

Romans 9:15-24

Sunday 7/26/2009

SEC: The Importance of Romans and God's Election

Last week we found and examined one of the great truths found in the Bible. As you know, we are in Romans 9. I cannot tell you how important it is for you to grasp the Book of Romans. I have said this almost every week as an introduction, and I will continue to say it because if you are just starting today, here or in the last couple of weeks, you can get the tapes and get caught up in Romans if you like.

The Book of Romans is an incredible book, probably for you and for me, understanding the number one thing in the Bible that we need to understand, which is Bible doctrine. The word doctrine means "to teach." When you come to the Book of Romans, it is uniquely placed in the New Testament because it begins to lay out for you and show you exactly not only the birth of the Church, but what the Church really is to believe and what it is to stand on.

I do not like the word "stupid." I have never called anybody stupid that I was not sorry that I did and apologized very quickly. I think that is a very bad word, and I would never call anybody that directly in any way, shape, or form. But I have never—I am going to use it this morning—I have never seen more stupidity in Bible Christianity today than I have. People are trying to do what they think God wants them to do, but in reality, they do not understand even what they are supposed to believe.

It comes down today because pastors do not teach the Book of Romans. They do not lay things out for you. So you try to do the best you can, and you wonder why you get caught up in everything, or your life is not fulfilled, and why you struggle with the things that you struggle with. The answer is very easy: God's people today are saved and they are on the way to heaven, but they absolutely know nothing about the Bible. I want you to know everything about the Bible.

Last week we began in Romans 9. As we started moving down through it, we defined two key words for you that really help you figure out what you are reading. The Book of Romans, and I told you this when we started, is like the Declaration of Independence. It is like our own Constitution. Our Constitution and our Declaration of Independence lay out what we stand for as a nation, or what we are used to and what we believe as a nation. That is what the Book of Romans does for you and me as Christians. It lays out every aspect of every detail of not only what we are supposed to believe, but why we are supposed to believe it.

We are in Romans 9, and Romans 9, 10, and 11 deal now with the nation of Israel. All the aspects of God's dealing with them historically we find in Romans 9. Then we find out how God had a great plan for them; they reneged on that plan; they did not fulfill it. Then it goes from Romans 9 to Romans 10, which deals with the times of the Gentiles and God dealing with the Church. Then back to Romans 11, which deals with the Second Coming of Christ and God restoring the nation of Israel.

We saw a great word defined last week, and it is the word "elect" or the word "election." Remember, I told you that that word means "set apart," it means "called out," it means "chosen." I also told you that never anywhere in the New Testament will you ever find the word "elect" or the word "election" that is ever dealing with an individual. It will always be dealing with the nation of Israel. I gave you the reference verses last week back in Isaiah that actually showed you and defined for you the word "election" as it pertains to the nation of Israel.

You remember that when we come through our Bible Basic class, many of you, and I told you this is how you build on it. I make reference to things like this. You ought to already be putting them in your little mind, in your little chart. We talked about how important Israel was. We talked about how they were the main component in the Old Testament by which God dealt with man. I showed you now, and you should have it down, how God formulated them, how God called them out from Exodus up through Joshua. Then when Abraham comes on the scene, God begins to develop them in Genesis, and He brings them right up through Isaac and Jacob and Joseph. They get called out under Moses, and then they go into the land and they get established under David. We saw all that, and we understand now that last week we talked about a key verse which said, "Jacob have I loved, but Esau have I hated."

I told you how many, many people who mistreat the Bible and teach the Bible wrongly, they make that about individuals. From that, they build the heresy which we call Calvinism, which basically means that God chose some people to go to heaven and chose some people to go to hell. Many times they will use that verse right there. In fact, the truth of the matter is, Romans 9 is probably the second greatest hangout place for Calvinists. The first one would be Ephesians 1, and the third one would be Romans 8.

I told you how now that we understand this, that He is not talking about individuals when He said, "Jacob have I loved, Esau have I hated." I gave you the reference back in Genesis that said He is talking about two nations. Then I showed you how Jacob develops into the nation of Israel and how Esau develops into the Edomites, and how the book of Obadiah is written as they go against the nation of Israel. So you should have all of that by now.

Romans 9 very clearly and plainly is establishing the special nature that God has with the nation of Israel, and then how they lose the blessings because they do not keep doing what the Word of God tells them to do. Obviously, throughout this, I have made the great parallels from Israel as a nation to you and I as individuals. Just as God had a plan for the nation of Israel—we are going to talk about this today—God has a plan for you. Just as they lost the blessings of God because they did not do what is right, sometimes many of us as God's people do the exact same thing.

SEC: God's Overarching Plan and Purpose

Today, as I stated last week, we are going to look at probably the single greatest concept about God that you are ever going to understand. Probably in all that we talk about God and all of the things, I do not know of any one thing, any one concept, that puts in context God and what He is doing. We talk about His history, and we look back through history, and we learn things about history, and yet history has to have a context.

Thursday night I talked about somebody asked a question, we talked about knowledge, we talked about wisdom, and we talked about understanding. I showed you Thursday night how knowledge is facts. When you get facts, you have knowledge. When you apply those facts or you use those facts, you have wisdom. Any unsaved man, any unsaved woman in this town today or around the country or around the world, they can have facts and they can have wisdom. I have met many, many unsaved people who have wisdom in certain things that they do. I have met guys who are great mechanics; they have a special knowledge about engines. I know guys that are great fishermen, great hunters. What they have done is they have learned the basics of hunting, fishing, mechanics, whatever they do. Some of you amaze me with your ability with a computer to do the things that you do. Personally, I am still under the opinion that all computers are demon possessed. I mean, they have a mind of their own, but some of you seem to get along with those demons pretty well, and you work it out really well with them. I envy that. I envy that.

Yet, you know, you have done that because you have taken the facts and then you have developed it into wisdom. Any unsaved man or unsaved woman can have facts and can have wisdom. But I told you Thursday night what an unsaved person can never have is understanding, because understanding is how God is involved in it. Understanding is how it, whatever you are looking at, plays out in the whole scheme of the Bible and what God is doing.

When you look at history, you can develop facts and you can develop wisdom about history. But if you want to understand history, then you have got to understand the concept that I am talking about today. When you look at prophecy, prophecy is things that are going to happen in the future. You can have an understanding of facts, and you can look at the world around us. You can look at the nation of Israel and the scenarios that they are in: Iran and Iraq and North Korea and all of the things that are going on in the world right now. You can get the facts and you can apply wisdom. But until you see it from God's standpoint—understanding—you will never really fully understand it.

You know that is true of your own life too? I mean, you can study the Bible. You can study the Bible and you can learn the Bible. You can come to the point where you can take every class that we have, and you can know everything about the Bible there is. You can have knowledge, and you can make that knowledge into wisdom. But until you take the Bible and apply it to you personally, you are never going to have understanding. I want to show you today one of the absolute, without a doubt, one of the absolute greatest concepts that you will ever learn. Maybe I should say that we will never learn about God, but boy, we sure should. It is an incredible concept.

Now I want to read in Romans 9, and I want to pick it up where we are. We are in verse 15, by the way. Let us read this, and then we will come back and we will try to put this thing all together. Here is what he says. This is God speaking, or Paul writing about what God spoke.

Romans 9:18

Therefore hath he mercy on whom he will have mercy, and whom he will he hardeneth.

Romans 9:23

And that he might make known the riches of his glory on the vessels of mercy, which he had afore prepared unto glory,

Now Father, we thank You and praise You for the Lord Jesus, and we love You today. And Lord, we will be very careful as we come to this sacred text that we look to You, Your Spirit, to teach us today. Lord, we know that as human beings, even saved human beings, that we cannot get anything unless God opens up our understanding. There are a lot of good people here today, Lord, who have come to get something from Your Word. I pray first of all, Lord, that we will look inside our hearts today, and if there is anything that has not been confessed, anything that has not been dealt with, anything in our lives that would keep us from receiving what the Holy Spirit of God has for us, that even now we would confess it, we would get it right. That we might stand spotless before You as far as our walk with God is concerned, and that we might receive the things of the Holy Spirit of God. Lord, these are good people, and they are Your people. My job here is just a temporary shepherd of these people that belong to You. Lord, help me today. Help me through my own inadequacies, Lord. Help me through my own struggles, Lord, to give them what You have for them today. Lord, we love You. We thank You and praise You. Lord, I pray that we will go home today with this great truth that we need to see today. If we do not get anything else out of what I say today, may we leave today understanding the greatest single concept about You that is all through the Bible and history. Lord, we will thank You and praise You in Jesus' name, for His sake we ask it. Amen.

