

Hebrews 12:1-3

Sunday 4/4/2010

In the Bible, Easter is something that you all had to study out at some point in your life. Roy was telling me as he came in this morning, I said, "Happy Easter" to him, and he said, "You know what?" He said, "Yeah, I was reading *Babylon, Mystery Religion* this morning on my way in before I got into church." That is a good Easter book to read in the morning. Most people do not know it, but the whole week of Easter, from Palm Sunday, which was last Sunday, then you have the whole week, and then you have Easter. Most people do not know this, but there is probably no greater record anywhere than from Mark 11 to Mark 16, where you have recorded for you almost on an hourly basis, in reality, almost an hourly basis of that week.

That week was so important to God in the Bible that He, unlike any other time that I can even think of in the Bible, recorded for you every event. It starts in Mark 11 and goes all the way up to Mark 16. It is the only Gospel that is really in its entirety, and you have a complete week with all the events that take place right up to His crucifixion and then including His resurrection. Of course, when you put that together and you get it all together, it is the Bible account, which is the right account, and you begin to see how so much tradition has crept in. You begin to find out there is no Good Friday; it was Bad Wednesday that He was crucified on, and all of those things begin to come into play there.

I want to look at the crucifixion from another angle today. I know we are in the book of Romans 14 and 15, but we are going to take a week off from that. I want to talk to you today about what we all came here for today, and that is the concept of Christ's death on the cross, His resurrection, and really how it impacts your life and my life. I want to talk about a passage that I think is probably one of the most personal passages anywhere in the Bible to me in the ministry. I think it is a passage that, to me, honestly, if I would not have grasped this passage early in my Christian life, I probably would still not be in the ministry today.

I want to give it to you because, one, you have come here, and you did not come here to hear Romans 14. You came here because it is Easter, and we as a church want to uphold that tradition, and that is a good tradition to talk about Christ's death on the cross. I will take any time, any place, anywhere to be able to talk with somebody about Christ's death on the cross. So it is a good day in that respect. But I also want to do it for some of you young men and young ladies that down the line, as God develops you, will be in ministry yourselves. There is no doubt in my mind that some of you young men will pastor at some point.

In the short time that we have been here now, almost seven years—our anniversary is coming up sometime in June—we have seen how the young men and the young ladies have developed and how God has developed that. We now have started a satellite church down in Warrensburg, and we have a group down there today. This last Thursday night, one of the young men that was the maintenance man on the building, who just saw our church and came to church, came up Thursday night with his girlfriend, called me, and wanted to make an appointment. They wanted to talk about getting their life on track. We have also come to the point where we now know—I found out this week, and we are going to be talking about this in the weeks to come—that we are going to be starting a satellite church in Wichita, and we will be sending two young men down

there every other week. We are going to talk about that in the weeks to come and get that ready to go. It is going to be a little different scenario than Warrensburg. These people have had more Bible and really have a pretty good handle on things. We are going to have to kind of rethink the thing, but that is where we are going there.

God has been good to us and given us those aspects, and I say all that to say this: I have no doubt in my mind that five years from now, maybe six or seven years from now, when we work out in these other churches and we get places where they do not have pastors, and God keeps giving us the places to go to really stir some of the hearts of the young men and the young ladies and the couples in our church, that God will reach down in some young man's heart and touch his heart, give him a burden for a particular place that we are already working in, and then just usher them out to take over that church that has already been well established in the Bible. I have no doubt in my mind with that. Many of you will probably stay here and work with me, do you not just come back with the endeavor that we are trying to do of reaching people and with Christ and helping them? This verse, whichever case you do, whether you go or you stay, this verse will be absolutely very important in your life.

It is found in the book of Hebrews 12. In fact, I gave you the basic outline a couple of weeks ago, maybe a month or so ago, and we talked about it very briefly, but I want to use it today as the text from which we are going to talk about Christ's death on the cross, His burial, and then of course, His resurrection. It starts in Hebrews 12, and it starts in verse 1. Here is what it says:

Wherefore seeing we also are compassed about with so great a cloud of witnesses, let us lay aside every weight, and the sin which doth so easily beset us, and let us run with patience the race that is set before us,

Looking unto Jesus the author and finisher of our faith; who for the joy that was set before him endured the cross, despising the shame, and is set down at the right hand of the throne of God.

For consider him that endured such contradiction of sinners against himself, lest ye be wearied and faint in your minds.

I. Prayer for Understanding and Guidance

Now, Father, we do thank You and praise You for the Lord Jesus. Lord, we do love You. We thank You for those that have come out today because they love You. Lord, there are many different people here today, Father, with many different needs, and I could not even begin to be the one that could meet all of those needs, but Lord, I know that Your Spirit can. Lord, the only thing that You need today is a clean vessel for which to flow through. Lord, I have looked in my heart, judged myself, and in every way I know how, Father, to be clean before You this morning, that I might be a vessel that could be used to pour Your Spirit out, to touch the hearts and the lives of these people. Each one of them has specific needs. Each one of them, Lord, has issues that may be that they need Your help in. Lord, I pray that no matter what it may be, through this message today, that You will take it through Your Spirit and touch their hearts and let them understand, Father, that they have found a place that will help them whatever circumstances or situation they are in. We ask You now, Father, in a very special way to be with us, take the words

of this message from this unworthy servant, and make them worthy for Your people. We will thank You and praise You in Jesus' name, for His sake we ask it. Amen.

