way

humanly possible. This is a suicide mission. This is a one-way ticket. God is sending you and me into this river that is over two miles across that's going to be way over my head before I get too much farther out, and He says, "Walk in that river and start going through it, and oh, by the way, you're never going to make it because you can't get to the other side."

Now when we're finished our study by next week, we won't get through this today, we'll find out that first of all, God never intended you to get to the other side, and we'll see why. But the thing that I want you to see right now today is it is humanly impossible that you have absolutely nothing when it comes to your walking by faith and not by sight for you getting the things of God in your life and your spiritual growth. It's one place that your great abilities have to put aside, and you have to come back and completely do it by faith. You cannot cross over this river in your own power. That brings up another great study we could study, which we won't have time to do this morning, and that's the study of crossing over in the Bible. Crossing over in the Bible, every time you find it, the nation of Israel crossing over the Red Sea, the nation of Israel a little bit later on, 40 years, crossing over Jordan, the crossing of, the crossing of David at the Brook of Kidron, you're going to find that every time in the Bible you find somebody crossing over something, it represents in our spiritual relationship with God leaving the old and moving into the new. As the Bible says, "If any man be in Christ, he is a new creature: old things are passed away; behold, all things are become new." Let me break that down into a simpler translation. That simply means you're passed over. You left the old, you're into the new. This is a tremendous chapter. You will leave here today, and I know a lot of people are sick today, but I'm telling you this was not a weekend to get sick. This thing will help you unbelievably.

Now look at verse 3. All right, now here's what we've looked at. We've looked now that there's water coming out of this temple. It's a type of the Holy Spirit of God. We've looked at the fact that this guy is comes out of here and he's told to begin to walk into this water, and he's already told in verse 5 that he can't get to the other side. We find out that has to do with somebody's house, and we have to see, we are, next thing we see is some, there's a process by which this man's progress. Now remember now, the water, the river is a picture of the Holy Spirit of God. The man going in is a picture of you and me getting more into the Spirit of God and getting more of God and Him getting more of you through a natural process of spiritual growth, and yet we now know there's a way to measure that. There's a way to measure that.

Now look at verse 3: "And he brought me through the waters; the waters were to the ankles." Now I don't know if you know it or not, but ankles in the Bible represent an incredible picture. It's a picture of your walk with God. You know how hard it is to walk with a broken ankle or a sprained ankle? Ankles are really the key part of your foot that really enables you to do everything that you do, and ankles represented here represents the beginning of your walk with God, the process, the beginning process of you beginning to walk with God.

Two of the greatest studies you'll take to go along with this in the Bible is Enoch in Genesis chapter 5, which really is a picture of your life in my life because the Bible says that Enoch walked with God and was not, for God took him. Enoch gets raptured out just like you and I are going to get raptured out, and the Bible says that Enoch walked with God, a great example of our walk with God. The Bible says he walked with God for over 300 years. Genesis chapter 6, you

find our second man who is a great study of a walk with God, and that's Noah. Yet we know that the Bible says that Noah walked with God, and in a time that he walked in, the Bible says that as it was in the days of Noah, so shall it be in the coming of the Son of man. Two men, two men who the Bible specifically said, now I know you got thousands of people in the Bible that had a relationship with God and walked with Him, but here's two men that the Bible specifically said walked with God. You know why? Because one represents the time of you and me at the rapture, the other one's the time you and me and what we're living in right now. They're key. They're key. And yet I guarantee you, I guarantee you when you study Enoch's life, there's not a lot said about him. You won't find that Enoch just woke up one day and said, "I'm going to walk with God." There was a process in his life. I don't think Noah woke up one morning and just simply said, "I'm going to build an ark." There was a process in his life, just like there's a process in your life and my life.

Now your ankles, you see, when you get into this thing and you get saved, and this is where so many of you are at right now, you're in this thing called Christianity, but you're not in very far. You're learning how to walk. Oh, you came in and you maybe, you maybe just got saved or you're just getting plugged in. You know, right now, you know what you're, what you're doing is strengthening your ankles. You're being disciplined. You're coming to Thursday night Bible study and taking notes down. You're doing what many of you are doing this morning, writing this down. You're going to take it home. You're strengthening your ankles. You're learning how to walk. Many of you are coming over to see me one-on-one. We're going through structured things that would help when you get to the point that you want to get. Many of you are being disciplined or you're working with somebody, and you're, and you're getting through that, and you're going through. We've got a number of little groups that are taking the Song of Solomon New Year's Eve, and they're taking somebody, older guys are taking the younger Christians, and they're walking them through, breaking that down. In other words, when you know what all that means, if I take all the things that we're doing in so many young Christians' lives, when we want to consolidate it into one little concept, it's simply this: we're strengthening your ankles. We're beginning to show you how to walk.

We have a saying in life, have a couple of them. Maybe you new young fang-dangle Christian, don't talk about him anymore, a kid, don't be a Christian, but that's old folks, we know, we've heard it. Somebody say, "What's the matter? You're afraid to get your feet wet?" Ever heard that one? Somebody gets in there and somebody says, "Come on in, the water's fine." That's the job, by the way, of every pastor, every spiritual leader, is whenever you get an opportunity to tell the younger people, "Hey, come on in, the water's fine." Ask the question every Sunday, "What's the matter? You're afraid to get your feet wet?"