SEC: God's Mercy and Conditions

Now he says in Romans 9:15, "For he saith unto Moses." I just want to make reference to this because we have been talking about how Calvinists or people will take this and try to put it into you and me, to the Church. Of course, what he is saying here is, "For he saith unto Moses." Now that sets the context. Moses was not part of the Church. Moses was not in the Kingdom of God. Moses is an Old Testament patriarch that is the beginning of the nation of Israel, and his kingdom is the literal, visible Kingdom of Heaven. What he is speaking here, he is not speaking to the Church. He is not speaking to Christians. He is speaking to Moses, who was under the Old Testament law, not New Testament Christians, not the Church, and certainly not John Calvin.

Now look at Romans 9:15, and here is the tough one:

Romans 9:15

For he saith to Moses, I will have mercy on whom I will have mercy, and I will have compassion on whom I will have compassion.

Now people will take from that, who do not understand God and understand the whole parameter of God, that verse standing by itself looks like God has kind of got an arrogant attitude and is simply saying, "You know what? I will save those that I want to save, and the ones that I do not want to save, I will not save." Now that is the premise that Calvin comes from, Calvinists come from. He comes to the point where he says, "Now there is a verse that clearly says that God will have mercy on whom He has mercy, and God will not have mercy on those that He does not want to have mercy." He takes that one little verse. He does not understand any other concept

about God in the Old Testament. He certainly does not understand the context that He is talking to Moses here, and then he tries to build his teaching on top of that, and of course, that will not work.

You know what he is saying here, folks? I mean, it is simple that anybody could figure it out. What he is saying here is that God shows men mercy based on the conditions that God has set up for men to get that mercy. When he is talking here and he says here that "I will have mercy on whom I will have mercy," the context of that statement is found in Exodus 33:19. You always have to have a verse that defines what the passage is saying. I told you this last week, and you want to turn to this because you want to see it. The Bible is of no private interpretation. The Bible interprets itself. When you read a passage like this and you say to yourself, "Wow, that looks pretty conclusive," well, you get a verse that explains that verse that will put it into context. Of course, we know he is speaking to Moses.

In Exodus 33:19, God is speaking to Moses again. Notice what he says in verse 19. I am sorry, you went to Exodus 33:19. I am sorry, Exodus 20:5-6 is where I want you to go. Romans 9:15 is quoting Exodus 33:19. I want you to go to Exodus 20. Now here is the context. Now look what God says:

Exodus 20:5-6

5 Thou shalt not bow down thyself to them, nor serve them: for I the LORD thy God am a jealous God, visiting the iniquity of the fathers upon the children unto the third and fourth generation of them that hate me;

6 And shewing mercy unto thousands of them that love me, and keep my commandments.

Now, did you see the condition set up there of getting God's mercy? Somebody raise your hand. Tell me what it is. What is the condition to get God's mercy? Keeping the commandments. God always sets—you want mercy—God sets the conditions for that mercy. When you meet those conditions, then God gives that mercy. If you do not meet those conditions, God will not give you that mercy. God chooses to give you or not give you His mercy based on the conditions that He set. In the Old Testament, it was keeping His commandments. That is why all this is to Moses. In the New Testament, it is you and me accepting Christ as your own personal Savior.

Now you will meet people all the time, and bless their hearts, I feel sorry for them, and sometimes you can get through to them and sometimes you cannot. I had a lady tell me a while back, she said when we were trying to talk about salvation, and Jamie was witnessing to a gal here a while back too, and talking about salvation. Here is the reasoning. The woman looks at Jamie and says, and I have heard this all my life, she says, "You know what? What you are trying to tell me is that if I want to get saved, whatever 'saved' is, then I have got to come through Jesus Christ." She said, "You know what?" She said, "Do you know how many roads that you can take and get to Florida? You can take different roads, maybe five or six different roads, and you can still get to Florida." Making the analogy that just like there are many roads that will get you to Florida, there are many roads that will get you to Christ.

That is, first of all, it is kind of lunacy to compare going to heaven with going to Florida. That is not the comparison you want to make. There may be many roads to get you to Florida, I am not going to dispute that, but Jesus Himself said there is only one way you can get to heaven. The Bible says it has got to be through Christ. Now you know what that is? That is a condition. That is a condition. In the Old Testament, the condition was, "You want My mercy, then keep My commandments." In the New Testament, the condition is, "You want My mercy, then you have got to get it in My Son, Jesus Christ."

When it comes to God, you know, we always like to throw around the little saying, and it sounds neat, you know, and it sounds manly, and it sounds like you are really in charge. I have heard people use it all the time, I have even used it myself. But it is really never true in any other sense that I have ever seen other than God. That is the little phrase, "My way or the highway." If you want the definitive person that can stand there and say, "My way or the highway," it is God. Because God always will set conditions for His mercy. If you meet that condition, then you get His mercy. If you do not meet that condition, then you do not get His mercy.

I will say it one more time: in the Old Testament, you just saw it right there in Exodus 20. God's condition was keeping the law, "shewing mercy unto thousands of them that love me, and keep my commandments." That was a condition. In the New Testament, it is not about the commandments. We are in the Church. Christ died on the cross. He had not died on the cross back there. The conditions for you and me is His Son dying on the cross.

If you are sitting here this morning and you do not know for sure if you died right now that you are—if you go to heaven. If you are sitting here this morning and deep down as I am speaking, the Holy Spirit of God is doing that little grinding act, and deep down inside you are not a hundred percent sure if you died right now you would go to heaven. I want to tell you something: the only way you are going to fill that void, you are going to have that assurance, the only way you are going to know for sure is one way. It is not by joining this church or any other church or being baptized upside down, forward, seven times under, or one time under. The only way you are going to fill that void is to meet Christ in the middle and get His death on a cross applied to your sins and get them washed away. That is the only way you are going to do it. Short version: His way or the highway. That is simple. That is just what he is saying here. That is what he is saying.

Now, if you are here this morning and if I get kind of loud and that kind of scares you, I am not mad at anything. I had a lady, I had a lady and a guy, and this is years ago. The lady says, "Well, I really like church, but," she said, "I did not care much for your preaching." Well, I kind of hurt, but you know what? She said, "You yell a lot." She says, "And people think you are mad." Then about two weeks later, we went—everybody in the church went to a baseball game or a football game, I cannot remember what it was—and this couple went, and she is over there jumping up and down and screaming and yelling like she is bananas when somebody made a touchdown. You know what? Just put it in context. You get excited and scream and yell where you want. I get yelled and scream and yell when I get excited about it.

Now, if I am sitting there watching an old football game, two guys throwing a dead pig down the thing, it does not do much for me now. Now, I think you could add a lot to football if the guys are running with the ball, everybody in the grandstand, or maybe you take a lottery, and maybe two guys, one on each end, go, and one each side gets to shoot at him as they run down. I think that would be exciting. I mean, if you get down to the touchdown, you do not get shot, touchdown. Now that I could get into that. But just watching a bunch of guys throw some half-dead pig down the thing there, and somebody ever catch it and going in there, you know, and then does some kind of goofy dance like he just did something. Now I would expect, I would respect your dance if you have got the ball running down there and four guys are out there, and you make it down. Now you have something to dance about.

You know what? I am just excited. I have a confession to make to you. I got saved about 40 years ago, and I just have never gotten over it. I have never gotten over it. I have known some Christians, you know, and they look like they have been baptized in pickle juice. You ask them, "Where do you go to church?" "Well, I go to the First Church of the Refrigerator." I understand that. I am sorry. When I got saved, it took. I am just excited. I am more excited now than I was back then because I did not know I was excited back then. I just did not know why. Now I am even worse because I am excited, but I know why.

So when he says, "I have mercy on those that have mercy," he is talking about God always sets conditions, always sets conditions. Again, this has absolutely nothing to do with the Church. It is talking about the nation of Israel once you get the context of Romans 9. I do not know how you could put it.

SEC: The Living Word and God's Sovereignty

Look at Romans 9:17:

Romans 9:17

For the scripture saith unto Pharaoh, Even for this same purpose have I raised thee up, that I might shew my power in thee, and that my name might be declared throughout all the earth.

Now there are three incredible things here that I want you to see, and getting to the place that and the great concept that I want you to see today. The first one, I think, is probably one of the greatest things in the Bible, and most people miss it, most people do not see it, but I am going to give it to you. Look there, it says, "For the scripture saith unto Pharaoh." Now I know that Paul writes this. He writes it the way God told him to write it. The Bible says, "the scripture saith unto Pharaoh," and most people just read that and move on. But you know the truth of the matter is that is Exodus 4 before Exodus 12. You know that in Exodus 12 there were no scriptures. Moses writes the first five books of the Bible, but he does it way later than that.