II. The Challenges of Modern Christianity

Bible Christianity has never been easy. We are going through church history on Tuesday night, and you are getting a fresh look at that, and you are getting a very good perspective on that. But I do not know of any time in history that it has not been a battle. The Bible says very clearly that you and I are up against three major obstacles: one of them is the world, the other one is the flesh, and the other one is the devil. Every problem we struggle with, everything that we get into, every heartache that we have, everything that knocks us off our track, gets us to the point where we lose what God has for us and what He wants us to do, comes down to those three things.

Today, I think as we get closer to the coming of the Lord, I think it is much harder today than at any other time in history. I really did not understand when we started this church. I talked about the fact that, and I gave you the context of what we wanted to do. Most of us have been through church history, and we understand the great seven periods of the history of the church. We also know from that that the Philadelphia church age was the greatest period in church history, and it ran from about 1500 with the beginning of the Reformation up through the early part of the 1900s and then fell apart from there. Then we talked about how the Laodicean period of the church is the most terrible time, and that is what we are in right now. We are studying in church history, and you have had it from Sunday morning many, many times, how that whole process took place. But I think today, as we get closer to the Lord Jesus and His coming, I think it is much harder than any time in history.

I told you that what we wanted to do is to build a Philadelphia church in the Laodicean church period. I have to confess to you today, I had no idea how hard that was going to be. In fact, I told the guys in a men's prayer group a couple of weeks ago that as I stand here today, that may be a near impossible task to try to do. I will tell you why that is: it is because the opposition, I believe, is greater now than it ever has been in the history of the world. I believe that just like the devil ramped up all his forces right before the first coming of Christ, he has again ramped up his forces right before the second coming of Christ, the time period that you and I are living in.

Not only that, I believe the attack today is much more subtle. In the old days, when you come through church history, the devil was out to kill your body. That is what he tried to do. He used the Roman Empire; he used all of the kings to try to literally kill God's people, wipe them off the face of the planet. They were the most severely persecuted bunch of people down through the history of the world. But the devil never makes the same mistake twice. He realized that trying to wipe out Christians was not the way to destroy Christianity; it only makes it stronger. So he did not make that mistake twice. This is why the problems we face today, I think, are much more volatile and much harder. Because the devil does not want to kill your body today, but he does want to destroy the spirit that lives inside you, that carries you through to do the work of God. He would let you go to any church on this planet. He will not stop you from going to church as long as you do not get involved in that church. He does not even care if you read your Bible as long as you do not apply the Bible. One of the reasons why the devil hates that King James Bible

more than any other book on this planet is because it was a common book written to a common man.

We think the worst destructive power today is the atomic bomb. There is a big thing going on right now, but we do not want Iran getting an A-bomb. I personally think it is a good thing because they are going to bomb Israel, or Israel is going to bomb them, and then we are going to go to war, and everybody is going to go to war, and then Jesus is coming back. I am for it. If I had secret plans of the A-bomb, I would be sending them over UPS. But I have secret plans of a greater destructive force than any A-bomb on this planet. Do you know what it is? It is that book right there. I know the Bible is more dangerous than any other bomb on this planet and more destructive because I know of nine countries as we speak today that outlaw that Bible. I do not know any country that outlaws nuclear weapons. That book is something else.

The devil today, he does not want to destroy your body. He does not want to put organizations out that will come out and kill you because you are a Christian. No, no, no. He will allow you to stay in church. He will allow you to keep your Bible. What he will do is destroy that spirit that is in you that God wants to match with His Spirit to accomplish the work that God wants you to accomplish.

The book of Hebrews is a great book. We know from our Institute studies that, doctrinally, it is written to the Jew in the tribulation period. But we also know the great parallels, inspirationally, to you and to me. Just as Israel is going to go through their tribulation period, we know it from our studies right before the Lord is coming back. Even though we are not going through the tribulation period that the Jews are, because we get raptured out before, let me tell you something: we as God's people right now are going through in many of our lives and many families and many one-on-one relationships and all the things in this world, as God's people in their defeat, are going through their own tribulation period. So this verse works in both cases. Paul admonishes them in this passage for us not to faint in our minds. That is where the real issue is today: quitting in your mind.

During the Vietnam War, we fought a policy, or we had a policy, of winning hearts and minds. The idea was that if you got somebody's heart, then their mind would follow. Now that is a biblical concept, misapplied in the Vietnam War. Because if God gets your heart, then your mind will follow. What the devil wants to do, we talked about it a couple of weeks ago, we talked about it very often, he wants to destroy the attitude of your heart, thereby destroying your mind, which destroys your spirit. That is where the attack is at today.

III. The Church Age as a Relay Race

We know that Bible Christianity or the New Testament Church, we know that it spans the space of about 2,000 years. I am not somebody who predicts the date. You are never going to see me put on a blackboard, "Jesus is coming back on this particular date." If I had that power, we would already be in heaven. I would have met the date a long time ago. I am not talking about that. But the Bible tells you that you and I are to know the times and the seasons. In Matthew 20, there are four or five different ways in the Bible where God shows you the approximate idea of His

coming. Matthew 20 is one of them because in Matthew 20, it breaks down the church age, which we know is about 2,000 years, thereabouts. It breaks it down into hours.