Now I've always envied people who can just jump in a swimming pool. Some of you know, up here we go swimming someplace or something, and the water's cold, you just dive right in. I've never been that kind of person. I never been, I walk around, I'll put my foot in it, it's cold. You know, you know, now if I would just dive in and let the water get over me, it's like being killed, it's over in a second, but it's cold and I don't like, you know what? And so what I do is like all idiots, is I'll start wading in, and I suppose when you wade in, if you just wade around a little bit,

and then, then there's you splashers who know what I'm doing and then want to come up and splash me with cold water. For you is reserved the lowest hell, I want you to know that. And I walk in there and you move up, and then when you get up here, it's okay in your legs, but for me, I can't speak for you, it's my upper torso on my back, and when you start to walk in and that cold water starts to come up, now what you ought to do is just jump in and get it over with. No, no, no, not me. Okay, so then you do this. Okay, get it ready. Sooner or later, sooner or later, you got to take the plunge. When I get up enough nerve and finally say, "This looks stupid, everybody's laughing, I'm making fun of me," that I just, I look like Mark Spitz and I just jump in and get the whole thing taken care of. But you know what? That's the way a lot of Christians are, and my advice to you is, "Come on in, the water is fine." Yes, there's a process. Yes, you're going to have to go through and you're going to have to wade in, but I'm telling you, don't be afraid to get your feet wet. And right now many of you, and this is why I wanted to preach this message to you, many of you are strengthening your ankles because your ankles are going to represent the beginning of your walk with God and the importance of a really good foundation in the Bible.

When I talk about a foundation, I'm not talking about just knowing the books of the Bible, not talking about just knowing who they, all the thing. I'm talking about understanding Bible principles, how to apply the Word of God into your life. In Luke chapter 6, you don't even have to turn to it if you don't want to. I'll read it to you. It's not that big a deal, but it's something that I've always really followed. In fact, if you look at our discipleship lessons, I put this little story, and it's another type, I put this little story at the beginning of our discipleship lesson to illustrate what we're trying to accomplish in discipleship, but it also illustrates what I'm trying to say to you today.

Luke 6:47-49

47 Whosoever cometh to me, and heareth my sayings, and doeth them, I will shew you to whom he is like:

48 He is like a man which built an house, and digged deep, and laid the foundation on a rock: and when the flood arose, the stream beat vehemently upon that house, and could not shake it: for it was founded upon a rock.

49 But he that heareth, and doeth not, is like a man that without a foundation built an house upon the earth; against which the stream did beat vehemently, and immediately it fell; and the ruin of that house was great.

Now that rock there is the principles of the Word of God. That man there should be you and me. The house can be your own temple or your house or your family, and what it's saying is there that the bedrock, when the time, bad times come, when all the storms of life comes, when everything happens, and this really comes into your children's world with the three little pigs, you know, one of them built a house of stone, one built a house of hay, one built all the things that the job, and see to Christ, and what you have here is that, that when the storms come, this house stands because its foundation is on a rock, and that rock is going to be the Bible and the biblical principles that keeps you stable in an unstable environment.

Now let's go on and read the rest of the story: "But he that heareth, and doeth not." Now I can't, can't pass this up. Look at verse 47 again: "Whosoever cometh to me, and heareth my sayings, and doeth them." You see, there's two aspects to it. It doesn't do you any good. Like I said earlier, most of God's people are collectors of truth. They're not applicators of truth. You can collect all the truth in the Bible. You can have your Bible so filled with notes. You can have every book that Ruckman wrote, every tape that I ever did. You can have every book by Pink or Larkin or everybody in the whole wide world, and if you are not applying what you're reading, you are wasting your time. It doesn't say just who heareth. It says, "heareth my sayings and doeth them."

"But he that heareth, and doeth not, verse 49, is like a man that without a foundation built an house upon the earth; against which the streams did beat vehemently, and immediately it fell; and the ruin of that house was great." Hey, I can take that story right there and tell you right now why some of you will not be here this time next year. I hate to say that. It's the reason that some were here last year or not here today. This study, this type, this picture, it answers everything. If you're a pastor someday, it answers every question why people struggle and why they go through the things that they go through. If you're here this morning and you're someone who is saved and you want to get plugged in, it's going to tell you how you're going to make it, why you're not going to make it. You have to get the foundation based on the rooted down principles of the Word of God, and not just know it, but those principles have to dictate what you think, what you say, and how you act. That's what separates it right there.

Now look at, look at verse 4, back to Ezekiel. I'm sorry. Look at verse 4, first part of the verse: "And again he measured a thousand, and brought me through the waters; the waters were to the knees." Now I want you to notice that we went from the ankles and now we're to the knees, and yet we have another measurement, another measurement of a thousand cubits. Now we're farther in and we're up to the knees, and I would, I want to be honest with you, I think that from my own personal experience, my own personal growth process or lack of it, however you want to look at it, I'd say that in our study of walking in the Spirit and the growth process, this is probably right here the key one. It certainly is the absolute most important one for you to see and understand what goes on in your life.