When it says there, "the scripture saith unto Pharaoh," ladies and gentlemen, there were no scriptures. You know what I like about that verse? That verse proves what I preach to you every day and you see me live every day. What I believe that they said the day I got saved, and that is that the Scriptures and God are the same. Paul is what we call a biblically idolater. He worshipped the Bible. He is telling you right there that God and the Scriptures, he uses them

interchangeably. That is one of the greatest places in the Bible that tells you that God and the Bible are the same. The Bible says God is unchanging, so your Bible has got to be unchanging. He says, "In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God." See, now I believe that. I believe that.

I will just throw in this with you too, Galatians 3:8, another one. It says, "And the scripture, foreseeing that God would justify the heathen through faith, preached before the gospel unto Abraham, saying, In thee shall all nations be blessed." See, there is another one. That is Galatians 3:8. Now I will tell you what, in Abraham's time, the Scriptures were 1,500 years away. There were no scriptures. There were none. And yet the Bible says, "the scripture foreseeing." You know what that tells me? Can a book foresee? I mean, you go home and you have got, you know, *Gone with the Wind*, great book. You have got, you know, any book you think of, great book. You say, "That was really a good book." Yeah, but can that book foresee you anything? You see, this book is different than any other book the world has ever seen because it is alive.

Years ago, a long time ago, I used to be part of a bunch of guys who used to go preach on the street. We do not preach on the street here because you cannot do it today and get anything done. But back then, you still could because you are still back there, you know. What we would do, we would go downtown, in fact, when I was home last time, I drove downtown and looked at the exact spot where we were. We always had a unique idea. We had this guy that was an incredible guy. He is a great preacher. He always had a knack, he always had a knack for figuring things out and always was way ahead of the game. Oh, I know you figured it out. I am talking about myself. No, I am not.

Anyway, we go out there one time, and I got there a little late, and it was a big Mexican, a big, big, what do they call it? Sombrero. That is right. Yeah, I had Italian food last night, and it messed me up with my Mexican dialect. But anyway, he had a big Mexican sombrero down there. We are all standing back, and I got there late, and the guy says, and the people are walking by and looking at the hat, and he says, "Ma'am, look out! That is alive! That is alive! Get away from that! That is alive!" And somebody else walking by says, "Sure, stand back! That is alive! Do not get close to that! That is alive!" And people started, they thought they had a big python or a snake or something under there, you know. They are standing around, and people, he is getting a good crowd, and he said, "Stand back, sir! That is alive! Do not get close! It is alive!" And somebody else, he said, "Stay back, ma'am! It is alive!" And the police officer saw the crowd, walked up, and he said, "What is going on here?" And the guy says, "Sure, please stand back! That is alive!" And the police said, "What is alive?" That is what he was waiting for. He walked over and picked up the hat. It was a Bible underneath, and he said, "The Word of God!" "Now that I have got your attention," and then he preached to them.

Now I like that. You know what he was saying? This book is alive. It discerns, the Bible says, the thoughts and intents of your heart. The Bible says there in Galatians 3, when he lays that thing out, he says, "the scripture foreseeing." Well, there were no scriptures. Who foresaw? God did. God and that book are the same. See, God and that book are the same.

Now the second thing I want you to see here in this passage is this. This is where the first one was just, you need to know it, but this is what we are getting into. He says, "I have raised thee up that I might shew my power in thee," talking to Pharaoh. Then the third thing is that, "and that my name might be declared throughout all the earth." Here is where we are at today. This is the single greatest concept that I am going to tell you now, and then we are going to see how it works through the Bible, through history, and through your life.

The greatest single thing that you will ever learn about God that will put everything into context—what you struggle with when you look at history, when you look at the future, and your own personal life and the situation you go through—the greatest single thing you will ever understand about God is simply this: God allows everything. God permits everything. God has a plan that He put in action way back in Genesis 1:1. That plan is going to run to Revelation 22. That chart over there represents that God is allowing everything to happen. God lets everything take place for one reason, and that is that God, who created all, God, who is worthy of it all, is going to get honor and glory out of everything that goes on on planet Earth.

Now sometimes it does not look that way. I have got to be honest with you, sometimes you wonder who is in charge, but that is because we are right in the proximity of it. See, I guarantee you, step back and look at what God is doing and understand God's plan and realize what God is trying to accomplish when He started it, when He is going to end it, and why it is going through the different twists and turns that it is. The greatest thing you will ever realize about God is that God, who created all, is going to get honor and glory out of everything that He created when He put that plan in motion. Do we as God's people, do we really understand God's plan?

When I was growing up, and I told you back in my day, I was taught by the old boys, the old last of the Philadelphia Church Age, the old guys that really believed the Bible, who still stood on the Bible. I am telling you, from that 40 years back to now, it is unbelievable how things have changed, it is unbelievable how God's people have changed, how preachers have changed, how churches have changed. When I was growing up, somebody asked me this question the other day, I know what it was. I think it was you. They asked me a question that when I was growing up, you know, did we see the Philadelphia Church Age and the Laodicean Church for what it really was? I told that person, I said, "You know what? When we were growing up and I was learning my Bible, we all thought that the Laodicean Church—and you know that is the last church before Jesus comes back, that is the apostate church, that the church Laodicea means 'rights of the people'—it is the last church in Revelation 3 out of the seven before the Lord comes back. We thought honestly, we thought that the Laodicean Church was the Protestant churches that had come out of the Reformation that had went back to their apostasy and were really, and that was the Laodicean Church." If anybody would have told me at that point, this is 1971, 1972, if anybody would have told me at that time that the Laodicean Church, the apostate church, was going to be the very church that had the truth, I would not have believed it. Brother, 40 years past that time, with what is taking place, I believe it today.

I have never seen a time where churches have preached less Bible and tried to raise more money. I have never seen a time where God's people are more confused. I have seen God's people have been saved 5, 10, 15 years and know nothing about the Bible. Some of the elementary kids know

more Bible than they do. Why is that? It is not necessarily the people's fault. I will tell you whose fault it is. It is the pastors of the churches in this country that gave up preaching the Word of God.

We are on a crusade in America right now to fix America. We are on a crusade in America right now to clean up America. We have got cities that people are killed. Why, you cannot even drive downtown without getting shot by a bullet that was not even coming your way. It is terrible. Our answer to that is, you see, our answer to the degrading society and the abortion by the millions and all the ungodliness that goes on and the drug abuse and the alcoholism and all those things. We go down to the mission. When I started going down to the mission 30 years ago, the average age of the mission bum was about 60 years of age. You know what the average age is now? About 20. About 20. You know why that is? I will tell you why that is, because society has eroded, and churches want to fix it. You know how they want to fix it? They want to fix it with more programs. They want to throw more money at it. Well, every time somebody gets shot, well, they spend more money to teach people about gun safety or teach people to educate or find them better jobs. You know what? That is not what is going to fix this society.

What will fix this society? It is not going to happen, by the way. But what will fix this society is every preacher getting up in his pulpit on Sunday morning, getting back to a Bible that is the truth, opening up that Bible, and preaching the hell out of people and getting them right with God and then staying right with God. That will change a society. Most of you do not remember this, it is called Prohibition. Prohibition was brought about that you could not buy alcohol in America anymore. You could buy beer, but you could not get whiskey. Prohibition was brought in because the alcoholism and the temperance wanted to get rid of it. So they brought what they called a prohibition, and it prohibited you to buy alcohol, hard stuff, whiskey, bourbon.

You know how Prohibition came into this country? It came about not on the tails of legislators. It came on the tails of one man who stood up across this country, Billy Sunday, who preached the Bible everywhere he went. Where he went, cities got saved, places closed, bars closed, and it prevented the whole town because of the power of the Word of God and a man that will preach it. That is how you fix it. I do not know why I told you all that and wasted all that energy because it is not going to get fixed. But that is what is wrong with it. That is how you get it fixed. That is how you get it fixed.

I tell you what, God's people today, they have no understanding of God's plan. One of my kids gave me a tape to listen to, a Bible study they went to a couple of weeks ago. Somebody asked the question, probably a very nice person, somebody asked the question of what is going to be going on in eternity and how the whole thing works out. This is one of the goofiest things I have ever heard in my life as the pastor answered it back, talked about the fact, "Well, I believe that we are all going to be living stones, and we are all going to turn into some kind of stones that are going to be alive, and we are going to be part of that. That is what I believe." I thought to myself, it is no wonder God's people do not have a clue of what is going on today. I would like to ask that bird, "Hey, tell me about Isaiah 9:6-7." You want to know what eternity is all about? Hey, when I grew up, what was going on out of eternity and what was going to happen was basic Bible knowledge. What happened to it? What happened to it? Where did we go from Isaiah 9:6-

7, which is the definitive verse, to "we are going to be a bunch of rocks"? Rocks were in his head.