I do not know if you have ever seen this or not. It is a 12-hour day starting from 6 o'clock in the morning going to 6 p.m. in the evening. He tells you in that passage that there were workers in this 12-hour period to go out in the field to work. Now we know what the field is, and we know who the workers are. The field is the world, and we are the workers. What He is showing us here is that in church history, coming down through it, He breaks it down into segments that God called workers into that field. It starts out early in the morning. That would be the apostles and the apostolic church fathers that go in around 33 A.D. with the death of Christ. He talks in about the third hour. On a little scale, the third hour would be to us about 9 o'clock in the morning. But in history, it would be about 500 A.D. if we follow the little formula here. He sent workers in around 500. Those of us who are studying church history, we know what that time period is: that is the beginning of the Dark Ages. We find He says the sixth hour, that would be on a time clock, or our time clock, would be 12 noon. He sends in more workers, and that would bring us up to the middle of the Dark Ages, around 1000 A.D. Then He says that He sends more workers in the ninth hour. On our time scale, that would be 3 o'clock in the afternoon, or on our historical scale, it would be right about the 1500s or the start of the Reformation. Then we come down to the 11th hour. The 11th hour would bring us up to 5 o'clock. Now, in the story, the Lord comes at 6 o'clock. So we only have an hour left. The 11th hour would come up with our time frame to about 1830, 1835, 1837. Then at 6 o'clock, the Lord comes back.

I do not know what that means to you, but here is what it does mean to me: I believe that my job as a Christian—and here it is already told, talked about here in Hebrews—that we are running a race. We are in a race. We are running a race. To me, I have always looked at it as a relay race. I looked at this passage, and in my mind, I have always looked at this, how I fit into this race. God did not ask me to run the whole 2,000 years. I am glad He did not. But you have all seen relay races where you have got four guys stationed, and the first guy takes off, and he runs his leg of it, and then he comes back, and the other guy takes off. He hands off the baton, and then he takes off, and the other guy can go off the scene, and he runs his relay, and then another guy is waiting, and he comes back to him, he hands it off to him, and right down the line, they hand off that baton in the relay until they get to the end of the race, and whatever team wins. That is how I look at it. I look at life as a relay race.

I look at the first start of that race was in 33 A.D., and they began to run. They passed off in 500 A.D., and then they picked up and ran. They passed off in 1000 A.D., and they got the baton, and then they ran. Around 1500, they passed off the baton, and then they began to run. In 1837, the last, or thereabouts, the last workers go in, the last time that baton is handed off, and now, we are running. We are running the race. It is our race now. I am telling you, we are in the 11th hour on God's timetable. For the time that God saved you, up to and including the time in your life now, it is our turn to run the leg of this race. For 2,000 years, God's people, or thereabouts, have held the line, ran the race. Then in around 1800 or something, that last baton was passed off to you and me. You and I today in 2010, we are the last guy running.

I am telling you right now, you can, it is like a guy running, and he has got the last baton, and he crosses that last curve, and down the line, just 500 feet, just 600 feet, it is a finish line. Now, what would you think if you had a team that was running that race, and you crossed that last deal, and you are in the lead, and the guy that is running, and he is only 400, 500 feet from the finish line, just throws the baton away and starts walking and loses the race? That is where we are at in Bible Christianity. That is exactly where we are at in Bible Christianity. We are in a race, my friend, and we are probably at 11:56 on that 12-hour clock. Yet, I am telling you, my friend, that we are in a race, and our race is against time. All the years of my life in ministry, I have never seen Bible Christianity in such a sorry state and it being so defeated today.

IV. Preventing Weariness and Fainting

Our text says in Hebrews 12:3, "For consider him that endured such contradiction of sinners against himself, lest ye be wearied and faint in your minds." Let us define being weary and fainting in your mind.

And let us not be weary in well doing: for in due season we shall reap, if we faint not.

You have heard me say it many, many times. I use it all the time, and you will probably get much more sick of it than you already are before you hear me quit using it. That is the basic three P's of Bible Christianity for the ministry. Three basic P's, a very neat little thing to understand that shows you what Bible Christianity really should be in your life and my life.

1. Perspective
2. Purpose
3. Passion

Losing sight of those three areas in your life is how you faint in your mind. I told you that Hebrews 12:1 says we are in a race.

Know ye not that they which run in a race run all, but one receiveth the prize? So run, that ye may obtain.

It is a race to get a crown, but it is an incorruptible crown. We are not talking about the Olympics here. We are not talking about field and track events. We are talking about a race with eternal consequences where men and women wind up in heaven and hell because of how well we won the race, and it is a race for an incorruptible crown.

And if a man also strive for masteries, yet is he not crowned, except he strive lawfully.

What does "strive" mean? It means he does everything he can, and he wants to win that crown because he wants to be pleasing in running his race. Years ago, I had a friend of mine that was a track coach, and he gave a devotion, and I sat in on it. It was one, and I put it down in my Bible. He took these passages, and he talked about running the race to his track team, and he likened it to running the race in the Christian life, and he gave them six principles. I am not preaching these this morning, but I am giving them to you because it is a great outline if you ever want to use it at some point in time, if you ever want to preach a sermon on it. He took the verses about

running a race, and then he built it around six concepts that we need to have, that you need to have in running an earthly race, but he kept making the application to the biblical race.

