

I. God's Timing and Spiritual Growth

We didn't get past verse 9 last week, and we probably won't get past verse 9 this week, but that's okay. We saw a great concept of God opening doors. The older I get, and the more I am in the ministry, and perhaps the more I am in the Bible, it comes with age and maturity, seeing the patterns that God does. I am always awestruck at God's timing in everything. Young Christians, young pastors, young Christians in general, do not understand this. It takes time—perhaps 15 to 20 years—to truly grasp that everything must be in God's timing.

We, as God's people, are famous for making things happen, but that is not the way you want to do it. You do not want to make things happen; you want things to happen in God's timing.

I remember teaching you a message a while back about Ezra and Nehemiah. It has been a number of years ago, and it focused on the aspect that God had the right man in the right place at the right time. That is a great lesson you want to learn, and that is exactly what God does. God has a timeframe in which He wants things done.

I think many times we get the idea that we are trying to fit God into our timeframe, but the true reality is, as God's people, we need to get closer to God in the Word of God, learn the principles of God, so we can better fit into God's timeframe. It starts with understanding that God's timing is everything whenever you are going to do anything for God, and doing it in God's time, not our own.

That brings up the importance of continued spiritual growth. This church has been here now for over eight years. God has been very good to us, and it has grown to the point where its stability, with the men and women who really have a handle on the Word of God, really forms a strong base. But I am never satisfied with that. I am always combing this church for any person who has a hint of leadership ability, and then to take that person and to help them grow.

I also understand that in the day and age that we live in, let's be honest, it takes a special kind of person today to be able to stand for the Lord. It is easy when you hear, and every time I preach a message like this, I get five or ten people come up, and in a way that is very well-meaning, and I do appreciate it. They always say, "Well, you can count on me." I understand that, and I do appreciate that.

But the Bible talks about counting the cost, and it costs something to stand for the Lord today. I am just not sure that most of God's people are willing to pay what it costs. It sounds great, and it probably makes us feel great when we say it. But the reality is, after 40 some years in the ministry, I just know that that is not true. It takes a special kind of person today with all the pressures and all of the things that come from your friends, from family, from your job, from just the pressures of this world. It is not an easy thing to make that stand for the Lord, and its spiritual growth and the continuance of that is really the key.

II. The Misconception of Philippians 4:13

There is a great principle found in Philippians 4:13. I am sure most of you probably already know what you have heard me say a thousand times, but it always bears repeating. That verse says:

Philippians 4:13

I can do all things through Christ which strengtheneth me.

That is a great verse, but that verse is probably one of the most misconstrued or misunderstood verses in all of the Bible. It is partly because of what the new Bibles do to it. The Bible says, "I can do all things through Christ which strengtheneth me." All your new Bibles, if you have any other Bible than the King James Bible this morning, will say something like this: "I can do all things through Christ who strengtheneth me." That is a lie, and that is a terrible breakdown of biblical principles.

We absolutely get the idea that we just get saved and we go to church, and then when you kind of pay your spiritual dues, that God has a big gospel dump truck up there in heaven that has spiritual maturity in it. When your name pops up on the list, He backs it up at night while you sleep, the angels pull the roof off, and He dumps it all down. You wake up in the morning, and you are ready to go. It would be nice if it worked that way, but that is not how it works.

The Bible says, "I can do all things through Christ which strengtheneth me." It is not God that comes down and strengthens you. It is that God strengthens you through the things that you do for Him. That is why most people never grow, because they never do anything. The great misconception is, it is not God just giving you the strength to do a work for Him, but when you do the work for Him, then He strengthens you through the work that you do.

God will give you something to do. You do that faithfully. "I am faithful over little things. God makes me rule over many." Then He gives you the next thing to do. You are faithful in that. He gives you the next thing to do. You are faithful in that. That is how it works. That is why things like the right timing and the right place where we are at in our church. If God would have given us this homeless ministry when He did, look how it all came about, all because we had too many people going in one place, and then God through that opened the door to what we got.

Things like this are basically the gateway to leadership in our church and in any church. Sir Isaac Newton lived way back when, and he was kind of an early physicist. He thought about gravity and all those things, and he put forth the theory, and it is a true theory. He says that for every forward motion, there is an equal reaction motion. In other words, like shooting a gun, the bullet goes out, but the gun recoils. That is true; that is the property of science, that is absolutely true.

But it is also true in ministry. For everything that you do for the Lord or somebody else, and you put out to do, there is an equal reaction that comes back to you, and that would be Philippians 4:13. Just like when you shoot a gun, and you ever saw a big howitzer that goes off, the barrel slides back, and if they do not dig them in the dirt, it will jump clean back. Why? Because the force of sending something out is an equal force of when it comes back.

You will see that in any church. This is true in any church. The real people who really get the job done are the people who have come through a process where they are growing spiritually and working with people involved in ministry, doing things that get done, because that is what the verse says. When you put out the energy to do something, there is an equal motion that comes back, and that is your spiritual growth. That is why, hands down, in any church—I do not care what church you go to—the people who are going to be spiritually mature and be really doing the work that needs to be done are going to be the people who have grown from what they are doing with others. That is just simply true.

I watch it in the prayer groups. I have watched some of you take a prayer group and watch how just a simple little thing like that has made you or molded you, or basically it shows you what you are really made of. It is nice to say, "Oh, I am in charge of a prayer group," but it is also nice to turn in your reports to Bob every week when he wants them. You see, with responsibility comes accountability. Everybody says, "Oh, I am a prayer group leader." Not in Bob's eyes, some of you are not, because it goes beyond just doing and taking a title. That is the way of everything in ministry; that is just the way it is.

We are going to work on those things because leadership is about you doing things for people by design that has an opposite effect in your life. In any church that you go into, I do not care where it is, you will see this effect immediately. Bob Jones Sr. is a great old guy who has been dead now since probably the middle 50s, but he had some of the greatest quotes that had so much wisdom in them, and some of them are just hilarious.

I remember hearing tapes of him and hearing guys talk about him. I was three or four years old when he died, but he sure trained up some young men and put them out. He would talk about, and you see this exact thing in any church, he would say, "In every church you have those who are standing on the promises, and then you have those who are sitting on the premises." That is exactly what you have in churches today. He had it right on the money. You have those of God's people in any church who are standing on the promises, doing what the Word of God says, and others are sitting on the premises. That is just the way it works; there is nothing you are going to do to change that.

The leadership in any church will always be related directly back to what that person, he or she, gets involved in as far as giving themselves to God's work. It is just the way it is. It has always been that way; it will always be that way. I am not much for—I have a lot of compassion and a lot of sympathy for people that go through problems, I really do—but I am not much in consoling whiners, Christians who whine about things.

You know what you ought to do? You ought to go down to KU Medical Center or get down to the Children's Hospital, go through the burn ward, or watch those little kids who are eight, nine, six years old that are dying of cancer. See some people who really have some problems. You would probably stop your whining. But you know why we whine? We whine because we are not involved in other people's problems, and that is one of the great things about dealing with other people's problems in their lives: it shows you how insignificant ours really are.

I am not saying you and I will not go through some problems, but you know what I am telling you? You want to keep your focus. You want to get the focus. People all the time say, "Well, you know what? I just do not think church is friendly, and I do not think there are people there, and I think there are too many cliques, and I think this or think that." You know what the bottom line is? You only get out of something what you put into it.