Now I don't know if you know this or not, and you've heard me talk about this before, but there's going to be levels of growth in your spiritual life. Now most people think what I'm about to say is true. Most people think that spiritual growth is about learning the Bible. That's a half-truth. That statement by itself is totally false. Spiritual growth is not just learning about the Bible. That is a half-truth. Spiritual growth is about learning the Bible and then as you grow, listen to me now, here's the second thing you want to get by the way, learning the Bible and as you grow, facing the issues in your life that will stop you from growing and overcoming those issues to get into the next level. I'm going to say it again. I don't want to say it about four or five different ways so you grasp it.

When you got saved, you started in this process of going through the river, and this is why so many people start, they never finish your Christian life. These levels are like a staircase, a stairwell. You have a group of stairs, then you have a level, group of more stairs, then you have a

level, group of more stairs, and it goes on endlessly. When you first get saved, the first thing you got to struggle with maybe, and I'm just throwing this out, first thing you got to struggle with when you first get saved is booze. Let's just say it's booze, and you get saved and you have a drinking problem, and you, you work, you come, somebody disciples you, we put you with some of our more famous alcoholics, and you, you really, you really get the victory on it, and you really come to that point, and now suddenly you're up to the next level. You know what you're going to find? Now that you've got the victory over booze, you know what you're going to find on that next level? Another set of issues you got to deal with. Maybe that one's cigarettes. Maybe that one's, uh, I don't know, it can be anything. So let's say you get the victory over that, and now you move up to the next level. You know what? Now, now the big things are out of your life, and this is the problem. When you get the big things out of your life, we kind of tend to believe that everything's out of our lives.

Some night I want you to come over. We got a clear sky. I'll have you come over my house, and I'll set up the biggest telescope you ever saw in your life, and we'll look up there at the moon, and I'll say, "Look at that moon, isn't that pretty?" You say, "Boy, that is the most beautiful thing I ever saw in your life." Then I'll say, "Come look at it through the telescope," and I'll put an eyepiece in that'll probably bring that moon about, oh, I don't know, a hundred times closer, and you look down there and you go, "Whoa, wow, man, that's, wow, that's really neat." And I'll say, "You think that's something? Watch this." I'll take that eyepiece out, put one in, it brings it in 200 times closer, and where you started out looking at it and it was so beautiful and so majestic, by the time I'm done with you, you're going to be looking down into one of those 80-mile long craters, and you're going to see beer cans, cigarette butts, you're going to see everything, and the, well, the piece of that thing is an absolute disaster up there. It's busted, broken, chopped off, chewed off, busted up, jaggedy, and look like one big mess, but from back here, it looks majestic. You see, that's what the Bible does for you. The Bible is your magnifying glass, your telescope. You get to a point in your life where you dump the booze, you dump the cigarettes, you dump the unsafe crowd, that you start thinking you're doing okay. That's the worst mistake you can make. When you stay in the Bible, the Bible is like upping the magnification and looking at the moon, only you're the moon, and the more magnification you put into your life, the more you got to see the cracks and the crevices need to be fixed, and sometimes we don't like what we see.

You see the first level down here, maybe booze, second level, maybe women, third level, maybe this, but when you get up here, then now you got to deal with pride, see, stubbornness, some secret sin that you got that you just don't want to get up, that give up, that it really doesn't affect anything that outwardly because nobody knows about it. Nobody sees you running down to the boats on the weekends and gambling at three o'clock in the morning, hope you win. "Ty, belong to the Lord, remember me." See, I'm just kidding with you. But the farther you get up, the more you've got to, you've got to focus on the things that spiritual growth is not just about learning the Bible. Spiritual growth is about facing issues you have to deal with and then moving to the next level, a process where you, you understand this process. You get into the ankles, and then you move up to the knees.

Now I'm going to give you something here that's going to be very valuable to you, and something if you ever become a pastor is going to be ultra valuable to you. This knees here, if people are going to quit, this is where they quit. This is called in spiritual growth the point of no return. For a child of God to get past this, past his knees, you're on your way. I, I just, I don't know what you watched last week on Barack Obama getting put in the president. I watched, I watched the inauguration, and I tell you, every, anybody who's anybody who wants to keep up on the world, you shouldn't have missed out. I know somebody had to work, but I'll tell you what, to me, I look at it as such a shame. Now I certainly don't look into his heart, know if he's saved or not. Bottom line, it's immaterial what I think. But I do know this, I have never heard, outside myself, of course, a greater communicator than Barack Obama. If he could just take, forget politics, and get saved, if he's not saved, and become a preacher, he'd win this world to Christ. He has, he, I have never heard a more, I listened to him for 35 minutes. I wanted to believe what he was saying. Of course, I know it's none of it's true, but the bottom line is he has a way of saying it. He has a way of making you believe that he can solve problems. He has a way of making you believe he can, he can pull. I have never in all my, it was the greatest inaugural speech I have ever heard. I remember when, when, you know, Abraham Lincoln gave his, and it wasn't near as good as this. You know, but I listened to him, and I thought to myself, some of you young men who want to learn how to preach, you ought to study his tactics. Maybe he's not preaching the gospel. He's not preaching the Bible. It ain't about that. It's about the way he's delivering it. It's the way he's captivating the crowd. It's the way that everybody, even the Republicans are saying, "Well, I should have been a Democrat." Everybody's falling into it. You ought to be that persuasive when you get up and you preach. Everybody ought to say, "Oh, I want to learn the Bible." Everybody ought to, you may never do it. Maybe you'll never accomplish, but, but my goal today is for everybody walking out of here saying, "Yes, that's what I want." Now you may go out and get drunk and go do something else and never accomplish it, but for a moment of time, I want you to buy into what I'm showing you here because I got the truth.