I would like to ask him, "Why do you find the tree of life in Genesis 3 and then you find a tree of life in Revelation 22? Why is that?" He did not know why it is. We have a lot of bunch of wannabe preachers out there and a lot of wannabe Bible teachers that know nothing about the Bible. "Give me the verse in Ezekiel 36 that pulls eternity past and eternity future and puts it right into a context for you." I learned that the first year I was saved. But I am asking you, do we really comprehend what all this is all about? Even more important, do we really comprehend how we fit into it? That is the key. That is the key. God's plan, how it affects your life, or better yet, how your life affects God's plan.

God has a plan for your life, and you know what the overall theme of that plan is? Oh, He has something He wants you to do. He has something He wants you to do individually. He has something for everybody He wants you to do. But you know overall what He wants to get, what He wants to do in your life? One thing overall, He may call you to be different things and do different things. But overall, He has one thing that He wants to accomplish: He wants the honor and glory out of your life and what you do. That is what He wanted from Israel. That is what He wanted from Pharaoh. That is what He wants from everything. I am telling you, this thing is incredible.

I am going to show you a great verse in Colossians 1. Look at Colossians 1:14. Here is a great verse that goes along exactly what he is saying to Pharaoh, and exactly how we are applying it to your life and my life. He says in Colossians 1:14-17:

Colossians 1:14-17

14 In whom we have redemption through his blood, even the forgiveness of sins:

15 Who is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn of every creature:

16 For by him were all things created, that are in heaven, and that are in earth, visible and invisible, whether they be thrones, or dominions, or principalities, or powers: all things were created by him, and for him:

17 And he is before all things, and by him all things consist.

See, when you begin to understand the context of the Bible, when you begin to understand that the Bible's theme is a kingdom, and with that kingdom is a throne, and with that throne is a crown. Once you begin to understand what we are looking at in Bible Basics, how that all through the Bible two men are after that crown: one rightly deserves it, the other one does not. Once you realize that in the Old Testament, God tries to establish that literal, visible kingdom through the nation of Israel, and then He tries to establish the Kingdom of Heaven, the spiritual kingdom, through the Church. Once you realize how that thing plays itself out and works its way out, you realize that when Christ comes back, the Bible says that He is going to be crowned King of Kings and Lord of Lords, Revelation 19. That is the end of it all. That is the end result. That is where everything in your Bible from Genesis points to.

No matter what struggle, no matter what you go through in life, no matter what failures we have, no matter what defeats we face, the end result is no matter what happened with Israel or America or whatever takes place, the end result is going to be when He sits down on that throne, and He is crowned King of Kings and Lord of Lords because everything was made by Him and for Him. You better grab that truth. It will help you deal with what you are struggling with right now.

Revelation 4:9

And when those beasts give glory and honour and thanks to him that sat on the throne, who liveth for ever and ever,

Revelation 4:11

Thou art worthy, O Lord, to receive glory and honour and power: for thou hast created all things, and for thy pleasure they are and were created.

Revelation 19:1

And after these things I heard a great voice of much people in heaven, saying, Alleluia; Salvation, and glory, and honour, and power, unto the Lord our God:

You ever notice this? You never—this is one of the most amazing things I have ever seen in my life, and it is so true. You ever notice that everything God created, everything God created, gives Him honor and glory except one thing? I mean, He made the weather. I can remember a couple of places in the Bible where the disciples were on the sea, and the winds were boisterous, and it looked like they were going to sink, and Jesus was in the boat. One time He is in the boat, and He just says, "Sea, be calm." Another time He comes walking on the water, and He says, "Winds, be still," and I mean it is dead quiet. The weather obeys Him. The weather obeys Him.

The sun and the moon obey Him. If you know the book of Ecclesiastes, you know that they follow a prescribed circuit that they all follow, and it lays it out in Ecclesiastes 1, 2, and 3. The earth, the earth obeys what He says. 365 days around the sun makes a year, and that earth never wavers from that, and it follows that exact course. Never wavers more than a millimeter any which way. Yet one day God said back there in Joshua, "Well, boys, they are not quite done fighting yet, are you? It is getting dark." And he said, "Yeah, we could use a couple more hours daylight." He said, "No problem. Hey, sun, zip it!" And the earth stopped rotating. You believe that? Well, Professor Totten did, who was a math professor at Oxford in 1710, because he took the mathematical equations and worked them back. You know what he found out? He found out that there are 24 hours missing in our time. Because God said, and it says over there in Joshua, that the earth stopped and quit rotating. The sun quit rotating. The earth stopped about a whole day.

Then you got over there in Kings, where Hezekiah says, "Well, you know, I am really, I am really, I am really worried about this, you know, and all of this stuff." And he says, God says, "Well, I will give you some more time to live." And he says, "Yeah, but how do I know that is for sure?" He is just like a lot of us, you know. He could not take God at His word. He is a sign. And he said, "Well, I will tell you what," he said, "I will make the sun dial go 10 degrees ahead." He

said, "That ain't no big deal, anybody that is going to do that on his own. How about if you make it go back?" At that point, the earth did not stop rotating. See, in Joshua, it just stopped rotating. But there it did not stop rotating. It went backwards. There is the other part of your 24 missing hours between those two places. You will not beat the Bible. You will not beat it at all. You will not beat it at all.

The stars, the stars follow God's courses. You know what the Bible says? It says, "The heavens declare the glory of God." When God made the heavens, He made them to declare God's glory. You know how God reaches nations where they have no Bible? You know how God reaches nations where they have no missionary? If God does not have His Son, there are three things in the Bible that give honor and glory that you can find God through. One of them is the Son. The other one is the Word of God. The other one is the stars. I do not know if you ever looked at the constellations. They tell the Gospel story. Oh, I know what astrology tells you. I am telling you right now, every one of those 12 tribes had a constellation assigned to them. The 12 tribes back then make up what astrology is trying to make the 12 signs of the zodiac today when they get outside the Bible.

I am going to tell you something. God made it all. God made it all. One day God went out and He looked at everything before He created it. He said, "I am a perfect God, and I am an orderly God. I am going to make everything, but I have got to have a pattern. Now what am I going to use for a pattern?" And one of the angels said, "Well, God, if it is going to be a perfect creation, yes, it has to be perfect. Is it going to be a complete creation? Absolutely, it has to be complete." Then he says, "Why do not You use Yourself as a pattern?" God said, "I never thought of that. I will use Myself." So your whole physical universe, everything about your spiritual life, follows the pattern of consistency in the Bible and order in the Bible after the most perfect, orderly God in the world. That is by the system of threes.

You know what a three is in your Bible and numerology? It is completeness. God the Father, God the Son, God the Holy Spirit. The Trinity. You know it. Remember the Trinity? Remember that little song you used to sing? "Three in one, all in three, the one in the middle died for me." Remember that. He is a Trinity. You have God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Spirit. 1 John 5:6-7. So when God says, "I am going to make man," you know what He did? He made man a body, soul, and a spirit. See that thing? You want to find it? You want to find it? You want to find a complete whatever? Then you are going to find it is based on a system of three based on God because God is the model for everything that He made because God is going to get honor and glory. That is why the Bible says, "He is before all things, and by him all things consist."

Romans 1:19-20

19 Because that which may be known of God is manifest in them; for God hath shewed it unto them.

20 For the invisible things of him from the creation of the world are clearly seen, being understood by the things that are made, even his eternal power and Godhead; so that they are without excuse:

See how that thing works? I mean, God created everything after His own pattern, which is a perfect, complete pattern. It is the model of three. You know what God is? God is omnipresent. I mean, He is everywhere. God is omniscient. That means He is all-knowing. And God is omnipotent. I mean, He is all-powerful. You see, without three, you have nothing. If I took a magic marker and I put a line across that wall, you have got three parts of that line. You have got a length. You have got a width. And if you have got a microscope, you have got a depth to it or a breadth to it. There are three. If you take any one of those three away, you do not have a line. You do not have a line.

God created everything. In the physical world, we have three dimensions: height, length, and width. That is what that line would be: height, length, and width. But then the Bible says in Ephesians 3 that there is a fourth dimension. That fourth dimension is the depth or the spiritual aspect of it, of God's mind. So you have got three dimensions physically, the fourth dimension of God. And then I guess you have got the fifth dimension. "Stop in the name of love." That was the Fifth Dimension. They are not in the Bible, but I really like their music. You have got three physical dimensions: height, length, and width. And then there is a depth. There is a spiritual dimension. That is God.