Every church ought to be a clique. Do you know that? Every church ought to have a clique. You have at least two: God's clique and the devil's clique, and you get to decide which one you are in. That is just the way it works. The leadership in any church and what we get out of something always goes back to what we put into it.

Now let us read our text again this morning, and we are going to move along here, and we are going to see another great principle that has to go with the first great principle. But let us read it again, the whole 9 through 14.

1 Corinthians 16:9-14

For a great door and effectual is opened unto me, and there are many adversaries.

Now if Timotheus come, see that he may be with you without fear: for he worketh the work of the Lord, as I also do.

Let no man therefore despise him: but conduct him forth in peace, that he may come unto me: for I look for him with the brethren.

As touching our brother Apollos, I greatly desired him to come unto you with the brethren: but his will was not at all to come at this time; but he will come when he shall have convenient time.

Watch ye, stand fast in the faith, quit you like men, be strong.

Let all your things be done with charity.

Now Father, we come to You today, and we ask You to take the Word of God and to give us those things that we need. These are good people here today, and Lord, I pray that You will continue to work on their heart. Help them to grasp the basic, simple concept of growing in Christ. You only get out of something what you do. If you do not put anything in, if you do not do anything, nothing comes back. It is a simple law of physics.

Help them to understand that the Bible says Jesus said, "If you will be faithful over little things, I will make you rule over many." That is where it has to start, where it has to start with each individual in every church on this planet today. Churches are made up of people, and the weakest part of that church will be the weakest person. That is why, Father, pastors around this world need to take a stand on the Word of God. They need to preach the Word of God. I need to hold their people accountable, but yet at the same time, bring them and help them, give them every opportunity to be a tool shed, that everybody that comes to that church gets every tool that they need to do the job that God has called them to do.

Help us to do that. We thank You for the great open doors that You have given us in the past, and the one You have given us now. And Lord, I thank You for the ones You will give us in the

future. Help us always be faithful. I almost said, "Help us to be worthy," but we will never be worthy, but do help us to be faithful, and we will thank You and praise You in Jesus' name, for His sake we ask it. Amen.

III. The Adversary Defined

Last week we saw an absolutely, I think anyhow, incredible concept. We talked about doors and keys, didn't we? We talked about and defined that he talked about an effectual door. That is a door with an effect. We now know, through defining it last week, that doors are opportunities in the Bible, and keys are what you learn from the Bible that open up those doors of opportunity. We saw that, and that is a great principle. You should all have that down now, and I hear it throughout the week and what you talk about, and I like that when I see it having an impact on you.

But today I want to talk about the rest of that verse, and to me, I want to talk about an equally incredible principle, because these two concepts go together. If you are listening to this and you did not hear last week, get last week and listen to them together. You cannot listen to last week without this one, and you cannot listen to this without last week, because the two concepts go together. He set up there, "For a great door and effectual was opened unto me, and there are many adversaries." What I want to talk about to you today is the last part of that verse: "and there are many adversaries."

It was 1972 in my life, and I had just been saved a short time, or right with God a short time, and I was in awe of all that God was doing. I knew that God wanted to do something in my life. I did not know what it was. I was much like many of you, and I wanted to serve God, but I was very inept at it and had no idea what to do. I would see all these guys that were older than me that were doing things, and I wanted to do that, and I did not know how to do that.

I would hear great guys coming in. That is one of the great things about my church back in Ohio. I was privileged to hear probably some of the greatest preachers of the 20th century in their last days. I will never forget, we had a Bible conference every year, an adult Bible conference, and they always would have great preachers. It was about 1972, and I had only been right with God now for maybe about eight or nine months, and I got to hear one of my great heroes of the faith. His name was John Rawlings.

John Rawlings was the pastor of Landmark Baptist Church in Cincinnati, Ohio. It is called Landmark Baptist Church because it is the first and the oldest Baptist church established in Ohio. John Rawlings was by that time probably in his 60s, and old John Rawlings was one of J. Frank Norris's boys, and old John Rawlings was something else. John Rawlings is like many of those boys in Ohio to come up across the Kentucky border out of the Bible Belt back in the Depression, and those periods of time, and built churches up in northern and central and southern Ohio.

Old John Rawlings was something else. He was a true soldier for the Lord Jesus Christ. John Rawlings is somebody you did not want to mess with. John Rawlings could preach the greatest sermons you ever heard, and he would give you a three-star cussing right afterwards if you

wanted one. A lot of God's people, they, and I am not saying that you ought to be that way, I do not know that you can be that way today, but back then it was a different breed. Back then men were men. I am not sure what they are today, but men back then, they had an air about them that they loved God, they loved the Word of God, but they did not take any crap off anybody.

Old John Rawlings was that way, and I loved to hear him preach. I loved to hear him preach. I remember one day back there at Bible conference, and I was just a young guy, and he said something that at that time I did not understand. He said something at that point that I really could not relate to, because where I was, young in the Lord and just trying to get my feet wet. Boy, I will tell you what, after 40 some years in the ministry, I understand what the old boy said clearly and loudly and plainly.

He said up there when he was preaching, and there was a bunch of young people there, much like our church today, because we were at a men's class, and him and Mel were old buddies. He got up there and he started kind of preaching to the young guys, and he said something. He said, "Boys, let me tell you something. If you ever decide that you are going to take a stand for God, if you ever decide that you are going to be God's man, and you are going to take a stand for Him, and you are going to put away everything else in your life, no matter who it may be, no matter what it may be, if you are going to give God everything in your life, and you are going to take a stand for this book," and boy, he believed the book, "the battle you are going to get into is going to make all the great battles of life look like a bunch of kids shooting marbles."

Then he went on to say, "You know, down through history there have been some great battles." Then he listed about 30, 40 battles, just as eloquently as you ever heard in your life. He talked about the Battle of Chancellorsville, he talked about the Battle of the Somme, he talked about the Battle of Pearl Harbor and the Battle of Wake Island and the Battle of Guadalcanal, all things that he had lived through. He said, "When you tie all those battles up and you look at all those battles and how bloody they were, how horrible they were, how terrible they were, I am going to tell you something: if you are a young man or a young lady, you are going to make a stand for God and going to clear up a spot in your life and says, 'Here is where I am going to stand, and this is the book that I am going to stand on,' the battle you are going to get into is going to make all those battles look like nothing."

I will be honest with you, at the time I did not relate to that. I did not. If you had told me when I came down and made my heart right with God, and the guy dealt with me there, if you would have told me at that point that the deacons were fighting and trying to plot to overthrow this, and people out there were not paying their bills, and doing all these things, and they were gossiping about each other, and they were tearing each other up, and political things were going on, I would have fought you tooth and nail. I would have said, "No, this is the closer you are going to get to heaven." Not anymore.

You see, you learn some things, and one of the things you learn is that when God opens a door, and this is a great verse, and this is why you have got to take those verses together, when God opens up the door, there are going to be many adversaries. That is just the way it works.