I heard somebody say, one of the newscasters, and I was flipping back and forth so I'm not sure which one it was, and it was his coming down, you know, and taking the, taking the oath of office. Oh, just incredible. I mean, just incredible. And somebody behind the scenes was narrating it, one of the news people, and they said, "Certainly, certainly today, from where he's come from, from all that he's, all the things that he's been through, today is his defining moment." And at that moment, it just struck me like a bullet, and I said, "No, no, no, no. Today is not his defining moment. Today is not his defining moment. You want his defining moment? It'll be a year from now when George Bush's recession becomes Barack Obama's recession. His defining moment will be a year from now when he closes Guantanamo Bay, and then certainly someplace down the line we get whacked again. Here's the defining moment." But what we went, all the checks that he's writing right now with his mouth, he doesn't have the ability to cash. They will guarantee you, they will throw him under the bus just like they did George Bush. You know why? Because this company, this country wants it now. It's okay to get up and, and say you can do it, but not being able to do it. No, here's defining moment does not come yet. Here's the defining moment will be six months from now, a year from now. He will find out that the honeymoon is over.

You don't ministry in churches dealing with people the same way. We all go through our defining moment. You realize that? You realize that the thing that you want to see out of here is that when you begin to grow spiritually, there comes a point where if you don't deal with the issue that you got to deal with, and you want to keep on saying to yourself, "That's just the way I am." I've watched people come out and play volleyball or softball, and I've watched people come to the point where maybe a bad call was made, and they, they, something goes bad, and, and, and they, they make an absolute fool of themselves. You know, threaten this player, threaten the umpire, and you look at yourself and, and, you know, and you talk to the guy afterwards or somebody, and they say, "Well, you know what? That's just always been my problem." Then fix that problem. Come on. I mean, you've got it, you've got a group is coming to a level, seeing you got an issue, and then dealing with that issue so you can get to the next level.

People come in, they, they get saved, they get plugged in, they hear incredible new things. You get excited. They hear, get lots of action going on. They get a glimpse of a Philadelphia, and church should be. The Bible starts to come alive. A God begins to speak to their heart. They realize that God has a plan for them. They, they start wading in. They get to their feet. They get to their ankles, and then bang, the reality all sets in. There are some things I got to deal with before I'm going to go any farther. They're going to quit. Here's where they quit. This helps you figure out a lot of things, ladies and gentlemen, a lot of things. Spiritual growth and walking in the Spirit is a progression unlike anything you've ever been involved in ever before in your life. You actually have to keep dealing with issues in your life to keep growing. And in that, just like Obama, after about eight months or a year, the excitement wears off. The honeymoon is over, and now the issues that you don't want to face magnify themselves in your life, and you fail in your defining moment. This is where just learning the Bible isn't enough. You have to face and deal with what's really down inside. Some do. Most do not.

We taught child training a while back. I told you, I told you that, you know what, that the thing you needed to do is take this home and redo it and revisit it and repackage it and take it to your family. I guarantee you, I guarantee you most people did not do that. I had people come up to me and they say, "Wow, I want to get child training down so I can help counsel people." We taught you through marriage enrichment. We're going to do it again here just a little bit for all you new folks. I told you that you need to take that home. I had actually had people come to me, and it shows you the obliviousness of them. They actually came to me and said, "I want to learn this. I can't wait to learn marriage counseling so I can go out and work with people in their bad marriages." And his wife's over there saying, "Hey, what about ours? Are you going to take that and do it here first?" Now that's what happens. You start growing. You get to a point that you want to be everything to everybody, but you got something in your own world that you don't want to give over to God or you don't want to change. You want to minister to the world, but you don't want to minister to your wife. You want to be a missionary to all the great things in this city, but you don't want to be a missionary to your own children. This is why at this level they never hardly get past this. Never do. Never do. You actually have to keep dealing with issues in your life to keep growing. This is called in the book of Ephesians perfecting the saints. This is where just learning the Bible isn't enough. You must apply it to your life, and that when you

apply it, that does something that, that, that all the study won't do. It makes you look at yourself, and the Holy Spirit of God says to you, "You got to change this."

I'm telling you this passage, that its application shows you exactly why people go to churches today, and it's all churches. Our church is better than most. I talked with pastors all the time. I've been around with churches and chapters all my life. This thing is a, it is the, it is the blight of churches in every course in the world, no matter what the language, what the culture and the understanding. This great passage will help you better understand where you're at, but it'll show you exactly why some people come to church, they get in, and in six months, eight months, a year, two years later, they get out, and hopefully you'll never be part of that.