- Run as hard as you can. There are no trophies for those who do not give it everything you have when you are running. You may pace yourself. You may have a strategy in how you run, but at the end of the day, you give it everything that you have.
- No false starts.
- Once you start to run, stay in your own lane. Nothing will mess you up in this race faster than to get into somebody else's business other than your own.
- Do not look at the hurdles. There are going to be hurdles in this race, and when you stop, you start focusing on the hurdles instead of losing your focus on the race, you are going to trip on one of the hurdles. I thought it was incredible.
- Run lawfully, no shortcuts. The whole team cannot be running around a thing, and you get the idea you can cut across the field and midfield. You cannot do that.
- Remember who you are running for. You are running for an incorruptible crown.

V. The Peril of Lost Comparison in the Laodicean Age

I told the guys as I said in last week's prayer meeting, I think it might be almost impossible to try to do what we are trying to do. Building a Philadelphian church in a Laodicean church age may be an impossible task. I will tell you one of the reasons why that it is, and it is found in the Old Testament in the book of Haggai. You do not have to turn to it; you might want to look at it later, but Haggai 2:3. In this particular book of the Bible, we find ourselves in an Old Testament scenario much like where we are at today. Haggai is written after the captivity that Israel went into for 70 years. During that 70 years, they had lost just about everything that was real to them as far as God was concerned. The physical temple, which was the focal point of where they were at and their relationship and their worship with God, had been destroyed. They go back, and they would try to rebuild it, but they never got it done. When Haggai writes, it is what? Oh, I do not remember, 15 or 16 or 17 years from when they went back, and the thing is still not done yet. It is a picture of God's people having lost the purpose, the perspective, and the passions of why they were God's people in the first place. Here they are with a temple that is absolutely central for them to have for Christ the Messiah to come and get them back on track with God, and yet they are milling around for 16 or 17 years with no purpose, no perspective, and no passion.

Haggai says to them, "Who was left among you that saw this house, Solomon's house, the temple in her first glory? How do you see it now? Is it not in your eyes in comparison as of nothing?"

Do you know what he is saying? He is saying there is nobody here that saw God's glory when this thing was real. All we have today, he is saying, is this desolate Jerusalem in rubble. The reason why he is saying to them, "You do not have the passion, and you have lost your perspective and your purpose," is because you do not have any comparison. You were not back there when Solomon on his sacrificial day, when he dedicated the temple, sacrificed 600,000 bullocks, 200,000 sheep and oxen. He says, "Here you are now going to build this temple, and you have no purpose, you have no passion, you have no perspective." So for you, there is no comparison.

I feel, and this is from the bottom of my heart, kids, I really do. I really feel sorry for some of you younger Christians. I say 30 years down, maybe a little older than that. I feel sorry for you, I really do. Because I know what a struggle it must be trying to build a relationship with God when you have no comparison in history of what a real church should be and a real comparison of what God and your relationship should be. This is why there is so much diversity in Christianity. This is why nobody can really figure anything out. We have nothing to compare it with. You have no idea what it was like in the greatest period of church history. You have no idea what it was like to hear a man that was preaching.

The greatest thing that I have in my life, outside what God gave me in the Bible, the greatest thing in my life—and I thank God for this every day in my life—was to allow me to grow up in the period that He did. I will tell you, part of my problem in ministering, anywhere where I would go, I was born at the wrong time from my perspective. I would have much rather been born in 1700 or 1800. I would have fit in with those guys. Because those guys could preach the word of God and put the thing down like you were laying asphalt on a road, and just as hot, and everybody enjoyed it. Everybody knew that is what it is supposed to be. I am like a fish out of water today. I feel like I am an 18th, 17th century preacher in a 21st century world that cares nothing about God or the word of God.

I told the guys a couple of weeks ago, if I trained you guys the way I was trained in ministry, you would not stick around. I was preaching the first time I ever preached. First time I ever preached, I preached in front of 500 people. I was not even scared because I had such a burden and a desire because I knew what God wanted me to do. I had such a burden and a desire to preach. You know the story. I had a man in my life that did for me what I try to do for some of you. He is the one that taught me and gave me my purpose. He gave me my perspective, and he gave me my passion. Many of you know who he is. He is 86, 87 now, out of the ministry, got Parkinson's disease, probably going to die at some point in the next four or five years just from old age. But he will always be and always was the Apostle Paul of my life.

I remember the first time I preached. Five hundred people. I am going to town up there, and I am shelling the corn and just letting the thing fly. I get up there in Genesis, and I do not remember what I was even preaching on. But I quoted the verse, and I quoted the verse out of Genesis that says in the Bible, "by the sweat of your face." When I quoted it in preaching, I quoted it, "by the sweat of your brow." There are 500 people here, and I am churned up, fired up, pumped up, and I am letting this thing fly. Right in the middle of that, right after I made that statement in front of everybody, I hear this loud booming voice that sounded like the death angel resonating all

through that building that simply said this: "Book, chapter, verse." And I said, "What?" I thought it was the Lord. I said, "What?" And I looked down, and he quoted me, and he said, "Book, chapter, verse." So I said, "Okay, you want to play Bible games? That is right. I will play Bible games." So I went over there to Genesis, and it said, "by the sweat of your face." I had said, "by the sweat of your brow." He stood up in front of 500 people, pointed his finger in my face, and said, "Look, son, if you are going to preach in my ministry and be out of my ministry, you preach the word of God correctly."