Now you should know that. Remember our Bible Basics class? When I taught you Bible Basics, we did not go. This verse is a great place to see one of the principles that I taught about God and the devil and the Bible and history and how it works in your life. God moves, the devil moves. I showed it to you in Bible Basics. I showed you how you do not go three verses in Genesis 1 before there is light and darkness, and those two have never got along the rest of the Bible. One represents God and one represents the devil.

In Genesis chapter 1, you saw God doing something. In Genesis chapter 2, God, the devil came down and tried to stop it. In Genesis chapter 2 and 3, God established His man, put him down in the garden, started to have fellowship with him. In Genesis chapter 3, the devil came down to stop it. In Genesis chapter 4, Adam has Cain and Abel, two boys, and they are out there, and the devil comes in and tries to stop it. You get over there in the Noah with the flood, and God brings the sons of God down to try to stop it. You get past the flood in Genesis chapter 6, 7, and 8, and God starts to do it again with Abraham. The devil came down, built the Tower of Babel. It is time after time.

When Christ came in the New Testament, God sent His Son. The devil sent his son, Judas, to mess things up. In church history, in the book of Acts, it was the church of Antioch that was God's church. We are the first called Christians. What did the devil do? He brought in this church, Alexandria, to try to tear it up. It is all through history. It is in everything that you do. God moves, and the devil moves.

Last week I showed you our case in point was the Philadelphia church. God came down and established that church, opened a church of the open door, and what happened? They had many adversaries. By the time you get to Revelation chapter 3, verses 7 through 13, the adversaries have shut that door. Now you are into the church of the closed door.

This adversary that we are talking about here, then Paul is making a reference to, is defined for you in particular in your Bible, if you do not know this already, in 1 Peter 5:8. That great verse says:

1 Peter 5:8

Be sober, be vigilant; because your adversary the devil, as a roaring lion, walketh about, seeking whom he may devour:

There is your adversary. Now I am telling you right now, at some point in your life, and I hope you all get there, but reality says you will not. At some point in your life, I hope God stirs your heart about something that God gives you to do. I know a lot of times everybody has to go through things, everybody has to work through things. I have seen people come here into this church, and you know, they come for a while, and then they fall back into the world, and then they show back up, and bang, they are ready to go. You know why? Because some people have to work through things, and you have got to be patient with that.

My prayer and goal for everybody in this room under the sound of my voice is the fact that you just at some point in your life get it put together and you start to do what God wants you to do. But I am telling you right now, the moment you make that decision in your heart, and God gives

you the open door that you said, "That is what I have been looking for," your adversary is going to show up.

Remember what Paul said in Colossians 4:3 last week? We talked about it. He said, "Pray for us, that God would open unto us a door of utterance, to speak the mystery of Christ." Then he said this, "For which I am also in bonds." He was in jail when he wrote that. God gave him an open door. He is praying for another open door, but the adversaries wanted to stop him, and now he is in jail. He is in prison. He is in prison for going through the door that God gave him.

Why? Because I am telling you something, my friend, do you want Ministry 101? Do you want the first basic fundamental rule of Ministry 101? God opens the door, the devil shows up. God gives open doors, the devil gives great adversity. You might as well get that set. You might as well get that fixed in your mind right now that that is exactly the way it goes, because that is the way it is always going to go.

That is why so many young Christians get blindsided. They get the first part of the verse. They think, "Oh, God opened a great door! We are going to go down to homelessness, we are going to do this, or we are going to get in prayer groups, and we are going to do that, we are going to do this." Then the moment you get excited about it, what happens? Your phone rings. It is somebody who has got an attitude toward God. It is somebody that you meet who says, "Oh, you are going to that church? Oh, you are going to do that?" And they try to knock your legs right out from under you. Why?

Why is that? Ministry 101: God opens the door, the adversary comes. Make friends with it. Deal with it. Realize that is the way it is. When you get into the ministry, that is what separates the men from the boys. Do not get blindsided by it. Somebody said, "Well, what happened? What is wrong? I started to do what God wanted me to do, and then my whole world fell apart." Well, what did you expect the devil to shake your hand and give you a degree and say, "Boy, you are really going to do good. I wish you were on my team"?

A couple of weeks ago on Thursday night, we talked about unclean spirits and being possessed. We now know from that that the devil cannot possess you if you are saved. He cannot get your soul. But today we see another whole concept of that. He may not be able to get your soul and may not be able to possess you, but my dear friend, he sure will try to devour you. I mean by that, he will overwhelm you. You know how the devil works when the Bible says, "Be sober, be diligent, because your adversary the devil, as a roaring lion, walketh about, seeking whom he may devour."

Now I am going to tell you something, you are all kind of sheltered here. I understand that. Most of you in your Christian world right now are fat, dumb, and happy. You do not know anything exists outside of the fun time that you have here. That is because it never rolls down on your shoulders, and for many, many years it rolled just down on my shoulders, and now there are men who have raised up to take that off, and it rolls down on their shoulders, and that is the way it should be.

But I am telling you right now, you live kind of sheltered, but if you ever, if you ever really get into this work here with me or any work at any time in your life, you are going to see what I am talking about. I remember my first Bible study when I came to Kansas City in 1976, and I was pretty stupid at that point in time about the ministry. I had been with Mel for almost six years, and he taught me everything that foundationalized. I knew a lot to expect a lot of things, but even at the best, I mean, I got six years under the best guy anybody could ever have before God sent me out, and I think that is basically the way it ought to work, at least five or six years.

But finally, when I got out there, I saw how I, I do not know what I would have done if it would not have had that five or six years, because I was still totally unprepared. I came into Kansas City, and I thought everybody in the world believed the Bible just like we did in Canton, Ohio. Boy, did I learn a reality! It only took one Bible study, one Bible study, and I thought, "Wait, I am going to go in here and talk about this, talk about that, and talk about this, talk about that." And I did. Boy, I did not get home less than an hour, my phone was ringing. My parents wanting to say, "What do you mean just King James Bible is the Word of God? What are you telling my kid? What do you mean over there, Genesis chapter 6, those were sons of God? What are you talking about?"

I am thinking, "My God, what did I get into?" So I went in to see the pastor. I figured, "You know what? I might as well quit before I get started. I have not even unpacked everything yet. I can just load it back up and go back home." He just laughed at me, and I have got to say this about him, he was very patient with me. He laughed, and he just kind of sat back. He did not conceal it like it was. He sat back and he laughed, and he put his arm across his chest. He says, "Well, Bob," he said, "I want to tell you," he said, "you are going to find out that the seat of all knowledge is not in Canton, Ohio, with Mel Subaka."

Now I knew that it was, and I knew he was wrong, but that gave me what I was looking for, because I may not be the smartest guy in the world. My own claim to fame is, "I am the fastest one in the slow class." Then he sat back and he said, "You know what? I do not care what you teach. As long as you keep a good spirit in the class, as long as you keep doing what God, you know, with those kids, and you help them be a leader to them, and help them do what is right," he said, "I will keep the parents off your back. We do not, I do not agree with everything you teach, but you know, so you know what? That is immaterial." He says, "You take care of those kids, you give them a good spirit, keep a good spirit in that class, I will keep everybody off your back." "Fair enough," I said. "Boy, that is all I needed to hear."