Now I have never in my life when someone got to this point, in fact, I told Chris Fender, where you at, Chris? Did I not tell you last week to keep \$100 out of the offering in an envelope? I did. You know why I told him do that? Because I've come to my mind that the next person who wants to leave this church that just comes up to me and says, "Bob, I don't want to grow anymore. I don't want to come to church anymore. I don't want to listen anymore. I really quit growing where I'm at right now, and I'm just going to go do my own thing because I don't want to do what God wants you to do." I'm going to say, "Go see Chris. Chris has got a hundred-dollar honesty thing for you. Take you and your wife out to dinner on Old Past Baptist Church, and God bless you. God bless you for just being honest about it." Because they get to this point just like they can't deal with their issues. They'll never deal, you know what they'll do? They'll blame it on some of you.

I had one of my gals, she's sitting in this room today, and I won't tell you who she is. I want to, my gals a while back, sweet kid, worked with me with many, many people. I trust her with anybody. And she was working with somebody, and it was on a, and, and I was watching this situation because I don't, when I put some people in it, I know that there could be problems. So, you know, I, I watch this situation, and it wasn't unfolding very well, and I didn't say anything to my gal. I just figured, you know what, she'll learn to burn from it. She'll get, she'll get some good stuff out of it. And it was on a Sunday morning, I think, maybe a Thursday, you know, I don't know. But anyway, this, I watched this gal come over to this, this woman, and I could see that on her face that she had some issues. So I kind of positioned myself far enough where I wasn't involved in it, but I could hear the conversation, and I heard what transpired. Well, the next day I got a call from her husband, and the husband was upset, and I said, "Well, what's the matter?" And he said, "Well, this woman you put with my, my wife, she said this, this, this, this, this, this, and she handled it this, this, this, this, and my wife was upset, and my wife's is not going to come back to church." And I said, "Oh, is that correct?" I said, "Yes." He said, "I just want you to know, I don't think I'm coming back either." And I said, "Well," I said, "I'm sorry to hear that, but I got to tell you this, your wife's not telling you the truth." "What? Or maybe it was what? Or maybe it was what? What? You call my wife a liar?" And I said, "No, I'm not calling wife anything. I'm just telling you that's not what happened." He said, "You're just sticking up for your people." And I said, "Well, I would." I said, "Could I put you in a position that I will back you up? Of course, if I find out you screwed it up, you're dead. But if I, if you're in there, I'll back you up. But in this case, I was right in earshot, and I related to him what had really

happened and what really said, and I said, “So it’s not about anybody calling your wife a liar. It’s about I was there and heard the exact conversation, and I know exactly what was said. I have even talked to my gal. I even talked to my person. I even talked to her yet, and I already know because I don’t need to because I was standing over here and I heard every word. Your wife is not telling the truth. Now you can either go home and say to your wife, ‘Look, honey, we got an issue,’ bam, and fix it, or you can do, or you can just let her blame somebody else for it.” Anybody want to guess what they did? You know why? Because people come to a point in their life at this point where they grow to get excited, and then the Word of God forces them to look and deal with something that they don’t want to deal with, and it can never be their fault. Has to be your fault. Sometimes it’s my fault. Sometimes it’s the church’s fault. Sometimes it’s God’s fault. I’ve known people that didn’t get what they wanted to get from God in the time frame they thought they should get it, and it didn’t come through the way they wanted it because God was never in it that way to begin with, and because they’re so, so they did get an attitude toward God. They get mad at God. But when it happens, this is where it happened. They never take the blame themselves.

You know, we went to Hawaii one time. It was been years ago. We were right on Waikiki Beach. We won a trip, free trip. It was beautiful, 29 days or something like that in Hawaii. And, and every morning when I got up and every night before I went to bed, we were way up high on a terrace. I looked down the beach. You know what I’d see? Hundreds and hundreds and hundreds and hundreds and hundreds of people wading in the water about up to here, back and forth and along the beach. Never did I ever see anybody way out in the thing. Of course, sharks, I’m not going out either. But I thought to myself, that’s just like so many of God’s people. They’re never going to get past their comfort zone. They’re never going to get past the knees. They’re never going to do it.

Now this is where God draws the line. Now this is the third thing you want to get. This is where God draws the line. This will be your defining moment in your spiritual growth. There isn’t anybody in this room that will be exempt from what I’m talking about. No, I won’t. You won’t. Everybody has to come to a point and decide, “Am I going to fix where this thing’s at so we can go on to the next one, or am I just going to keep on pretending and then going to get really nervous when my life, my family, and all this stuff shatters and breaks and fall down around me, and then suddenly, you know, I can’t, I just can’t take my own, but I got to blame it on somebody else?” The defining time in your life, ladies and gentlemen, just like my old buddy Barack Obama, will not be when everything is going well. The defining time in your life will be when everything is going wrong. The defining time in your life will be when you’re faced with a personal issue that you got to deal with, and you can’t pass it off. Oh, you will, but you can’t pass it off to somebody else. You got to look God right in the face and say, “I’m going to get through this, God. Get whatever help I need and get to the next level, or I’m just going to keep on alibiing and, and do the two-two-two step where I’m at and never get to that level.”