Now, if I tried that with some of you down the mission, your moms and dads would be all over me. You would leave the church. You say, "That sounds really cruel." You know what? There were probably people in that building that day that thought that was cruel. But I will tell you one thing: I never quoted another verse wrong, at least in his presence. You cannot do that today. It is an illusion to think that you can take anybody today and the world that we live in with all the amalgamated mess and all of the things that we have and try to forge that thing with the hardness and the endurance and the steel and all of the things that you have got to have to take a stand for today. You know why? Because there is no comparison. I am telling you, there is no comparison.

The word "Laodicea" means "rights of the people." We are living in a day and age where everybody, almost without exception, that is a Christian, is more concerned about their rights than they are God's right. You know why? No comparison. I thought to myself, one of the greatest books in time that you young men and you young ladies too need to get down and understand is the book of Colossians. Paul writes seven books to seven churches. John writes to seven churches. You can line those seven churches up. The one that lines up with Laodicea is the book of Colossians. Do you know what an outline of Colossians is? It is not my purpose to give you the teaching on the book of Colossians today. But in chapter 1, it takes a lot of time and defines who Christ is. In chapter 2, it lines up and shows you what the issues of the 70s, the 80s, and the 90s were, and even up to 2000. In chapter 3 and chapter 4, it shows you how as a New Testament Christian, you are to respond to those things.

The book of Colossians lines up to Laodicea. That is the church period we are in. Now somebody says, "Well, how do you know that?" You will find Laodicea five times in the book of Colossians. You know why? Because if you had a map, you would find that Colossae is right here. That was a very metropolitan city at the time. Then just 11 miles south was Laodicea. Do you know why that is important? It is just like being in Kansas City. This church right here is in Independence. Half a mile down the road or a mile down the road is the old pavilion where we used to have church. That is in Kansas City. There is no sign telling you when you cross over. You think you are in Kansas City when you are in Independence, or you think you are in Independence when you are in Kansas City. You know why? Because they are so close in proximity, and there is really no dividing line some places that tell you that you are not in Kansas City anymore. You are now in Independence, or vice versa. In the same spiritual sense, Colossae was so close to Laodicea that it is hard to tell sometimes when we cross over the line, and we are living in Laodicea when we think we are still living in Colossae. It is a subtle thing. These are the problems that we face in Christianity. These are the problems that keep us from keeping our perspective. It really is.

Personally for me, I would rather have been born in 1700 or 1800. But I have come to terms with it, and I know why God has put me where He has put me. I am at peace with it. I realize now what my job is, and my job is to, no matter what anybody else thinks, what anybody else says, what anybody else does, or what anybody else cares, if I cannot build a Philadelphian church in a Laodicean church period—and maybe that is impossible—but I will tell you what is not impossible: I am still going to be a Philadelphian preacher within the Laodicean church period. That is my calling. I tell you what, I would rather have it the other way around, but so what? This is what God has called me to do. This is where it is at.

VI. The Difference Between Weary *In* and Weary *Of* the Work

Now let us talk about being weary and fainting in your mind. This is going to be a throwback message. I decided that today, since it is Easter, since it is the Holy Day, that what we ought to do is go back, and now that I have told you what the problem is, I want to go back and I want to preach a Philadelphian message. Next week, I will go back to being my liberal self. No, no, no, next week I will go back to placating everybody and playing all the games and all of that. But I thought today, since it is Easter, and it is a Holy Day, and it is the day that we have all come here, I thought that once I identified the problem, if nothing else, I can give you a one-time comparison, because maybe you will never be back, of what it was 50, 60, 70, 80 years ago.

The greatest thing that God ever allowed for me—and I started to tell you this, and I got sidetracked, I do that a lot—was God allowed me to live through the switchover from the last of the Philadelphian church age to what we are today. I actually saw change. I actually was associated with pastors, preached in churches, where in the 1940s they started building their churches, believing the Bible was the Word of God, and by the 1980s and the 1970s, those same men who started believing the Bible now wound up not believing anymore. It was a nationwide, worldwide concept, and it destroyed the spirit in Christianity, and it is why people faint today. So I thought we would go back and, you know, throwback, you see the old ball teams wearing the old uniforms, I thought I would go back to a throwback message this morning, just one time. Like I said, next week I will go back to being my amalgamated, stud muffin self, where you are just very, very kind and very loving, and all the things that you have got to say and you have got to be to play all the games and all of those things. I am going to walk back and take you with me in time this morning.

I want to talk to you about being weary and fainting in your mind. It is okay. The first thing I want to tell you this: it is okay, it is okay, it is okay to get weary in the work of God. I want you to know that. The Bible says not to faint in your mind and get weary, but I want to tell you that it is okay to get weary in the work of the Lord. I do. If you do the ministry, you are going to too, because that comes with the job. After I became a pastor, my two favorite Bible characters became two sets of people. The first one was Moses, because Moses was God's man called to lead God's people. Yet, they come out of Egypt in Exodus 12, and God is giving them great deliverance and great things by His mighty hand. So you go to chapter 12, 13, 14, 15, and then chapter 16, probably not out of Egypt four weeks, and you will find the first word in your Bible

that is going to find it all the way through: it is the word "murmuring." From that point on, God's people, after the great deliverance that God had given them, at every turn, at every place, as they walked through the wilderness, even though God supernaturally gave them what they needed, they never stopped their murmuring. Moses was a good example for me, and it will be for you young men too, and young ladies, when you get into the ministry and down the line someplace, 10, 15, 20 years if Jesus does not come, you are pastoring your church. Moses will be a great understudy for you to study his life simply because you are going to have to put up with the murmuring too. It does not matter that God saved you. It does not matter that right now, sitting here this morning, you have got 98% of the world population beat because they are going to hell, and you are going to heaven. What do we have to murmur about? "I will find something." That is our attitude.