But if you think that that is where it all ended, you are crazy. I mean, I appreciate that, but at the end of the day, I will tell you what, I got it. I got it every time I turned around. I did. I had one particular parent, they were Pharisees, and G. Bracken knows who these are. I will not mention their name because nobody needs to, but they hated my guts. I had been there about four or five years now, and somebody decided on Sunday night we were going to have Bible classes that people in the church could come to. I said, "Okay." So every pastor took a class. Church started at six, I think the classes started at five. We had a month to sign up.

So I am in the church now, been there four or five years, and I was going to do the book of Revelation. That is just where I was at that particular point. Everybody else was doing their thing, and there were some good classes. Well, there was this couple in the church who, he was the resident Pharisee slash Bible scholar. His big book was the book of Daniel. This guy was as boring as puke to listen to when he was talking. He was the worst speaker I have ever heard in my life. His Sunday school class, he had been there 20 some years, his Sunday school class ran six, and that was him and his wife and four other people. My class after five years was running like 250 people.

So they opened us up to the church. I did not even look at the list. I just went in. I had 345 people in my class. He had six. I wonder who the six were. So afterwards, a week later, he called me on the phone, and I said, "Well, hi, how are you?" He says, "Fine." He said, "Could I have a meeting with you?" "Yes, sure, sure." He said, "I am really concerned about some of your teachings." He said, "I would like to help you." And I said, "Well, gee, I would love to have the help, thank you. What can I, what can you, what do you want to talk about?" He says, "Well," he says, "it is your style and some of the things you say." I said, "Okay." And he says, "You know, you cannot say the things you say and build anything and be successful."

So he went on about 40 minutes telling me what is wrong with what I did. He said, "So I hope that..." I said, "I got it. I got it. I am going to quit preaching the way I preach. I am going to quit saying the things I say the way I say them. I am going to quit doing this, I am going to quit doing that, and I am going to start doing this." He wanted me to take some classes at Calvary Bible College. I said, "I want to do that." I said, "When it is all said and done, I am excited because then I can run six in my Sunday school class like you have got now." When you talk like that, you are going to get in trouble.

I have only had one rule in all the years in ministry, because I know that when God opens the door, I know when God opens the door, there are going to be adversaries. I have always had one rule: no quarter, no quarter given. If you want to take it on, take it on. We will see how it falls down at the end of the day. But I am telling you, you are all kind of sheltered here, you really are. The truth of the matter is, the devil will always try to stop you.

You see, you do not realize this yet: the devil cannot touch you. The devil today, if you are saved, he cannot touch you. He cannot stop you. The devil today, if you are saved, he has absolutely, listen to me now, absolutely no power in your life. The world, absolutely. The government, yeah. Unsaved people, no question about it. But you and me, if you are saved, if I am saved, we belong to God. It is Him that is living inside you. It is Him that is the Holy Spirit of God that has saved you, and the devil cannot touch you or stop you. He has absolutely no power over you.

But what does he do then? Why is he so successful in our lives? Because the devil will always try to stop us by intimidating us. You see, he operates on not what you know, he operates on what we do not know. He is not going to attack you on a frontal assault when you have got the front door barred and the windows barred. He is going to go around because he knows you left the back screen door unlocked. He is going to intimidate you. He is going to intimidate you with the things that you do not understand.

The Bible says he is a roaring lion. Did you not read that? I was in Africa a number of years ago, and I think I was in northern Africa at one point, mid-central Africa in Kenya, and then I was in Johannesburg in southern Africa. I think South Africa is probably the most beautiful part of Africa there is. I was in South Africa, and we were working there with missionary teams, and they gave us a break on the weekend, and it was the greatest experience of my life. They actually took us into what they called a game preserve. You had to drive through the jungle with the windows up. You are into the deepest, darkest part of Africa, and you are looking at the, there are giraffes running along the side, and out there.

So we get into this place, and it has got a big steel high fence all the way around it, and it is inside, it is like a plush resort place, but it is all fenced in. At night they close that gate, and you are in there sleeping in the Holiday Inn, five-star stuff with great meals. But all around you, and the place is huge, it is probably as big as this whole corner of our intersection here, it is probably bigger than that, and it has got bungalows and everything is absolutely first class. But right outside those gates, man, about two o'clock in the morning, I heard a lion roaring out there, and he sounded like he was right next to my window. I could walk up to the thing and look down the river, and I saw the biggest crocodile. I thought they were submarines, they were so big. It is just like any Tarzan movie you ever heard. You can hear the monkeys out there chirping and chirping and all that stuff.

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I am laying there in bed, and I am thinking, "What a great place!" All that time I did it, man, he was close, and boy, I will tell you what, it put the hair up in the back of my neck. I thought about that many times after I read 1 Peter 5:8. You know what Christianity is like? When you got

saved, God put a big fence around you, and all the devil can really do at night is roar out there in the darkness. But if you do not know that the gate is locked and the gate is up and the fence is up, it will scare the fire out of you. That is how he does. That is how he does.

Haunted houses are big this time of year, and haunted houses are really kind of a scary thing. You go through there, and people, you know it is fake, you know it is phony, but it scares the fire out of you. You walk in this room and you hear these moans and groans coming from out of here somewhere in the dark, and you are running into things hanging from the ceiling, and you are absolutely scared. But you take a big flashlight, better yet, mount a flashlight under the barrel of a Glock, suddenly you are not afraid anymore. It is the darkness and the unknown that always makes us afraid, and when it deals with your adversary the devil, it is the darkness and the unknown of what you do not know about the Bible that he uses, and that is how he stops you. It is exactly how he stops us.

He will always try to stop you by intimidating you, and if you ever do anything at all for God, you are going to, in time, I mean, let's face it, you are going to rub people the wrong way. I do not care. Some of you, you have friends, you work with, or friends in your life, or friends that are your family or whatever, and right now if you really took a stand for God and really did what was right in your life, you would lose them. That was Paul's biggest problem he had to deal with, and it will be our biggest problem. You know why? Because with great opportunity of God opening doors comes great adversity. That is why it is a fact of life. It is the reality of ministry. Get used to it. Deal with it. Make friends with it.

You know, one time I, another fun time I had in my life is I went down to the rattlesnake roundup down in Texas, and that is fun. Those guys in this one place must have brought in 6,000 rattlesnakes. I mean, and then they eat them. I will tell you what, that is where I bought me a rattlesnake, all stuffed up, curled up, ready to strike. I have given that rattlesnake many names over the years, people that I knew.

Anyway, I am down there, and there is this old guy, man, and he must have been 60, 70 years old, and I, he has got rattlesnakes everywhere, and I am talking to him, and I am just fascinated. I am saying, "Man," I said, "how do you get so many rattlesnakes and never have been bit?" "You know, I have been bit," he said, "I have been bit probably 40 times." And I said, "Well, why are you still alive?" "I mean, I thought they were poisonous." "So they are," he says, "but any true rattlesnake handler, he will take, he will take a little bit at a time of the rattlesnake venom, and you keep digesting it and put it into your system, and after a while, if you do it in small doses, that builds up your system that when you get bit with a rattlesnake, that it does not affect you. I mean, you may get sore and swollen, but it is not even going to kill you because you have got your body adapted by the venom that you have been taking up, and you have got yourself built to the place where you can resist the venom of a rattlesnake."