Look at time. You know what you have got in time? Past, present, and future. Three. Three. I tell people all the time, you know, I said, "You know what, it is important that you cannot—it is important that you take any one of those away: past, present, or future. You take any one of them away, you do not know what you are doing." I mean, let us face it. If you do not know where you have been—I am talking to you, Christian, church history—if you do not know where you have been, how do you know where you are going? If you do not know where you have been and you do not know where you are going, how in the world do you know where you are at? The answer is you do not. Because three is the complete. Three makes it complete.

You want to get scientific, you want to study matter? It is source, generation, and position. You want to go see your shrink and talk about reality? Reality is time, matter, and space. You want to look at man like we already said? Body, soul, and spirit. You want to see a complete family? It is mother, father, and child. It is never just a mom and a dad, "we are a family," because you are incomplete. You are complete when the third person shows up, and now you are a family. When you come to the earth, you have got three things: a land, air, and a sea. When it comes to the kingdoms: animal, vegetable, and mineral. When it comes to music: harmony, rhythm, and melody. I mean, let us face it, you have got the Army, Navy, and the Marine Corps. I mean, it is three.

You take your Bible. You hear me say it all the time, your Bible has three applications. It has got a doctrinal application, inspirational application, and a historical application. You have got an Old Testament and New Testament. Then your Bible is incomplete. If all you have got is an Old Testament and a New Testament, then your Bible is incomplete. There needs to be a Third Testament to make it complete. We already saw what that was in Romans 9:17 and Galatians 3. It is the person of Christ. He is the Third Testament. He makes it complete. The Bible was written in Hebrew, Greek, and Aramaic. The Old Testament is buried around the law, the prophets, and the writings. The New Testament is the Gospels, Acts, and the Epistles. I mean, wherever you go,

nothing is complete without the third part. Two and two is incomplete. Do you get the answer? Four. It is just that simple. God made everything after the pattern of Himself. Everything.

When it talks about the Ark of the Covenant back there in the Old Testament, He put three things in that Ark. He put a copy of the law. He put Aaron's rod that budded. And He put a pot of manna. Every one of those are significant to show you the completeness of what God did. You want to talk about the complete Christ? People say, "It is Jesus." Somebody says, "He is the Christ." Somebody said, "He is Lord." The complete name is three: The Lord Jesus Christ. Every one of those names means something that when you understand what it means, brings about the completeness of who He is. Three is the model. Three is the number. He made everything He made after Himself. Why? Because He is going to get honor and glory out of everything that He does.

So the weather obeys Him. The sun and the moon obey Him. The earth obeys Him. The stars obey Him. Even the animals obey Him. I mean, when is the last time you saw a mama animal abuse her baby animal? When is the last time you saw an animal break outside of the realm? Did you ever see two male monkeys try to get along in a relationship? Did you ever see two male horses say, or two female horses say, "Hey, we are going to hang out together, and you know what, this is my new horseman guy"? You are laughing at me, but does not the Bible say, does not even nature tell you? Well, if we are all through evolution, and we got to the point now where it is all right for two men to be married or two women to be married, then if we are all coming from animals, why are not the animals doing it? Does not even nature itself teach you? Come on. The animals obey.

You know what? When I get right down to it, even the devil obeys. And the unclean spirits obey. Why, in Job 1 and Job 2, the devil goes into God and he says, "You know what? I am going to work Job over." God says, "You are, huh?" He says, "Yes, I am." And he said, "You know what? He does not really love You." And then God said, "Oh, yes, he does." "No, he does not. He just loves You because of all the stuff You give him." And God says, "Well, take everything he has got. Let us see." The devil said, "Oh, I need it." He starts walking out the door saying, "Am I going to give it to him?" And right when he gets to the door, to the elevator to come down—oh, yeah, you missed that in John 10? This is against that thing to the door. You missed that in John 10? Okay. If you did, that is not my fault. But just as he gets to the door to come down, you missed that in John 10? Anyway, you see, he is ready to come down. The devil said, God said, "Oh, by the way, do not touch his body." The devil went, "Hmm." You know why? Because at that point, God told the devil what his parameters were. You see, God has a—you do not know that. We are going to talk about this in a minute. We look at the things that we think the devil and this and all that, God uses the devil just like He uses everything else. You realize that God is going to get the honor and glory even out of the devil? I am going to show you that in a moment.

With the devil, God said to the devil, "You can do whatever you want, take what you want, but do not touch him." The devil, if he had stayed up all night long and got all the legions of hell with him, he could not have touched Job's body. Second time he comes back, God says, "Okay, now you can touch his body." God said, "All right, go to that door, John 10." And just as he is

ready to step on the elevator, God said, "But you cannot kill him." Even he has to go by what God did. Everything obeys God.

In Matthew 8:29, he cast some devils out of some guys, probably Baptist preachers. He cast some demons out. The demon said—the demon gives God more respect than most of God's people do—they said, "Who art thou, Jesus, who art the Son of David, to torment us before our time?" They not only knew who He was from Israel's standpoint, they knew they were going to wind up in a lake of fire. No. No. I will tell you why. Well, I will tell you the proof that we do not understand God's plan. I will tell you why. I will tell you what it is. It is real easy. Everything that God created, and He made it after a pattern of Himself—the weather, the sun, the moon, the earth, the stars, the animals, the unclean spirits, and the devil—they all have their parameters, and they all obey Him. The only thing of His creation that will arrogantly not obey Him is us. It is us. It is us.

That is what he says in Romans 9:20:

Romans 9:20

Nay but, O man, who art thou that repliest against God? Shall the thing formed say to him that formed it, Why hast thou made me thus?

That is what we do. You know why God—I can understand why the world does it because they are lost and on their way to hell and have no understanding at all. But you and I, we are not only to have knowledge and wisdom, we are supposed to have understanding. We are supposed to see God in things. Yet I see things happen in God's people's lives, and they say, "Now, why did that happen?" Or they get mad at God, blame God. The whole bottom line is they do not understand.

There was a blind guy once in the Gospels. Remember him? Around John 6 or someplace in there. They came up and they asked Jesus, "Why was this man born blind? Was it the sin of his parents? Was it some sin in his life?" And Jesus said, "Neither one. He was born blind that the glory of God might be brought forth and manifested." You know, sometimes God will allow things to happen in your life that are bad things because God wants to get the honor and glory out of it. Because we are so shallow in our mindset and shallow in our thinking, and so caught up in ourselves. Like a guy, his wife called him on the phone and says, "How is work going today, honey?" "It was terrible. The computers were down. We all had to think." Everything that God created. You like that? All right. She is my bodyguard, by the way, that bulging in her purse. You got it with you today? Oh, that is because your hubby has got the back door today, does not he? Yeah. I would like to see him in a football game and a guy running down the field with that Barrett .50 he has got, he would be taking them out. Big chunks of field, I will tell you.

Man, it is you and me. It is you and me. We always argue against God. We always, because we do not understand this great concept. We do not understand it.

SEC: Pharaoh's Hardened Heart and God's Purpose

Look what he says in Romans 9:17. I will show you something else. He says, "Even for the same purpose," back to Romans 9. "Even for the same purpose have I raised thee up, that I might shew

my power in thee, and that my name might be declared throughout all the earth." Now, I want you to see something here. God said absolutely nothing about Pharaoh being a bad guy. All God said to Pharaoh was, "I am going to use you to get honor and glory out of you that all the nations of the earth know who I am." He is saying basically, "Pharaoh, you can decide which way that is going to be. You can either do it as My friend, or you can do it as My enemy. You can either let My people go, and I will get the honor and glory out of that, or you cannot let them go, and I will come down and make an object lesson out of you, and I will get the honor and glory out of that. You choose, Pharaoh." Nothing in there about Him making him bad. Not a thing.

You know what? It is the same way. Look at Romans 9:18, going back to based on conditions:

Romans 9:18

Therefore hath he mercy on whom he will have mercy, and whom he will he hardeneth.

Now, the Calvinists take that to say, "Poor Pharaoh. He did not have a chance. Jacob have I loved, Esau have I hated. God loved Jacob, and He hated Esau, and because of that, He picked one over the other." No, no, the context is already satisfied. It is nations. Obviously, the obvious reference here is in Exodus 10:20 and Exodus 11:10, which is Calvinists' favorite place where it says that God hardened Pharaoh's heart.