I think the last couple weeks, I know you all know the story, the boy, wasn’t that Captain Sullenberger, you as air, wouldn’t he a great guy? I heard that story break on the news, and I sat there and I, and I saw the pictures on how he, he landed that plane in the Hudson. It’s been called

the miracle of the Hudson. You know, I don't know if he's a Christian or not, but I want to tell you something, I wish he was because that's the kind of Christians I'd like to be around. Now did you hear his bio? Graduated from the Air Force Academy. The pilot flew fighter jets for seven years. I didn't hear if he was in Desert Storm or one of those early battles, but nevertheless, he was a combat pilot. Flew jet fighters. I bet you all through his life when he accomplished those great things, I mean, it's a great thing to be accepted to the Air Force Academy. It's even a greater thing to graduate. It's even a greater thing. You realize that all the people come out of there want to be pilots. Most of them don't get jets. I mean, jet fighters. They'll fly C-130s or they'll fly cargo planes or they'll fly this or they'll fly that. Only a select few get the free jet pilots where they fire the fast fighters. That's quite an honor. For seven years he flew the fastest, the best jets we ever had. I'm sure when he, I'm sure that most of the Air Force guys and Navy guys do also. I'm sure that when he got out of the military, he had already had designed to go to be a commercial airline pilot. Take what the government spent four million dollars training and we get him ready for, and then sell it to USAir or TWA or whoever would pay for it, and it became a pilot. And I bet you there was people that saw him make that transition and said, "Man, he's a successful guy." I bet if you stop and ask people around his life, I bet your people would look at his life and it says, "That was a defining moment for him. That was a defining moment for him. That was a defining moment for him." The defining moment for him was two weeks ago when he took off that runway with no altitude, no real airspeed, and a bunch of stupid birds went through his engines, and now he is faced with the most critical decision in his life. He's faced now with a, with a catastrophe ready to unfold. At the end of the day, he's either going to be the man of the year or he's going to be crucified. His defining moment was not when he graduated, when he flew jets, when he went to work as an airline. His defining moment when he took off from that runway out of New York. He got about 2,000 feet in the air, and both engines flamed out on him, and now he can't get back to the airport. Where are you going to land? 5th Street in Washington? I mean, in New York? No place to go. In a split second, without even thinking about it, his training had kicked in, and he did what is absolutely almost impossible. He landed a big old plane in the middle of the river, and people stepped out on the wings. I don't think anybody even got wet, and they got right into the boats, and he's a hero today.

Now you know what you and I had done? I know I had done. I had to get on my cell phone and said, "Mom, you know what he did?" You know what I'd have done? Most pilots probably would have done this. He'd have thought the safest, the best way to do it was to try to get as much altitude as you can, swing around, and make a dead stick landing on the ground. But that never would have worked. He chose as his defining moment a time when the odds were absolutely against him, when everything aeronautically was against him, that everything that he had, that he had been in his own human ability was screaming at him, "You are going to kill these people." But you know what he did? For years and years and years, when the people designed that plane, they wrote a, they wrote a textbook about that plane. They told you what that plane was capable of doing. They told you what that plane was not capable of doing. They would tell you that when you're at 2,000 feet and you lose the engines, when your airspeed drops to 160, you drop like a rock. They told him that in this situation and that situation, this is what you have to do. Nobody likes to make a water landing, but he had a manual that was written by the people who built that plane that said, "When you find yourself in a situation with both

engines out at 2,000 feet, and you got nowhere to go, and there's water around, here's what you do: put your nose up, put your flap down, keep your wheels up, and then land that sucker by the tail, and then set it right down in the water." That's exactly what he did. He followed the rules and the principles in the book that the people who created that plane wrote. And when your defining moment is when you and I are faced with some impending disaster, you and I are faced with some issue, and your flesh wants to tell you to do something else, your own human spirit says, "Go do this," but the textbook, the manual that was written by the one that created you, will tell you how to land. He had to land in a river. You and I just got a crossover line by the book. You know why they were alive today? Because he went by the book. He didn't get creative. He didn't think, "I think I can beat the odds." He didn't say to himself, "Oh, I'm a pilot, I can land anywhere." He knew his limitations. He knew exactly what he had to do. He knew what the book said, and he followed the book, and he laid that baby down right in the middle, and a hundred some people got off and were saved. Your face were those finding, that was his defining moment, a moment when he could have panicked, a moment when he could have said, "I could do this," but it was a moment when he said, "I'm going to do what the book trained me to do," and they survived. You want to survive? Then do what the book trained you to do on whatever level you find yourself.

Now let me show you why this, this thing here is such a killer, and I almost play a little game here. Now let me show you why this particular point here is such a killer. You get to this point in the river, it's the, it's the line that God draws. It's the defining moment for so many people. It's why a year from now some of you won't be here. It's why from last year to now many other people aren't here. They come to the point in their life, and across this city, across this country, pastors could say the same thing. People come to a point where they grow, where they get in, and it's exciting, but then once the honeymoon is over, once the defining moment comes, once they have to look at themselves and say, "I've got to fix this or I can't go any farther." Your defining moment is, will you fix it or will you blame somebody else for it?