I thought to myself, "Well, that is pretty good. You guess you better do that if you are going to do it." But I thought about that later, you know, that is what we all need to do as Christians. There are some rattlesnakes out there who want to bite you. You know what the Bible does? The Bible is your anti-venom. You get the biblical principles in your life, and you learn what the Bible says

about your adversary and who he is going to use and what he is going to use and how he is going to stop you. When they do bite you, it does not hurt nearly as bad.

There are just things that you need to think about if you are going to get into ministry, because I am telling you, with great opportunity comes great adversity. It does. I will tell you something else, you never want to look at adversity or adversaries as a bad thing. I do not think. I do not think. Some of God's people, you get defeated before you even get started. I mean, you really do, and I feel sorry for you. I mean, you do. But I would think that, I mean, do not ever be afraid of it as long as you are doing what is right.

I better address that. I realize that a lot of our adversity that we bring on, people bring on ourselves because we do not do what is right. I mean, if you do not, you do not do what is right in your own personal life, you do not do what is right with your family, you do not do what is right with people. The Bible says, "Have a good conscience toward man and God." I mean, you cannot go around life and not pay your bills and stiff everybody you owe money and do this and do that, and somebody just think you are going to wake up someday and no, you are not going to have, and then when you do have adversity, say, "Oh, of course, I am in the ministry." No, it is because you are an idiot and you did not do what was right, and you want to blame it on something else when in reality it was your own fault.

I am not talking about that. I am talking about you standing on the Book, having a good conscience between man and God, doing what you are supposed to do between man and God. That is going to be enough to get you clobbered. But Romans 8:28 says that all things work together for good. I personally think you ought to wear that as a badge of honor.

In fact, I will tell you something else, you are not going to like this, but I will tell it to you. If you have been saved five years or more—and I always say that because that is how long it took me to really get out of there in five or six years, I always give you a five or six year break, figure it takes you that long to figure it out, that is what it took me—but I will say this, if you have been saved five or six years, and you have not got two crowds in your world, one who loves you and the other one who hates you, you better look at your life. I think you might be compromised in some place.

You actually think that they hated Christ? They put Him on the cross. They were after Him every chance they got, and they wanted to kill Him. They wanted to beat Him up. They wanted to, every step the scribes and Pharisees took to try to trap Him, talk about Him, talk about He was an illegitimate bastard son, talk about the fact of His mother and His father and everything that He did. Then you skate through life and I skate through life as a Christian, and nobody ever says boo to us, and then we are Christ-like? You need a psychiatrist.

Let me give you three great verses quickly here, and these verses are, these are anti-venom right here. You want some anti-rattlesnake venom, and boy, there are some snakes out there.

1 John 4:18

There is no fear in love; but perfect love casteth out fear: because fear hath torment. He that feareth is not made perfect in love.

That is a great verse. So that means your perfect, your love with God, and when you love God, then you learn all about God, you get to understand the patterns of God, you get to know who God is, it casts out fear. You are not afraid of anything, or I should say, you are not afraid of anything you should not be afraid of.

Here is another great one:

Isaiah 26:3

Thou wilt keep him in perfect peace, whose mind is stayed on thee: because he trusteth in thee.

1 John 4:4

Ye are of God, little children, and have overcome them: because greater is he that is in you, than he that is in the world.

Those three verses are anti-venom. When your adversary shows up, when God opens the opportunity, what are you going to do? Are you going to put your tail between your legs all the rest of your life and run from what God wants you to do? Are you really? Are you really going to be like a whipped little puppy because somebody says something about you, or they do not like you, or they do not like what you said, or they do not like where you go to church, and they do not like this and they do not like that? Are you actually the rest of your life going to put your tail between your legs, pee a little spot on the floor like a dog scared, and then run off in the closet someplace?

Listen, if you are doing what is right with people and that Book, and you are preaching what God tells you to preach, and you are doing it by the Book, and your life personally is clean where it needs to be, never, and I mean never, and I mean never, never, never get nervous or let it bother you what people think or say about you. Rather, they are lost. Listen, kid, if you have got God's hand in your life, and His blessings in your life, and people are being saved, and lives are being changed, and lives are being transformed, what do you care what somebody else thinks about it other than God?

I mean, come on. In other words, if you are winning people to Christ, do not take too seriously what people who never win anybody to Christ think about you. Give them Proverbs 11:30. If you are involved in people's lives and actually a part of letting God use you and help them, you do not ever let people who are not part of anybody's life, who never work with anybody, ever influence you or by what they think or what they say.

Hey, let me tell you something, do not ever let people who do not come to church or hardly ever come to church ever tell you how to run a church, and then care less what they think when you say, "No, thank you. Thank you for your concern, but no, thank you." Do not ever let people who do not give anything to your church come around and try to get into the finances and tell you how you ought to be spending the church's money. Get out of here. Get out of here. But that is what happens. People get power. They want to push their weight around. They want to come in and they want to say, "Well, we want to see this." Well, you can see whatever you want to see, just bring your giving record when you come. That will cut down the line.

IV. Historical Examples of Adversity

I got this way not by any my own fault. Maybe it was when I was a young man growing up and paying my dues. I realized that one of the things I was going to have to do is to become fluent in church history. I knew that church history was really the key, along with the Bible, to putting it all together. I realized that, as I think most pastors have to do, and really every Christian has to do, but they will not. I think you ought to be able to speak church history like you speak your own native English language. I think you ought to eat, sleep, and drink it. I think you ought to see everything in the world and run it back through the Word of God and what is going on. I think that is the key.

We like to talk about the God of prophecy. Well, the God of prophecy is also the God of history, and you cannot have one without the other. So I started to go through that, and I saw very clearly, God gave me at least enough sense to see that, and I began to go through it, tie it into my Bible, and in doing so, I got something out of it I never expected to get. It just happened. It just came about. It was not my goal, but it absolutely, and I am not, it is a thing where when I saw it, it absolutely just captivated me.

When coming through church history, looking at the things that a man has to have or a woman has to have to face the adversity when God opens up a door, because the verse is the compound verse: God opened up an effectual door, but there are many adversaries. You cannot take one without the other. Over the course of 10 to 15 years, I kept bumping into four men in church history, and God took these four men, and in my life at that particular point in time, it has changed somewhat, they were my role models.

I think every kid has to have role models. I think the first role model a kid ought to have is his father. I think that is a good role model. It does not happen very often, but I think it ought to be. Then his dad will lead him to other role models, and in the Bible, some of your kids grow up with their role model to be sports figures, fornicating, drug-taking sports figures, who you are going to tell your kid you want to grow up and be like that? You mean, "I want you to grow up and be good in sports." The kid does not see it that way. He looks at the sports and the drugs, and that is exactly what he becomes. After all, maybe, come to think of it, maybe the role model was his father. I do not know.

But I began to see that role models are important, and these men began to be role models for me because when I was in ministry and I did not know nothing, and I was learning through this thing, I saw that these four men:

1. One had what it took.
2. Two, they got the job done.

I remember asking God, and I personally, I do not think God ever answered this prayer in my life, but I remember asking God to mold me in these areas of my life. I remember as a young guy sitting down there and studying their lives and afterwards saying, "God," sitting back in that chair looking up at the ceiling, thinking to myself, "My goodness, where did all that go today?" And, "God, help me, help me to put that area in my life in ministry, to be faithful in me."