Now, I want to show you a little thing about your Bible. The Bible says, "Search the scriptures." I told you before, I never met a Calvinist in my life who really knew anything about the Bible. But I mean, I want to show you something here. Now, Exodus 10 and Exodus 11, the Bible says that God hardened Pharaoh's heart. And He did. But as I already showed you, He said absolutely nothing about Pharaoh being a bad guy. He just said, "I am going to get the honor and glory out of it." Pharaoh got to choose which way it went because God always sets the conditions, and you get God's favor or not God's favor by what you do with the condition. Pharaoh did not follow the conditions.

Now, he says in Exodus 10 and Exodus 11, God hardened Pharaoh's heart. But I want to draw your attention to Exodus 7:14. I want to draw your attention secondly to Exodus 8:15. I want to draw your attention thirdly to Exodus 8:32. Then fourthly, Exodus 9:7. And then lastly and fifthly, Exodus 9:34. Five times before you get to Exodus 10 and 11, where the Bible says God hardened his heart, you will find in Exodus 7, Exodus 8, Exodus 8, Exodus 9, and Exodus 9, five times that Pharaoh hardens his heart. Pharaoh hardens his heart before God ever touches his heart. Pharaoh hardened his heart five times before God ever touched. Not only that, not only that, you want to add to that, that God gave him two chances to repent without ever touching him by his own free will in Exodus 5 and Exodus 7. Five times Pharaoh hardened his heart. God, when He finally in Exodus 10, God just took the hardened heart that Pharaoh gave Him and used it for His honor and glory. Just that simple.

Five. Five times. You know what five is in your Bible? Three is the number of completion, five is the number of death. Search the scriptures. The first man in your Bible, Jared, is in Genesis 5:5. In the Old Testament, when they killed him, they stabbed him under the fifth rib. You ever see the word "devil"? Five letters. You ever see the word "Satan"? Five letters. You ever see the word

"Jesus"? Five letters. Somebody says, "Why did Jesus have five letters?" Because He died for you to have eternal life. You know what happens in the Navy when a ship goes dead in the water? They call it a number five shutdown. You know what any aeronautical, whatever the thing is, the emergency channel is 500 megacycles or kilocycles, 500. You know what happens when an airplane is flying around over there and he is shot up and he is going to crash or he is going to come in for a landing? What does that pilot do? He flips over on his international switch and he yells this out: "Mayday, mayday, mayday, mayday." January, February, March, April, May. Five. Five, the number of death in your Bible. Never a good number. Five times Pharaoh hardened his heart. Then finally God took it and said, "Five is enough because that fits into My Bible. I am going to take it now. Now I am going to get the honor and glory out of it."

Sometimes it looks like God loses control, does not it? Sometimes we get so caught up in the circumstances of life, and we look at things in our own personal lives, or we look at things around us in the world, or we look at things down through history. I have had many, many young Christians ask me the question, "Well, why did God do it this way? I mean, you know, it seems like it is very complicated. Why did God put all this stuff in the world today? Why did God do it all like the way He did it?" Sometimes it looked like God kind of loses control. I know it looks that way when you just understand. But when you understand what I am talking about today, and you will understand that God has a plan, and through that plan, He is going to get the honor and glory out of everything. It does not matter how it goes. You see, we get so caught up with the circumstance. It is true in your life. We get so caught up in the personal circumstances of the things that happen to us in life that it kind of gets us off track of how we really see things.

God is going to allow—now, a lot of the problems we have, we have because we made some bad decisions, let us face it. But let us just say you are your average garden variety Christian that just wants to serve God and love Him. My verse for you is, "All you that love God, you are going to get it in the neck." When it comes to Christianity and serving God, no good deed will go without being punished. Think about that for a while. Somebody is going to whack you. Somebody is going to go after you. Somebody is going to hate you. Somebody is going to go after you because you are going to serve God, and God is going to use—the devil is going to use somebody in their life to go after you. You know what you are going to do? You are going to get so focused on what is happening in your world, you are going to lose sight of the fact that, you know what? It does not matter if you are right with God and you want to serve God and you want to do what is right and you love God and that book. It does not matter what the whole world says or thinks about you, let alone God's people. But you see, we cannot get to that. You know how you get to that? You understand. It does not mean anything with God and the Bible.

Oh, I know sometimes, I am sure we know back there in Genesis 1:1, when the devil led a revolt against God way before it all started. We are sitting back there, God just sitting on the throne, you know, and everything is fine. "Well, this is a great thing. Well, tomorrow I am going to go out and create everything. We are going to get this thing going." But that time an angel runs in, "Your Majesty, the devil just tried to overthrow everything. He has got a bunch of the angels going to go with him, and we are going to have a real war up here. What are we going to do?" And God says, "Oh my goodness. Oh my God. Oh, that is Me. I mean, what am I going to do?"

The devil, My friend, the devil who I gave everything to, he is now against Me. He is going to come after Me. He is going to try to take My crown, My throne. What am I going to do?" That is not how it works. God lets everything come His way. He never panics. He never says, "What? I had not thought of that." He lets everything come His way because He knows no matter what, ultimately, He will get the honor and glory out of it.

He put Adam and Eve down there. Adam and Eve are down there in the garden, and God says, "We are going to have a great time." And He is up there in heaven. One afternoon, another angel runs in and says, "Father, Holy Father, God, You are not going to believe this. You told him not to eat that tree. That old devil, he went in there and he got Eve to eat. And then Eve gave it to her dumb husband, and the whole thing screwed up." God says, "I am now what is going on down there?" No. Did God panic? If God did not panic when all of mankind just got dumped into the lake of fire, something does not change. Why should you and I panic if God is in control? See the practical side of it?

What did God do? He walks down into the cool of the day, just like He always did. Except this time, before, Adam and Eve were always trucking out. "Hey, hey, hey, hey, hey. Hey, come on, come on, come on, come on, come on. Come on, come on, come on, come on, come on." Your hands are really sweaty. This time, they are not there. They are nowhere to be found. God says He is walking down through there, "Well, wonder where they are at?" Can you see God walking around? And I know what it says, "Adam, where art thou?" But we get the idea. "Adam! Adam!" You know why God, who knew where he was, who knew what rocks he was hiding under? You know he tried to make you a camouflage suit out of fig leaves? Does it not ever bother you guys when you go hunting and you want to hide from the animals, you put on the same clothing that he did when he wanted to hide from God? And imagine God, "Adam, come out, come out wherever you are." Adam knew exactly where he was hiding. You know why God asked him, "Adam, where art thou?" Because of the same reason, great characteristics of God. God asked Adam where he was when God already knew where Adam was because God will always give you the chance for you to tell Him where you are at with Him before He has to ask you where you are at. That is right.

Oh, He is a great God. Why, if God wanted to do it, He would come down there with His Mossberg 1100 and got a couple angels and turned them into bird dogs, and He says, "Get him!" And that old dog would have come up to that old fig tree, you know, and there is Adam in there with a little fig suit on, you know, goopy Adam, you know, his big eyeballs sticking out of the fig tree, you know, and that old angel, that old angel just goes. Oh, God goes, "Flush him!" Oh, hey, I tell you what, you want to know you are in trouble with God when God says, "Flush him!" And then you hear that, you know, we got to be the terrible thing. God breaks into your house. The most terrible thing you have got to hear, you know, is that she is thinking about 12 gauge, loading one in the chamber, you know. I mean, the most terrible world is a Christian is when you hear God say, "Flush him!" And then you hear that thing, you know.

I like that movie, Mel Brooks movie, *History of the World, Part One*. I love it. I think it is the funniest thing in the world, especially when you have got Henry the 14th or Henry the 8th or Louis the 14th, I forget what. He is standing there, and somebody runs in and he says, "Your

Majesty, the peasants are revolting!" And he says, "What?" He says, "Yes, the peasants are revolting!" And he says, "Why would they do that? I love my people." "Pull!" And then a peasant goes flying across the sky. I am not yelling now. I am just laughing at my own stupid jokes, and that is even worse. I love it.

You know what God did? God is always prepared. Boy, if you cannot see the prophecy in this, you know what God did? God went over and killed two things that were innocent and said, "You know what, Adam? Those fig leaves, camouflage suits, were not going to do you any good. They were not even going to hide you from Me because it is going to take something innocent to die to cover your nakedness now." And God, in preparation for the Lamb that was going to be died and was going to cover our nakedness with the garments of our salvation, that is how God thought about it. He did not panic. He did not panic.

He puts Noah down there. And God said, "Well, finally, it is going good. Going good." But that time, same angel. You know, after about the third or fourth time, you think God killed that angel? Yeah, with the secret, He cannot kill angels. So you are stuck with him. "God, Holy Father, God, You are not going to believe this. The devil is taking over the world, and everybody down there is wicked. There are big old sons of God down there. They are going to start something called the NBA. Boy, they are going to be really big in that. Those giants are down there, and they are going to carry everything up, and they are taking over the world." God says, "Oh, oh, all right. I am done. I quit. Let somebody else be in charge." I do not know what God did. And God did not panic either, did He?