Then my other one was the Old Testament prophets. The Old Testament prophets were my favorite because they were God's men sent to an apostate nation, much like we are today. They have a message from God that God's people simply do not want to hear. Of course, this is where I find my problems. This is where I am born out of my time because the message that you have to preach today, I do not care who they say they are, very few of them, the message you have got to preach today, most of God's people does not want to hear. They approach the Bible and their spiritual growth like they do working out and trying to stay in shape. You get on TV, and you watch this guy come up, and he says, "Buy the new fat burner pills. You eat these pills one a day, you do not even have to work out. They will burn the fat off. You just take one a day, and you will guarantee in one month's time to lose 60 pounds. Wow, for \$19.95, wait, there is more! If you order right now, we are going to give you a month's supply or a year's supply of the fat burner pills. Are you tired of fat? Are you tired of this? Just get the fat burner pill." The phone lines just go crazy because we want a fat burner pill. Everybody wants to look nice, but we want a fat burner pill. We want a pill that we can eat, and they will tell you, "Eat whatever you want and still lose weight." Man, that is heaven to me. I do not know what that is to you. Now, is there anybody in your right mind that knows that is not how you lose weight? You know how you lose weight? You sweat, you work.

When I go to the gym, I watch these ladies on these bicycles. They are just pedaling along, reading a book. You cannot concentrate on working out, reading a book. Get rid of that book. I have a buddy there who is a personal trainer. He is a big guy. Big, big solid guy. Nice guy. I am always giving him a tough time because he was always training these older ladies. One day, I am over there working out, and this one little lady, a sweet gal, she says, "Oh," she says, "you are just so good for me. You just make me feel so good." I stand there, and I said, "What?" I said, "You are not doing your job. She is not supposed to tell you how good you are. She is supposed to cuss you, have nightmares about you. You let her drink water? I do not care if she is 75. Hit that deck, baby." They all laughed and had a good time, but that is the way we are, is not it? We want to get with God without any real work, without any real self-discipline, without any real self-stuff that we have got to change in our lives. We want to get with God just like you. We want to buy a God burner pill. There are none. No more than there are fat burner pills. Only stupid people buy them.

I am telling you, people will wear you out. That is not a complaint. That just comes with the territory. When you start working with people, and you start to get your life involved with people, I am going to tell you something: you are going to get weary, and it is okay. It is okay to get weary in the work of God. The problem becomes when you get weary *of* the work of God. That can never happen. I get weary *in* it, but I never get weary *of* it. One time somebody asked my father, Lord Mel Sabaka, in a Bible study. They said, "Let me ask you a question, Brother Mel. Are you enjoying your salvation? Are you enduring your salvation?" He snapped back so fast, "I am enjoying my enduring." Are you? Are you enjoying your enduring this morning? Are you? You see, when you get weary *of* it, that is when you faint in your mind and quit.

My favorite example in the Bible, and at some point in our church, I do not know when it is going to be, but at some point in our church, I want to bring you through a study of the kings of Israel and Judah. That will be a hard study. That will be a long study. But I will tell you what, you will never find any place in your Bible where you find out more better why you and I are the way we are. You will find kings back there that were perfect in all their ways, but not perfect in their heart. Now, how do you do that? You will find that every king of Israel and Judah back there is compared to one king, and that is King David. In 2 Kings 12, you are going to find one of the kings of Judah. I have preached this message for years and years and years, and it is a great message. His name is Jehoash. Jehoash, king of Judah. Probably never heard of him. But God changes his name in time to Joash. Now, why is that? Because Jehoash in the name means "fire for Jehovah." But Joash, the name that God changes his name to, simply means "fire." Do you know what that is a great study of? That is a study of how a young man or a young lady or a mom or a dad or whoever can start out on fire for Jehovah. Then by the end of their life, the middle of their life, or somewhere in the process, just become fire. They lose Jehovah. They are no longer fire for Jehovah. They are on fire for something, but it is not God. One of the greatest examples how a Christian starts out on fire for God and then in time gets weary, faints, and quits as far as their perspective, their purpose, and their passion. If you want to have some fun with that, just go back and match him up to Chronicles, go to the account in both places, and find out what he did to get his name changed. Find out what he got into that God came down and said, "You have lost your fire for Me. You are on fire for somebody. You are on fire for something, but it is not Me," and changed his name. Incredible.