I never wanted a big ministry. I do not want one today. I am not looking for a church of 10,000. If I had a church of 10,000, I would sell it tomorrow with the people with it, \$100 a head. That is not my goal. My goal is not to see how many people I can get to come to church. I have one goal in my life that I want to do, that I fail miserably at it most of the time, but it is the one goal that all I care about, and that is to stay faithful to what God has called me to do. I do not care about anything else.

I can remember asking God to mold these guys' character in my life, to show me that, make me faithful. I am first to tell you, I do not personally, I do not think God did that. Maybe that was not the right kind of prayer, I do not know, but boy, did I ever learn some things, and that was worth the trip right there.

Martin Luther (1483-1546): Courage

I looked at old Martin Luther. Martin Luther, he was not a very good theologian. Most people look at guys like Martin Luther, and they do not be able to put it together. His theology was not his main stick. His main stick was courage, and old Martin Luther was an incredible guy. It has been said of Luther that he never feared the face of man. I believe that. I believe that. He lived around 1483 to 1546. He was an old hard-headed Kraut brother who you could not tell anything, and when he got fixed on something, that is what it was.

His open door that God gave him was the Reformation, and that Reformation, because of Martin Luther, became the key to history from 1500 on. The day that he was a Roman Catholic priest caught up in the travesty of the Roman Catholic Church back in that day, but Martin had no peace in his life. He had no peace of God with God in his life, and he struggled. He read all and he heard all that the Catholic Church taught him, and he had to make penance of himself to be accepted of God. So Martin whipped himself till he bled. He sought crawling up the cathedral steps, which numbered about 200 steps, on his knees four or five times a day. His knees bled.

Martin found no satisfaction, and one day he started reading the Bible. Right place, right man, right timing. He opened up the Romans. Romans was his favorite book. He used to call Romans his Catherine because that was his wife's name. One day he read in Romans 1:17 that the just shall live by faith, and at that point he got it. At that point, God opened up the lights of heaven, and old Martin Luther found Christ as his own personal Savior. He led the world to a new level and single-handedly opened the door to the Philadelphia Church Age in 1600.

But my dear friend, did he ever pay a price? You see, God gave him the door, but boy, the adversity came, and the adversity came from the Roman Catholic Church. They went after him with everything that he had. He was a young, in 1515, I stood in Wittenberg, Germany, at the church, the Wittenberg Church, and there he walked up the steps, and on that church door, same door, there in the 1540s, he nailed his 95 Theses, 95 things that the Bible taught that the Roman Catholic Church were not teaching, that he was taking a stand on. Boy, did it hit the fan!

It hit the fan in Heidelberg in April 26, 1518. He is brought before the Roman Catholic Council, and he makes one of the most brilliant defenses. There is more information written about Martin Luther than any other man in church history, and he is an incredible guy. Like I said, theology

was not his great deal, but brother, he was a preacher, and when God needed somebody to break the back of the Roman Catholic Church and take the stand and open up the door and let go through that door that everybody else that was going to go through after him, He found it in Martin Luther.

Boy, I will tell you what, he made a brilliant defense. In 1521, he was called before the Catholic German Catholic Council at Worms, Germany, to answer the question of heresy. They had put a death warrant on him. He turned the witness stand into a pulpit, and instead of getting up and defending himself and telling them how he was wrong, he took that thing and took that, and for the next two hours, he preached a fire out of them based on what the Bible said about salvation. He had a death warrant put on him. He closed that great statement and that great preaching there in Worms, Germany. He closed that thing by holding up his hands, and he said, "On these I stand, and God give me the grace, I can do no otherwise." Boy, he meant it. He meant it.

At the end of his life, he had firmly established three things in mainland Europe:

He established that salvation was by faith and faith alone.

He established that every Bible believer that is saved was a priest.

He established alone that the Bible was man's final authority.

In fact, he is responsible for the German people getting the first King James Bible in German with Martin Luther's translation. One of his friends said one time, "Martin, do not you know the whole world is against you?" He looked back and snarled, "I am against the whole world." That is the courage that he had. That is the courage that he had, because with an open door comes much adversity.

George Whitefield (1734-1770): Compassion

Then I looked at the counters of that, that would be George Whitefield, and where you find courage with Martin Luther, you find compassion with George Whitefield. George Whitefield lived 1734 to 1770. He is called the Prince of Preachers. He would preach seven times a day. Between him and Jonathan Edwards, they really formed the Constitution of the United States with our Founding Fathers with their preaching.

Old George Whitefield never missed an opportunity to preach God's Word to the lost. Story goes, he stayed in preaching at a place one time, and he stayed with some people who were lost, and they came to church, but they would not get saved, and he was very burdened for them. After this last service, he was getting relieved the next morning. It was a very cold January morning, and the frost was all over the window, and George Whitefield, as he left, this family was a very rich family, very influential family, a family that had it all, but did not want God.

Old Whitefield, before he left, took a ring on his finger, scratched on that window, "Yet thou lackest one thing," which is a quotation out of Luke 18:22. The woman came up about two hours later to clean up the room. By that time the sun had come up, and you know how it is when a frost window, all that had melted down there in big letters was, "Yet thou lackest one thing." She

called her husband up. They came up and stuck to that thing. They fell on their knees and trusted Christ as their own personal Savior. He never missed an opportunity. He never did.

I remember one time he preached on the Boston Commons. 30,000 people got saved. In fact, in the Boston Common, there is a little plaque down there. I tried to find it for four or five years. I would go to Boston on a regular basis almost every year preaching, and I would try to find that plaque because I wanted to stand where he stood. I asked every park ranger, I asked everybody, and nobody knew where it was. Then I found one old guy who cut the lawn who knew where it was, and he walked me over there. It was 50 feet where I was, but it was all covered over, and I took the time to pull it all around. There is a little plaque right there. It says, "On this day in 17- whenever it was, George Whitefield preached and 30,000 people came to Christ on that spot." That is compassion.

He is rejected by the established church. You might know that he preached in the woods. This is where the idea of open-air camp meetings came from. He preached one time, and a man came up with a pistol, put that gun right in front of his face and said, "If you do not stop your blankety-blank preaching, I am going to blow your blankety-blank head off." Whitefield just kept on preaching. The guy walked around for a while, stuck the guns in different places on his head and his body, and Whitefield just kept on preaching. The guy backed off about 10 paces, cocked the pistol, put it right to his face, and pulled the trigger. The gun exploded, killed the man, blew the jacket off of Whitefield. He finished the message. Compassion. Compassion. They do not make them like that anymore.

He preached his last message on the balcony of his sick room in 1770, where 2,000 people had gathered to hear him just one more time. He was weak, he was frail, the weather was very cold, but he preached one last sermon, and scores came to Christ. Then he crawled back in his bed, and he died two hours later.

You see, his open door was the Great Awakening. God moved, the devil moved. God moved to bring the Word of God into America, and the devil moved back then. What was Unitarianism, which was spreading through Europe and destroying what the Great Reformation had started, and it came over on the tale of Whitefield. Whitefield and Jonathan Edwards stopped it dead in its tracks, and they are credited, he is credited with the First Great Awakening in America. The open door, the chance for that Bible, the chance for that Bible to go to the next level and finally make its way to you and to me. It is incredible, but God opened the door, but there was much adversity.