My point, and I am going to make a couple more of them because I am having a great time doing this. You need to hear the point. The point is this: if God did not panic whenever His world went apart, why do you panic? You know what God did? The Bible says He came down and He looked at that thing. He said, "Oh, the devil is really got something going here, does not he? Well, he has got the whole world loving him. I only got one guy down there that really walked with Me, and his name is Noah." You know what? I will just tell you what. Boy, the old devil, he really thinks he has got something going. Here the whole world, the Bible says the whole world was continually evil. The imagination of man was evil from everything. Now, you would think that God would bring in angels with big atomic bombs. You would think God would have millions of angels with flamethrowers in their mouth, torching the earth. No, no, no, no, no. God says, "Boy, that is really tough. Yeah, the devil is in control. Yeah, boy, he is really doing a good job. Well, he stopped control. What are you going to do? What am I going to do? I will make it rain." Get rain. It had not rained down on the earth anyhow. About time it rained. Saving it for now, it will rain. But you see, when God makes it rain, it rains. It rains.

I do not know if you ever figured it out or not. I mean, I do not know if you ever put a pencil to it. I mean, the Bible gives you the parameters there. It is pretty easy to see. But I will tell you what, when you figure that thing out, it is called Mount Everest. It is where it is at today, over a mile high, and it is 40 days and 40 nights, and that water had to come down at 725 feet a day, 30 feet an hour, 7 inches a minute. That is a pretty good rainstorm, is not it? I guarantee you, in two hours, the radius might have been a renowned with treading water. But when the whole world went into catastrophe, God said, "What are you going to do? Why do not we have it rain?" That

sounds like it is a thing to do. It was dead. He never panicked. He never panicked at all, because He is always in charge. Because you know what? The devil thought He was going to get honor and glory out of it, but when God wins and kills everybody, He gets the honor and glory out of it.

So let me go up to Genesis 11. Here it is again. He is up there in the throne. Boy, things are going good. Pretty day up here today. Boy, eternity is a nice place. What time is it? Oh, there is no time. I thought we were going to eternity. That is right. Well, this is nicely. Here comes that angel again. "Have you seen what they have done? God, have you seen what they have done?" "No, no, no. What have they done this time?" "Well, they are building a tower down there. They have got this thing going down there. Boy, the whole world is one language, one this. Boy, they are going to take over this thing again. You better do something." He said, "Yeah, I better do something." The Bible says He came down and looked at it. He said, "What are you going to do? What are you going to do?" He said, "You shut up. What am I going to do? Why did not you go with Him when He left? You would have been a lot better off." "What am I going to do? You say they are all one language? Yeah. You say they are all one nation? Yeah. They are all one in unity? Yeah. What am I going to do? Watch this."

They are building that tower. Down there, Joe Slavoski, he is running the rivet gun. Up on 3-4-0 out there is Bill Varnanski. He is running this up here. He is doing this. This Joe down here runs out of bolts. He yells up to Bill and he says, "Hey, Bill, throw me down some more bolts!" But at the time he left his mouth and got up there, God had changed it. This is where He changed the languages. So when it gets up to him, it says, "Hey, your mother is the ugliest thing I ever saw in my life. She fell out of the ugly tree and had every branch coming down." And Bill says, "What did you say?" And God changed it. But at the time it came down and it says, "Yeah, your mother wears army boots and she is ugly too," you know. You know what? He changed the languages. Where they were communicating in one, now what He did in that particular point, Genesis 11, He sent man back 6,000 years right there. One little thing. One little thing. Never panic. Never got. Never got. One little thing. One little thing. I am telling you.

Because God has a plan. In that plan, God is going to get the honor and glory out of it one way or the other. You know what? God would like for everybody to do what is right, but God knows they are not. God simply says, "You know what? I will have mercy on whom I have mercy, and I will not have mercy on those based on the conditions." God never panics. Why do we panic? If God wants to get the honor and glory out of your life, bad things are going to happen in your world just like they happened in His. He did not panic. You ought to look at the travail that comes into your life. Now obviously, I go back to saying if you have not called them yourself, but even in that, even in that, you come to the point in life, you make it, you blow it in life, you make some bad choices and you do some stupid things. You know what? Once you get it right and do what is right, God can get the honor and glory even out of your repentance. There should be no time that God cannot get the honor and glory out of whatever we do, whether it is right or it is wrong. But we panic. We panic.

God takes the people and the circumstances and says this, "Here is what I am going to do, here is My plan, and you know what? You can either help Me with it and give Me the honor and glory that way, or I will do it through you and spite you, and I will get the honor and glory that way.

But you know what? You get to choose." Romans 9:21 says, "one vessel unto honour, and another unto dishonour," but you get to choose.

We look at Nebuchadnezzar back in Jeremiah 43:10 where it says, God calls Nebuchadnezzar. You know who Nebuchadnezzar was, do not you? He is the guy that came down and sacked Jerusalem from Babylon. King of Assyria came down, Sennacherib came down from the north, and Babylon came up from the east or from the southeast, and they came over there and they sacked Jerusalem, carried the Jews off into captivity, butchered, I do not know how many people, and then God says, "Nebuchadnezzar, My servant." Wow. You know why? Because it does not matter who you are, what you are, what you think you are, you do not go by your own agenda. You may think you do. You fit right into God's plan.

Pharaoh. That is who he is talking about here. He went in there, Moses went in and said, he said, "Pharaoh," he says, "God said, 'Let my people go.'" Pharaoh said, "I am not going to let them go." "Here is where you are better, and what if I do not?" "Well, I do not know, but you are better." He goes down through there, and he goes back to God, he says, "He is not going to let them go." God says, "You know what, just do what I tell you to do, and we will see it. Because the bottom line is, Moses, it does not matter whether he is going to let you go or not. I am the one that says you are coming out, not him." So he goes after him, you know, and finally God brings the plagues, does everything He is going to do. Finally Pharaoh says, "Get out of here, go!" So they are gone. They are moving out to the thing. Moses and everybody is just going, "Oh boy, God is great. Man, here we go. We are marching, we are marching, we are marching to Zion, marching, da-da-da-da-da-da-da-da." And then somebody says, "Pharaoh changed his mind. Here he comes." Panic mode.

Do not you have days like that? Do not you have days where it starts out when everything goes really well, and you and God are just marching to Zion? Then you are running for your life. Moses turned to God, does the same thing we do. He turned to God and he said, "Now, why did You bring us out of Egypt? You brought us here? Here we are at the Red Sea, we are trapped. Now what are we going to do?" And here is Pharaoh. "Boy, what a fine event You got us into now." God says, "Shut up, Moses. What do you have in your hands?" "I have this big old stick." He says, "Reach down and touch that water." Reach down and touch that water. Boy, that water began to boil. I mean, that thing just set back up there. You all saw Charlton Heston in the movie, did not you? The thing all just went back through there. And he said, "Wow, look at that." Then he says, "Come on, we are marching to Zion again. We are marching to Zion." They get on the other side. They said, "Oh, boy, Kumbaya. Here we go, Kumbaya. Come on, Kumbaya, the Lord, You got us through." And she is gone now. "How are you?" And off we go. Somebody said, "Moses, look. Somebody forgot to close the sea. Pharaoh is coming right after him." Panic mode again. "Oh, no, Lord, what are we going to do? Here they come." And God said, "You know what? Well, you just shut up. Watch this." Water comes over there and drowns them all out. God never panics. God never panics.

Would not it have been a great thing if Pharaoh, the first time Moses went, would not it have been a great thing if Pharaoh would have stood up and said, "Your God wants me to let you go? You got a deal. I want everybody to know in this world that the God of Israel and the God of

Moses is the greatest God in the world. I know we have got a bunch of gods here, but they could not even lick His shoes. This is the greatest God there is. Even though I do not believe in Him and I have got my 500 gods, I am going to let the people go." Well, he would have gone down in history as one of the greatest men that ever lived.

I always thought about men in the Bible. Even men in history had a great opportunity. Remember old Pontius Pilate? Remember when he was up there before the people and they had Christ right there? Now to me, that is one of the greatest opportunities to go down in history you could ever want to go down in your life. He has got Christ, he is standing there on a balcony. He has got Christ right there. He is saying to them, "Should I crucify your king?" They say, "We have no king but Caesar." You know, would not it have been a great thing if he would have taken off that royal robe that he wore and put it around Him and took off his crown and put it on Christ and then bowed down before the whole world and says, "There is your King, crucify me!" Well, if he could have done the right thing at the right time and said the right thing, he would have got honor and glory out of his life where God—but you know what, he could not do it. He could not do it. Pharaoh could not do it. Nebuchadnezzar could not do it. Sennacherib could not do it. I will tell you what, sometimes you and I cannot do it.