Let me show you why this point in the river is such a killer. Anybody see it yet? Raise your hand. Anybody see it yet? Anybody see in this verse here, verse 4, what the real killer is? Oh, it's right there looking like if it was an anaconda, you'd have you for lunch. Anybody see it? What's the key? What is it? Yeah, John, pardon me? The who? We're not even that far yet. What is it? Yes, well, that's good, but that's not it. Yes, ma'am, Jen? The knees. The knees. The knees. This one will get you every time. When you start walking into this water, look what it says, verse 4: "brought me through the water to the knees." Now can I ask you a question? Let me ask you a question. You started through this. Has God brought you through the waters and brought you to your knees yet? The key, here's the knees. Has God brought you through the water to your knees yet? The knees represent the place of commitment and the place of submission, the end of self, the end of pride, the end of arrogance, the end of stubbornness, the end of being at your way, a complete submission to God at His will and His plan for your life, willing to change about you whatever needs to be changed based on a book, not what you think, and come into the place of total commitment. Too hard a thing for a child of God to do. Too hard a little bit of this thing. The place of commitment and a place of submission. And my question to you, has God brought you through the waters yet, and are you on your knees?

Two aspects into your knees in the Bible, and they fit right in with our study here, and this is why when you get to this point, some don't make it. The first one about your knees is your prayer life. At some point in your life, if you have to have commitment, you have to have communication. Commitment is only based on communication. You know what the number one problem in marriage is? Well, the real number one problem is, is there's no commitment. You know why there's really no commitment? Because they have no communication. I've never understood when a husband in a situation with his wife has problems and issues, why he, why he just cannot, and it's the hardest thing, why they can, he cannot take that thing in hand and say, "Hey, look, we got a problem. There's only one way we can get out of it. We got to learn how to communicate." You know, we have learned to communicate. We got to learn to communicate with God together and begin praying together, praying about whatever problem you're struggling with, communicating. There's no commitment without communication. And when it comes to your Christian life, we don't know how to pray. We don't know what to pray, and we don't know how God answers us. We do not have a stable prayer life. And as you begin to come through this and you begin to move through this, it brings you to your knees, the end of self, and you do not go one inch higher till you get on your knees. This is where you lose relationships and blaming on everything in the world except the fact that you can't be the spiritual leader. This is where your wife will get so fed up with your goofiness after a while that she'll say, "You know what? I don't need this anymore." And you'll say, "What?" And all the bottom line is you'll go out of the relationship and you'll blame this, you'll blame that, you'll blame this, you'll blame that, but at the bottom line, you were at a level where you were not willing to get on your knees and pray, pray with her, pray for yourself, develop your own prayer life. Communication is commitment.

Ephesians 6:10-18

No, really, there's seven things listed. There are six pieces of armor, and therefore you and I protection. He talks about gird about with truth. Talks about the breastplate of righteousness. Talk about the feet shod with the preparation of the gospel of peace. All this means. So if it talks about the shield of faith, the helmet of salvation, sword of the Spirit, and then he says down there, he says, "praying always." Praying always. You know, this armor down here is broken down into two kinds of armor: offensive and defensive. You know why? Because every warfare has an offense and a defense. But you know where there's no armor listed? He's got it for the loins. He's got it for the breastplate. He's got it for the head. He's got it for all this stuff. There's nothing listed that armors and covers his knees. You know why? Because a child of God should never get hit in the knees because coming through the waters ought to bring you to your knees, and you should never be off your knees. Your prayer life ought to be consistent based on your commitment.

The second thing here is submission of your will to His. We talked about this last week in Philippians 2:10 where it says, "That at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, of things in heaven, and things in earth, and things under the earth." This is where these two places, this is it, is these two places are exactly where people get and they stop. This is where the rubber meets the road. This is where that when you see them, they come in and you say, "Well, what happened to so-and-so? Where's so-and-so? Where they been?" Well, you know where they been. They went

up this staircase, and it was fun for a while, but then they got through all the antichrist warps. They got through all of the church history. They got through all the exciting stuff. They heard all the things they wanted. They got to a level when God said, He met them at the top of the stairs or her and said, "You know what? We're not going any farther till we fix what's inside you right now. Draw the line right here." And you can blame whoever you want to blame. Blame the church, blame Bob, blame the person, blame this guy, blame that gal, blame your mother, blame your dad, blame everybody in the world. Bottom line is, go ahead and do all you want to do. We'll get it all straightened out at the judgment seat of Christ, and we'll find out where the blame really was. You know why? Because we don't grow past this point. You don't grow past this point. This is the defining moment in every child of God's life.