David Brainerd (1718-1747): Commitment

Then I saw and asked God for the commitment of a David Brainerd, 1718 to 1747, missionary to the American Indians in New York and Pennsylvania. Probably one of the greatest examples of what is lacking in God's people today: commitment. Commitment with any kind of intelligence, commitment to God's calling in our lives. By modern standard, he was a failure. If he would go to the big churches today, and they would just take him on his record, it would not even let him in the door. He never established any work. He never built any church. He never had a great work. He never saw thousands ever come to Christ. He never even learned the language.

His health was so poor. One time he had to preach through a drunken interpreter to a bunch of Indians. The man was so drunk he could hardly stand, but that is all he had, and he preached the Word of God through a drunken interpreter, and scores of Indians were saved. He is an incredible guy, incredible guy. Never built any work, never did anything meaningfully. Prayed long hours in the snow-covered pine trees of New York and Pennsylvania.

One time, years and years ago, Mel and I were up in Rochester, New York, really it was Five Fingers Lake, which was north of Rochester, right up in the area where he was, and it was in February. We were up at a lodge in a camp way up in the mountains, up in the hills overlooking the lakes, and one morning Mel got up, woke me up, and he says, "Come on, I am going to just go out here." And I said, "Man, it is freezing out there." He says, "Come on, let's go, let's go." So we tramped through the snow, and I will tell you what, the pine trees were just as thick as you could ever see, and they were covered with snow, and I have never heard under those pine trees a more deafening silence. I mean, the snow in them trees, you could hear nothing.

We sat down there, and I still did not know what was going on, and he looked over me and he said, "Just sit here for a minute." And he told me the story of David Brainerd, and he says, "This may be one of the very spots where he prayed, because you could pray under that kind of a tree, brother, because you did not hear nothing, and God even whispered, you could hear what He said." He died 29 years old of consumption. Never did a thing. Never did a thing. Never really established anything.

*But it was his commitment, you see. After his death, they found his diary. We have a copy of it in the bookstore. It is called *The Diary of the Journal of David Brainerd*. His commitment, his dedication, his self-sacrifice stirred the hearts of millions of people for the next 300 years. You know what? William Carey, great missionary, called the Father of Modern Missions, went to India. Robert McCheyne went to the Middle East. Henry Martyn also went to India. They turned the world upside down. You know why they turned the world upside down? All of them got the burden by reading the diary of David Brainerd. All of them got a hold of that. His commitment and his sacrifice, his self-sacrifice, and what he did.*

The door God gave him was the open door to missions around the world, and yet he never even saw it. And yet if we would look at him today by the standards of what we have in churches today, he was a total failure. I guarantee you something, I guarantee when old David Brainerd went up to heaven and he met the Lord, the Lord looked down at him and put His arm around him, and David kind of put his head down. He said, "Lord, I sure did not do very well for You. I am really sorry. I really messed it up. I did not get the language learned. I died when I was 29. I just got married, my wife, and nothing worked out there, and I was sick all the time. I tried my best. I did not get anything done. I prayed and prayed and prayed. I had a few converts, but Lord, I am so sorry. I wished I had done better with the time that You gave me."

And the Lord says, "Come here, let me show you something." God walked him over there. "Look down there. You know who that is? That is William Carey. He is reading your diary. See that over here? That is Robert McCheyne. He is reading what you went through. See that guy down here? That is Henry Martyn. David, let me tell you something, sometimes you do not all get it down

here. Sometimes you do not get it till you get up there. You know, I need guys to go out and do great things, but I need some people that do not get anything done. They just put down on paper what their burden was at their heart, and I will take that, and David, you are going to get credit for everything that they did at the judgment seat of Christ." You know why? Because it was your burden that became their burden that was first My burden.

George Müller (1805-1898): Faith

Then I think of the faith of a George Müller. Yeah, when God opens the door, there is going to be adversity, and you better have these four things in your life if you are going to make it. Old George Müller lived 1805 to 1898. Born and raised in Germany in Prussia, he lived the life of sin and crime before he was saved, but he was converted in a Bible study in a private home, and he immediately got a burden for the lost people around him. He too was rejected by the intellectual. He tried to get into the London Missionary Society, but they would not take him, and he preached wherever God throughout England would give him an open door.

He saw by that time the big need was orphan children, homeless children, all in the streets of England, and he got a burden for them. He opened his first orphanage in 1835 with 26 girls. By 1870, he had built five large orphanages, feeding and ministering to the homeless of his day, over 2,200 kids. The most amazing thing about George Müller is the fact that he solicited no financial help from anybody. Never asked one time. Never took up an offer. Never went to a church. Never asked anybody for anything. He only told the Lord his daily needs.

It is said that he read the Bible through over 200 times, 100 of that on his knees. All his life of 63 years of ministry, he alone with God prayed in over seven and a half million dollars. Never one time looked outside of God for his help. At the end of his life, over 121,000 kids were cared for and won to Christ and saved, and over 5,000 of those that went into the ministry, into the mission field. When he died at 93 years old, his personal estate was worth less than \$100. See how it works?

I saw these guys. I never expected to get that out of church history. I thought it was just a bunch of dates, facts, and figures. But you see, he did what God wanted to do. He just went through the doors as God gave them to him with only two things: God and the Word of God. But they all paid a price.

You know, I think the real question for us, I think the real question for us, I think the real question for you and for me that has to be pondered today, certainly has to be pondered at some time in your life, maybe you have already pondered and already made up your mind. I think the real question for us is not, "Are we willing to serve God?" I think the real question is, "Are we willing to pay the price to serve God?" Because with a great open door comes a great adversity, and it is going to happen.

Listen, wherever there is movement of any kind, there is friction, based on the Bible and what it says. If you have been saved five years or more, as I said, and you do not have a crowd that loves you and a crowd that hates you, I would check it out. I think there is something wrong someplace. That is one of the cold, hard, undeniable facts of the Bible and history, driven home

by the verse: God opened a great effectual door, but you are going to have many, many adversaries.

I am not talking about, as I said, causing problems because we are stupid. I am talking about causing problems because of the fact that we have made a stand that we are going to do what God wants us to do. It is just that simple. It is just that simple. That is why I drove home those 11 concepts in Bible Basics. You will see them at work fundamentally in everything you do, in every aspect of the Bible, in every event of the Bible, in every event of world history, and every event in your life. God wants to use you. The devil wants to stop you, and he will.

He cannot hurt you, but he knows that we are so shallow in the Word of God and the principles that when you hear him roar out there in the middle of the night, if you just stop what you are doing and get more focused on the roaring, then you do what God has called you to do. Courage is an incredible thing, lacking today in God's people. God's people are spineless today. Nice people, spineless. If I had to go into combat today, I would just as soon have a good German Shepherd in the foxhole with me than most of God's people. Joshua chapter 1 talks about courage to believe the Book, courage to obey the Book, courage to rest in the Book. When God opens a great door and effectual, there are going to be many, many, many adversities that come along with it. This is where God, as I said, separates the men from the boys.