Somebody says, "What about the devil?" I am going to give you one of the greatest verses in the Bible on the devil. Turn over to Proverbs 16:4. It is really unsaved people too. You want the definitive verse on the devil? It is nowhere but here.

Proverbs 16:4

The LORD hath made all things for himself: yea, even the wicked for the day of evil.

See that thing? God uses the devil and has a plan for the devil just like He does unsaved people. Because at the end of the day, no matter what he tries to do, no matter how to disrupt God's plan or how he tries to stop it, at the end of the day, God is going to take him like He took Pharaoh, like He took Sennacherib, like He took Assyria, like He took Pilate, and God is going to get the honor and glory. They get to choose. Vessel of honor, vessel of dishonor. Boy, that is one of the greatest truths you will ever find out about God.

SEC: Vessels of Honor and Dishonor

The practical term is simply this: nothing will stop God's plan in the Bible. Not a thing. Not one thing will ever stop God's plan. He enacted it in Genesis 1:1. He is going to wind it up in Revelation 22. You and I are supposed to be part of that plan. You are supposed to understand that plan. You are supposed to know where you fit in that plan. You are supposed to know what your job is in that plan. You know what? Just like the devil or nothing in earth or nothing in heaven, or no circumstances will stop God's plan. Nothing will stop God's plan in your life. Except you. Except you. Except you. Except me. The devil cannot stop me. Bob Alexander will stop me. The devil cannot stop you. All the forces of hell cannot stop you. But we will stop ourselves. We will stop ourselves.

Look at Romans 9:21, very quickly here, and we are done.

Romans 9:21

Hath not the potter power over the clay, of the same lump to make one vessel unto honour, and another unto dishonour?

Romans 9:22

What if God, willing to shew his wrath, and to make his power known, endured with much longsuffering the vessels of wrath fitted to destruction:

See that thing? It says right there that there are some vessels that are fitted to destruction, and in the same verse the Bible says God has long-suffering toward them, trying to give a chance to repent. We talked about Noah's flood and how God came down and wiped out the world in Genesis 7 and 8. But you know what I did not tell you? I did not tell you He waited 120 years before He did it. You know why? Because He is long-suffering. He gave those people a chance to repent even though they did not. You cannot. You cannot beat God. God is always ahead of the game. Always ahead of the game.

Look what He says in Romans 9:23-24:

Romans 9:23

And that he might make known the riches of his glory on the vessels of mercy, which he had afore prepared unto glory,

24 Even us, whom he hath called, not of the Jews only, but also of the Gentiles?

Now, you see that thing right there? That is one of the clearest verses in the Bible, saying that thing is someday going to go from the Jew to the Gentile. That is me and you. That tells you and me that this thing can be applied about vessels of dishonor and vessels of honor. It can be applied to even me and you in the Church.

Now, one last thing. Look over to 2 Timothy 2, and I will put this in a New Testament context for you, because Paul uses the same thing when he talked to young Timothy. 2 Timothy 2:19-21, starting in verse 19. Here is what He said:

2 Timothy 2:19-20

19 Nevertheless the foundation of God standeth sure, having this seal, The Lord knoweth them that are his. And, Let every one that nameth the name of Christ depart from iniquity.

20 But in a great house there are not only vessels of gold and of silver, but also of wood and of earth; and some to honour, and some to dishonour.

Now, we are in a New Testament now, saying that thing applies over based on Romans 9:24 that we just read back there. That is why Paul, talking to young Timothy. The first thing he says is this, and boy, I agree with it a thousand percent. Number one, the foundation of God is sure. Nothing is going to change God's plan. It is a sure thing. Then notice the next part of the verse: "Having this seal," that seal is the Holy Spirit of God that seals that thing.

Look at 2 Timothy 2:20, "But in a great house," that is the household of God we have talked about before. Seven parts of that household. But in the household of God, people, groups make up this house. He says, "in a great house, there are not only vessels of gold and silver, but vessels of wood." Look at the reference, or make the reference back to 1 Corinthians 3, the judgment seat of Christ. Gold, silver, precious stones, wood, hay, and stubble. One of the world, dishonor, one of God, honor.

But look at 2 Timothy 2:21. No Calvinism to this. You are not picked and chosen, one in, one out. Look at that thing, verse 21:

2 Timothy 2:21

If a man therefore purge himself from these, he shall be a vessel unto honour, sanctified, and meet for the master's use, and prepared unto every good work.

See that thing? "If he purged himself from these, he shall be a vessel unto honour." You can purge yourself from the vessel of dishonor. How do you do that? You get right. You can change your status. You can change your status by changing your attitude toward God, the Word of God, and changing the things that you do in your life. And become a vessel of honor.

Back to 2 Timothy 2:21: "If a man therefore purge himself from these, he shall be a vessel unto honour." Watch it. "Sanctified." Watch it. "And meet, meet, meet." M-E-E-T. Remember that little study back in Genesis 2:20? When Adam did not have a wife, and all the other animals had mates, and they are all male and female, by the way. He came back there and he says, "It is not good for man to be alone." And he says, "Well, I am going to make a man, I am going to make him a help, help, help, meet." Not a mate. Animals have mates. Human beings have meets. M-E-E-T. You know why? Because God had a plan for Adam. Adam had to fulfill that plan. God knew it was going to be a plan, it was going to be tough at times. So God gave him a help meet, not a helpmate. Because the number one thing in your life and my life is not a mate having kids. The number one thing in your life is having a help meet. Someone to help you meet the requirements to fulfill the plan that God has for you. Just like He gave Adam a help meet, the Bible says that you and I, as the bride of Christ, are going to be the help meet to Jesus Christ.

You know what that means? That means that every one of you, every one of you, every one of you, ought to be part of God's plan actively, helping God meet the requirements of that plan by fulfilling God's plan in your life and letting God use you. God had a plan for Israel, and God has a plan for the Church. Of course, preparing yourself for that job. My job as a pastor is found in Ephesians 4:11-12. It is real easy. You are told in 2 Timothy 2:21 that you are to be "meet for the master's use, prepared unto every good work." My job in Ephesians 4, the Bible says, "He gave some pastors, some teachers, some evangelists." What are they for? It says very clearly down through there:

Ephesians 4:12

For the perfecting of the saints, for the work of the ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ:

That is my job. My job is for the perfecting of the saints, to help you perfect yourself for the job that God has you to do. What do we mean by that? Learning the Bible, getting the things in your life that you need to have, taking every step, every aspect, and helping you learn everything that God wants you to learn to be everything you can be for Him. Then for the work of the ministry, it gets you ready to the place that you can take a piece of this work, take a piece of God's plan.

God saved you where He saved you in the time that He saved you in His overall plan because He had a specific job for you to do. He just did not save you by accident. He looked into your life, and through His foreknowledge, He saw you. He knew what He wanted you to do. He wants you to be a vessel of honor, but you have the option to say, "No, thanks, God." And God said, "Okay, I am going to get honor." You remember the whole deal. I am going to get honor and glory out of everything, everything that I made, patterned after Me, everything that I do. I am going to get honor and glory out of. You are either going to give it to Me as a vessel of honor, or I am going to take it as a vessel of dishonor. But you get to choose. You get to choose.

That is the single greatest concept about God you will ever learn: preparing yourself as a vessel of honor, meet for the Master's use. You know, I believe the judgment seat of Christ is going to be a terrible time. I believe it is going to be a terrible time because I think that once we get off this planet, once we stand there before God in the presence of Him, and we see Him and we fully come to a complete realization of everything that God had, everything that God was, and boy, everything that God wanted us to do. I think that is going to be the most sobering time for God's people that there ever has been in the history of the world or ever will be in the future. But the bottom line is this: the judgment seat of Christ should never catch you unaware. You should never go to the judgment seat of Christ unprepared. Because you can know now exactly what you will know then if you will just get in that book and find out what God has for you and find out what His plan is. If you are saved this morning, He has something that He has for every one of you that He wants you to do. Because ultimately, in everything He does, He is going to get the honor and the glory out of everything. Vessel of honor or vessel of dishonor, that we get to choose. God wants to prepare you as a vessel of honor, fit for the Master's use.

Every head bowed and every eye closed. Father, we thank You and praise You for the Lord Jesus.