Some of you, one time, the Bible was everything in your life. Now it is a struggle. Your attitude of heart has been poisoned. Your spirit is gone. The self-biblical discipline and the accountability and responsibility of your life are gone. It is just an absolute tragedy. Now the message today is, like I said, it is for me as much as it is you. I probably look over this thing probably two or three times a year just to keep me because I know, and I told you this, that the three infirmities that we have in the Bible is one, we do not know how to pray, two is our own flesh, and three, the fact that we forget. I am just like you to forget. My wife wanted me to turn the ham on at 9:30 this morning. She left early. I had to stay there. While you were frivolously looking for eggs, I was on my knees before God. That did not impress you any. I was not really, I was walking the dog. But anyway, we were having a great conversation about some of you. She says, "Now turn the ham on at 9:30." I said, "Okay." So I go out in the kitchen, head on the table. There is a note 25

by 50. Then she tried to mask it by "honey." Now I am confused because I know it is a honey ham. So I am not sure what she is talking about. She says, "Honey, would you please turn the thing on at 9:30?" I said to myself as I looked at that 85 by 35 foot note, I looked at that, and I am saying, "Now she told me to do it. Why would she write me a note that big? If she is going to write me a note, just write me a normal note. Why put it up so big that the astronauts in Skylab are looking down and seeing my note?" You know why she does? Because I forget. I will not tell you the three other things that she told me not to do this morning that I already forgot and did. I forget. I am one of the more, I am good with the Bible, and I do not forget things in the Bible, but I forget other things. I mean, everything likes to trade off. I cannot be good in everything. I mean, come on. You can use that, guys. Or you can find something you are good at. You can use that. But I am telling you, we forget. I forget. You forget. We have to learn this. This is how you stay in the race. I am telling you, my God, people, the finish line is in sight. It is right there. We do not have to run for a thousand years. You can look and see the finish line. Now is not the time to quit. Now is not the time to faint in your mind.

Hebrews 12 gives us two things to do to keep from getting weary and fainting and keep from getting out of God's race. I will tell you, there is no walking lane in His track. He says, first of all, "Wherefore seeing we also are compassed about with so great a cloud of witnesses, let us lay aside every weight, and the sin which doth so easily beset us, and let us run with patience the race that is set before us." The first thing he says here that I want to draw your attention to is that we are compassed about with a great cloud of witnesses. That means the chapter before. If you go through that chapter, you will find that there are 16 men and women that he pulled out of the Old Testament: Abel, Enoch, Noah, Abraham, Sarah, Isaac, Jacob, Joseph, Moses, Rahab, Gideon, Barak, Samson, Jephthah, David, and Samuel. Sixteen men and women that he says you do not want to forget these people because they are compassed about you because they had to go through much difficult times just like you do. He is saying, "If they can make it, you can make it." These men and women were faithful in their race.

One of the other things I am eternally grateful for is living in the time period that God allowed me to live. Seeing what was actually transpiring in front of my face that I might carry that through to some of you young men or some of you young ladies that will grasp it. Because I got to hear some of the greatest preachers and the greatest preaching that you could ever hear that you could not find anywhere today on planet earth. You will not find their tapes. You will not find their books. You will not find their sermons. They absolutely have just went into thin air, but they were the greatest, holiest, godliest men who had a fervor for God, who knew the Bible, and could preach the word of God and paint off the walls. Today, you know what we have? We do not have any great preachers today. Back in my day, I used to hear those guys, they would preach on hell. They would paint a picture so hot on hell and so real a hell that people could not wait to get down the aisle. They took the Bible, formed it into a picture through words and through the Spirit of God and the word of God. They laid out the Bible in a place that painted the picture of whatever they wanted to say. We have lost that. Now we have overheads. We have praise bands. We have a thousand things to stir you up and settle the one thing that ought to turn up the heat on you. I told you this was a throwback. Next week it will be, "Why are we here?"

I tried that. When I was young preaching, I got to preach a couple of places. One of the places I preached was Stark County Mental Health Place, and I would go anywhere. I told you any place would have me, but I would go anywhere. I actually went into a place where 30 or 40 people that were crazy people. They were not mentally, they were crazy. They were in there for life. But I am so stupid, I think, and I am up there. I had just heard a great preacher on the radio use this technique, and I thought it was good. He got up, and he got up for the congregation, and he wanted to pose, and he thought for a minute very poetically, and he said, "Let us ask ourselves, 'Why are we here today?'" And I thought, "Man, that is a great lead." I am always looking for lead-ins like you are. Find some. I am always looking for lead-ins. If I find some good ones. So I get up, and the place was, in fact, it was just about as many as you hear this morning. It kind of reminds me of the place. I get up there, and I tried the same thing. I looked at them, paused for a moment, and I said, "Let us ask ourselves, 'Why are we here?'" A guy said, "We are here, preacher, because we ain't all there." Wow, what do you do after that?

I heard great preachers. I heard preachers that laid it out and told you, and I have got those sermons, and I never forget them. I remember one time I heard a preacher preaching a Bible conference for four nights. For four nights, he took the first four people out of this passage here. He took Abel, and he took Enoch, and he took Noah, and he took Abraham, and he preached, and he said, "Let us talk about Abel. Do you know what we learn from Abel? We learn as God's people, we are to give God the very best we have because that is what Abel did." He says, "Let us talk about Enoch. Let us talk about Enoch." The next night, he said, "What did we learn from Enoch? Enoch walked with God, and the world was wicked." I will tell you what we learned: "Do not be afraid as a Christian to walk with God when nobody else does." Then he went to Noah the third night, and he said, "How about Noah? How about Noah? Noah lived in a world where it was all wicked, but he did work for God." You know what we learned? "Do not be afraid to work for God when nobody else does." He took Abraham, and he said Abraham was called out to go when he did not know where he was going. He was called out to go to a place that God called him to. What did we learn from Abraham? I will tell you what we learned. He said, "Do not be afraid to wander for God wherever God calls you to go." I have never forgotten that. You do not hear that anymore. You do not hear that anymore.