V. Dealing with Adversity

Now when it comes to your adversary and it comes to the adversity that you are going to face because God gives you an open door in your life, my suggestion is to follow the biblical principles. Remember in Matthew chapter 4, Christ had come down to do God's work. He was born of a virgin. He was Israel's King. God opened up a door for Him to come down. That door is in John chapter 10 if you want to find it. When God opened up that door, came the great adversity. The first thing the devil tried to do was stop the messenger, and that is what it will do with you.

If you read Matthew 4:1-11, we are not going to look at it this morning, you will find that the devil comes to Him three times and tries to get Him to quit. I like this because the Bible says the first time it talks about him, it does not call him the devil, it calls him the tempter. I like that. You know why? Because the moment God gives you an open door, he is going to give you a tempter, and that tempter is going to be, the devil is going to give you a tempter, and that tempter is going to be somebody that comes into your life, calls you on the phone, comes over to see you, you meet in a shopping place someplace, you meet out of the thin air that you have not seen for whatever, and they are going to start to take out of your life what God tried to put in. That is the way it works.

I think Jesus's response is our response, because in each time, and I told you this Thursday night, we looked at Psalm 91, and I told you we would talk about it Sunday. There are three things that he comes and he deals with Christ on: one in Deuteronomy 8:3, one in Psalm 91:12, and one in Deuteronomy 6:3. They all have to do with the Second Coming of Christ, but that is beside the point. Every time the devil came, the tempter came and tempted Him, Jesus's response was clear,

decisive, and right to the point. He simply said, "It is written." He took him right back to the Bible, because the Bible has no stand against the Word of God.

It is when you and I start to do the old Baptist two-foot shuffle. It is when we start to make other things up and put other things in and justify ourselves and try to get around what we do not want to deal with, that is when the devil has a heyday. If you clearly stand up and you just take the biblical principle to whoever or whatever your tempter is and simply say, "This is what the Bible says. I am not sure why you are not doing it, but I am sure I am going to do it," that will end the problem. If not the first time, the second time. If not the second time, third time is the charm.

You ever see the devil? He came once, "It is written." Two, "It is written." Third time, "It is written." The devil left him. You know why? Because your tempter knows that he has nothing that he can do outside that Word of God. It is only when we get outside the Bible. Jesus did exactly what you and I should do when the adversary comes, and whoever it may be. He applied James 4:8, where it says:

James 4:8

Draw nigh to God, and he will draw nigh to you. Cleanse your hands, ye sinners; and purify your hearts, ye double minded.

You see, if you submit yourself to God first, you have to do that before you can ever resist the devil. Now here is the problem: most of God's people today in the world, they are just too good a friend with the devil to do that. They just are. This is exactly how it will come to you, and this is exactly what you have got to be prepared for, because God has got something He wants to do with you. Maybe it is an Operation Homeless. Maybe it is in some other area of your life. I do not know. It just happens to be that that is where we are at in the Book, when we are at in our church.

But I am telling this, when God opens the door, there are many adversaries, so just expect it. Just realize it. Do not get blindsided, because if you do not up the speed on it, you are going to get discouraged. You are going to say, "Well, what is God doing?" God is doing exactly what has been going on for the last 6,000 years: God moves, and the devil moves. Remember that roaring lion? He is outside. The gate is locked. It is fenced. He cannot get in, only in your fears and your dreams.

When that did not work, then he attacked the message of the messenger, and that is when his buddies, the scribes and the Pharisees, got into it. They became the tempters, and they dogged Him, didn't they? They dogged Him every day. They said things about Him that were terrible. They lied about Him. They told half-truths about Him. They just said everything about Him because their ulterior motive was they wanted to stop the work because they had what they wanted going, and they did not want Jesus taking that away from them.

Boy, I will tell you what, when it did not work to attack the messenger, he attacked the message, and that is where they jumped in. Again, for time and eternity, will you ever get it? Will you ever understand this? Those who do nothing will always criticize those who do something. You just have got to get that. But at the end of the day, it did not work either. It meant nothing, because no

matter what they say about you, no matter what they try to do to you, like they did Christ, no matter what they say about me, this church, or anybody else, remember what we read in Revelation chapter 3, that the church that God opened the door, and God said, "No man shall shut it."

You do not have to be afraid about what people say about you. You do not have to be afraid what people say about anything in the ministry that you may do. If God truly opened the door, then it is God's door. Now if you opened the door and it is your deal, then it is your worry. But if God opened the door and God is in charge, then God opened the door, and no man, no man, no man on this earth is going to shut that door. The devil will roar. He will make a lot of noise. He will make all kinds of noises. He will scare you. He will scare the fire out of you.

But at the end of the day, with Christ, it meant nothing. All the abuse, all the beating, all the spitting, all the beard pulling, all the whipping, and they finally crucified Him. It absolutely stopped nothing. In your life and my life, when God has got His hand on you, and God is doing something through you, and God has given you an open door, do not get nervous about the loud roars of a lion or what anybody says about you or tries to discourage you. The bottom line is simply this: if God opened the door, no man is going to shut it. Your job is just to go through it and get the job done. Just go through the door that God gave you.

Remember he is a roaring lion. Remember he is a roaring lion seeking whom he may devour, and he may be able to devour everything on this planet, but he cannot devour you and me. The devil will never stop you. The devil will never be able to stop me. If we get stopped, it is because we will stop ourselves by not doing what the Word of God says. Remember he is a roaring lion, but Christ on the cross took what the devil had for you and me today. As I stand, with all due respect to the devil and his due as the anointed cherub, let me tell you something, he got declawed and he got detoothed at Calvary. He cannot claw me anymore, and he cannot bite me anymore. All he can do is growl out in the darkness, but he can never devour us because God opened the door, no man is ever going to shut it.

Father, help us to see that. Help us to learn that with a great open door comes great adversity. Lord, we do love You. Help these men and women in this church, the younger ones, help them to continue to grow. Help the older ones continue to grow. Help us all to realize that no matter what, Lord, You have given us a job to do, and if it is not this, it is something, but You have something. You brought us here for some reason, for some purpose, and I do not care for somebody to walk in the door for the first time today, there is a place that they can start on whatever level they are and grow from there. With great adversity, or great open doors, comes great adversity, and we need to learn those two concepts because we will not walk through this door unscathed. We will not walk through this door with people out there saying things and people, the devil trying to stop, but all he can do is roar. He can roar loud, and he can roar voraciously, but at the end of the day, he cannot touch us.

Help us to claim those promises and know that this is Your church, that we are Your people. Father, we trust in You that when You give us the door, open the door, truly no man is going to shut it. It does not matter who he is, no matter who he thinks he is. We have seen it all my life,

Father. I have seen everything that every God has ever given me, somebody stand up and try to take it away or try to shut it down, and it just has never happened. After 40 some years of going through the fire, I am still standing here, Lord. This church will go on because of the stand we take on the Word of God, and we will thank You and praise You in Jesus' name, for His sake we ask it. Amen.

God bless you. Hey folks, do not forget this week, bring in your hot dogs. Joe's crew wants to meet him up here. Check out and self-get the sign up for the marriage book back here if you want one, or check out the Halloween tracks. But do not forget, bring hot dogs and buns Thursday night, as many as you can, and we will get everything going. God bless you. People who are getting food, make sure you have me let me know by Thursday where we are at with it all.