Now this is a great place to stop, and I'm going to stop here. Next week we're going to come into the last two, and I'm going to put this whole thing together. Don't get, don't, what are you putting stuff away for? I got the last great point I haven't given you yet. Next week I want to bring you through the levels of our relationship that I pray that everybody in here sees. You get to this point. This church needs some elders. This church needs some aged. This church needs some men and some women that can take that upper left. And you know what? And I, and I know what goes through many of your minds, "Well, I know the Bible. I've been in the Bible for 20 years." Yeah, but look at your finances. Look at your work ethic. Look at your business deals. It's more than just the Bible. Discipline comes in every aspect of your life, and when it's not in every aspect of your life, it's in none of your life. But it can fake the Bible. "Well, I got to read five, six hundred words a minute. I can go back there and pick a book up and read it up, come back up here, make you think I know it." But you know what? It isn't about what I quote to you. How do I live my life? Do you see what I preach in what I live my life every day? I'm not saying you do. I'm saying you ought to. You don't just talk about the Bible and how much you know about it, and your, your whole personal world is just you, you know, you just can't get anything together in your world. See, that's you on that level where you just, you're just refusing. You see nothing wrong with me. "Well, I don't push it." He said that. "Well, I do nothing wrong with me." "Well, I know this and I know I've had a long time." You know, I'll tell you, it ain't about that. It ain't about that.

And we'll give you one last thought. This is probably the best thought I've given you today. You know something I learned years and years ago at Genesis chapter 1. The Bible says, "And the Spirit of God moved upon the face of the waters." You know that's the first time you find the Holy Spirit of God in the Bible, and the first thing you find about the Holy Spirit of God is the fact that it moved, and it never stops. There's never a font place anywhere in the Bible that you'll show me where the Holy Spirit of God now stops. It doesn't stop. Doesn't stop. And you and I need to understand that once you become a Christian, whether you go forward or you go backwards, you never stand still in Christ. You're either moving forward or you're moving backwards. As a young Christian, you're never stationary. We get the idea, "Well, I'm not really, I'm not really growing and I'm not, but I'm just holding my ground." No, nobody does that. You're either moving forward or you're moving backwards. Nobody ever stays. You're either progressing up the steps or you're moving down the steps, but nobody stays on one landing and stays. The devil is not going to let that happen. It's called the law of human collapse in the Bible.

We know it as the law of gravity. Things don't go up, they go down. When you don't have any force pulling them up, they come down. You stop growing.

Know the next thing that happens. Here's the progression. You stop growing for whatever reason. You get yourself on that level and you say, "I'm not going any farther." You stop growing. You know what happened? When you stop growing, your attitude changes. You don't, you're not excited about the Bible like you once were. You don't like these messages that I preached like you once do. Now that where before they, you said, "Boy, that was really good. I needed that." Now they offend you a little bit. What? Your attitude changes. It's only a matter of time. Your action changes. You don't want to be around God's people. You want to be away from God's people. You don't want to be around God's things. You want to be away from God's things. First thing you do is drop Bible study on Thursday night. You know what? It's only two nights a week you got to be here. I can show you churches, they got something going every night of the week. So you can't get it worked out to be here twice a week. I know you got to work and I know things come up and I know things happen here and people this and people that. I understand all that. I'm talking about in a consistency. Some of you just don't care anymore like you once did. Usually after you drop Bible study, the next thing it goes, you could drop whatever ministry you're in, and pretty soon your Sundays start going, you know, you start missing one out of four, then you start missing two out of four, then you start missing three out of four, then you start missing four out of four, and you're gone. Now that's how it works.

And it all comes back to this river and you beginning to walk into this thing and getting your feet wet and getting to the ankles and then come into the place do you get to the knees and at the knees this is where it brings you to your knees this is the place of commitment submission this is the price of your giving it all to God at a point of no return this is the place that from this point on you really get it squared away and you know what you're not gonna have some good days in your bad days you're gonna get some whack but your defining moment is come there'll never be a time in your life again where you'll ever let anything pull you out get your focus off you may get messed up you may do some stupid things you may say some stupid things you may have a relapse and fall flat on your face but you know what you're never gonna come to the point where you're not moving forward again and that's the case you're either moving forward or you're moving backwards but you are not standing still you're not standing still.

Yeah, I told you, I told you just like Ephesians chapter 6 when it talks about the armor of God, there's no covering for the knees. You'll find that there's no armor for the back. No armor for the knees, no armor for the back. You know why? Because one, you're always to be on your knees, and two, God never thought for a moment you wouldn't be going forward. He never thought He'd have to protect your back because He thought you'd always be moving toward Him, not away from Him. I told you, you want to wonder why things are the way they are? You want to understand in your own life? You want to know how you measure your spiritual growth? You want to know how you put this thing to work? You want to know and understand it better how God sees this thing where you're at with it? You want to understand, go out here today better where you're at, what you got to do? I'll tell you what, Ezekiel chapter 47, you see it's a type, it's a picture. Now I just gave you this morning in the first half, we'll finish up the second half next

week, I just gave you probably what it would take you three or four, six, seven, eight months to figure it on your own if you could get it there. It was in such a concise package as you go out of here, and now you know exactly what you got to do. You know exactly probably where you're at, and I guarantee you probably almost everybody in here knows exactly what you got to deal with. That's what it's all about for the perfecting of the saints, for the perfecting of the saints. You may go forward or you may go backwards, but you never stand still. Let's pray.