I heard a man preach on Jacob, and he laid out the two natures of the believer. I did not even know I had. He said, "Jacob means schemer." In the first part of his life, he is scheming everything he does, but he meets God, and he changes his perspective, and then God changes his name to Israel. Old nature and a new nature. I heard a man preach one time on Sarah, and he talked about the promise of the God that God gave her when she was 80 some years old. The Bible says she laughed at God. Then when God said, "Hey, you laughed," she says, "No, I did not laugh." He says, "Yeah, but you did laugh." She had Isaac. God says, "Call that boy Isaac." He says, "Why?" "Because Isaac means laughter. I want you to remember the rest of your life that there was a time when you disobeyed Me, and this is the price that you are paid for it. Now every time you see that boy, you are going to remember, 'Do not laugh at the promises of God.'" I never forgot that. I put that into my life. I still have that in my Bible. It is still there.

I will tell you, I remember Joseph and the study of Joseph. Joseph was treated harshly by his brethren. They hated him because he had favor with the father, and they hated him. They put him into a hole. "We are going to kill him." Then they brought him out, and they sold him to the Midianites, and he goes down into Egypt, and he is down there for a number of years, and he goes through the trials of Egypt. He goes through what you and I will never go through as a Christian. At the end of his life, at the end of the book in chapter 50, when they are all united together, and his brothers are cowering in the corner afraid that Joseph, who is now the second in command in Egypt, was going to kill him. He steps up to that family, and he says, "Do not be afraid." He quotes one of the greatest passages, one of the greatest verses anywhere in the Bible where he says, "You meant it for my evil, but God meant it for our good." Now, I guarantee you folks, Joseph did not understand that while he was going through it, but all sometimes we have to go through it, do not we? Before we get on the other side, and Joseph got to. I have never forgotten that. That has carried me through the ministry and life more than anything else that I have ever learned.

I think of Samuel, the greatest example of how God calls a young man or a young woman into God's service. I think about Jephthah, the prideful, arrogant Christian who talked big, but in the end of the day, his own daughter died because of his self-righteousness. I am telling you that whole Bible, I have heard men that preached that, and those things are the things that keep me and help me that when I feel like quitting, I realize that the Bible is filled with men and women who went through much more than we did and helped me keep my focus on the finish line. It will help you keep the focus. My God, people, do not quit now. We are in the last part, the baton was passed off, we are running now. Do not quit, the finish line is right there.

VII. Considering Christ: The Key to Endurance

I will tell you the next thing I do. My Bible says, "For consider him that endured such contradiction of sinners against himself, lest ye be wearied and faint in your minds." I will tell you when I get weary in the work, and I feel like quitting, and I feel like fainting, I do what that verse says. I consider Him. You want to restore your perspective, your purpose, and your passion? You want to get back on track? I will tell you what, just consider Him in three ways.

4. Consider Who He Was
5. Consider What He Endured
6. Consider What He Became

VIII. Conclusion and Call to Salvation

Do not quit now. I do not care what the issue is. I do not care what the problem is. You are bigger than that. You have to understand there are bigger things here than this. The finish line, people, is right there. We got the handoff. It is our time as a church. It is our time to run our race. Do not quit now. Do not faint now. There is only something that will keep you from finishing that race. When I get weary and I start to faint, and I do, and you will too, I consider all those that went

before me. I consider what they endured, what they put up with. I look at Moses. I look at Jeremiah. I look at Isaiah. I look at Rahab. I look at all of those pictures and old stories, and then I consider Him. I consider who He was. I consider what He endured, and I consider what He became.

Now you tell me, folks, after today's message—next week I will be back to my old liberal self. I will tell you what you want to hear. I will fix it so it does not offend you. I will walk and tiptoe on eggshells around this pulpit for you. But come on. Let us walk back in history this morning. This is what it was when I grew up. This is what you did and how you preached when I grew up. This is what the man who still believed that book and understood that book and understood the judgment that was coming that you and I are going to have to face when they preached the word of God. Now let me ask you a question: where are you at today? If you are saved here this morning, you need to look on this Easter Sunday deep inside yourself. You need to ask yourself, "Where are you at in this race?" And what justification now do you have, compared to what we heard, to get out of this race? Knowing that the finish line is so short. What torture did you go through? What agonizing? Who did something to your children? What torture had you done to bring you to the point? What was it again that got you out of the race?

Then I want to talk to the rest of you this morning. I love you with all of my heart. But you came here because it is Easter. Easter is about Christ's death, His burial, and His resurrection. That is about your salvation. Maybe you are a young man here today, or you are a young lady. I do not know. Maybe you are a visitor. Maybe you have been coming for 20 years. That would be good. We have only been here seven. Thank you for waiting for us. But the bottom line is this: you do not know today if you died where you would spend eternity. You do not have the assurance in your heart after hearing what I have said. Maybe God's Spirit has melted you. Maybe you put away your foolish pride. Maybe you have come to your heart where God cracked and broke your heart this morning. I do not know. But maybe you have come to the place in your life where you now honestly know and understand that if you died today, you would not go to heaven. You can know.

These things have I written unto you that believe on the name of the Son of God; that ye may know that ye have eternal life, and that ye may believe on the name of the Son of God.

You can know today. Every head bowed and every eye closed.