

1 Corinthians 15

Sunday 10/9/2011

If you have your Bibles this morning, I would like to invite you to turn to 1 Corinthians chapter 15. As you know, we have been spending some time in this chapter. I think it is probably a key chapter in your life for understanding many things. The last couple of weeks, we have really focused on how the resurrection of Christ truly impacts you. Last week, we saw how we are to view it.

We talked about probably the hardest thing for us as Christians to do today, with all the distractions of the world around us and a lot of the phoniness of Christianity that we have to deal with, is to keep our perspective and keep our focus on what God has called us to do. It is so easy to lose that many times. I am sure you feel this way too; it feels like I am in a little rubber raft in the middle of a tornado and typhoon on a raging ocean. That is exactly what the world is portrayed as throughout the Word of God: the great billows of seas and waves. Many times, those things begin to overwhelm us.

I told you last week, probably for me anyhow, I cannot speak for you, but something that I have always kept focused on, and I talked about it last week, is that in this life, if you do not learn to use the promises of what God's coming is going to do for you and what is coming for you, then you will never get through the struggles of today. I gave you some good verses, and I hope those verses now form up for you some new prayer card verses that you can use in your own personal life.

We saw in 1 John 3:1-3 where the Bible says that a Christian should purify himself even as He is pure. What does that mean? It means that you focus on what is coming. You realize that life today on planet Earth for you and for me in our lifetime, the Bible says, "What is your life but a vapor that appeareth for a little while and then fadeth away?" God saved you for a purpose. He saved you for a reason. There is something that God wants you to do within the reason why God saved you. Many times, God's people never accomplish that in their life. They go through their whole life and they never do anything for God, or at least never find out what God wants them to do and then give their life in doing that.

We learned a lot of things about the resurrection. We learned that we are to purify ourselves even as we are pure. The Bible says that when you got saved, you have the Holy Spirit of God living inside you. But even though that is so, we have to perfect ourselves daily. Not sinless perfection in any way, shape, or form, but perfecting ourselves, the Bible says, for the work of God. Getting ourselves to the place that we keep ourselves pure from the world so we do not lose our focus. The only way we do that, and I am just being honest with you, the only way that we do that in the world that we live in is to focus on what is coming and what God has for us in the future.

We saw some great verses in Romans chapter 8 last week. We took probably, I think, one of the greatest studies in the Bible and really just touched the surface of it. We talked about the great study of the first Adam versus the second Adam. We know now that the first Adam sinned in the garden, and because he was denied the tree of life, the second Adam fulfilled what the first Adam failed to do in the garden, and He became the tree of life. We studied about the image of God.

Now that when you got saved, you got God's image inside of you. But you still have to get the body, and that is really what chapter 15 is all about. It is about the resurrection of you and me, this corruption putting on incorruption, based on the resurrection of Christ.

Today, we will finish out this chapter. Again, we are going to deal with another aspect of this great chapter in this book. I do not know if you have noticed it or not, but this is how I learned the Bible years ago. I like to break the Bible down into the proper sections. The Bible talks about rightly dividing the word of truth, and yet I found that chapters naturally break down. If you are paying attention here, this will be the fifth division in this chapter, and I think you need to get those divisions down because they are very important in helping you break down that chapter.

You remember 1 Corinthians 15:1-4? There we talked about the defining of the Gospel, and that was a great principle that we all learned. We knew what the Gospel was based on the Bible. In 1 Corinthians 15:5-38, we talked about the doctrinal importance of the resurrection, how important the resurrection is to us. Without Christ's resurrection, we are dead in our sins. In 1 Corinthians 15:39-44, that section talks about the glory of our resurrection, and that focuses it back on you and me. That is an incredible section too. In 1 Corinthians 15:45-50, this was last week, we talked about the passion of our resurrection, the perspective of it, what it really should mean to you. What it really should mean to help you. We talked about the victory in Christ and the victory that we should have as Christians. The victory you are going to see today lies in the fact of you understanding the passion and the perspective of our resurrection.

Today, the fifth section, 1 Corinthians 15:51-58, this will be the process of our resurrection, how it actually happens and transpires and takes place. There is a key word that I think is probably one of the most misused words in all of Christianity today, and it is the word "translation." You have to study it sometime in the Bible. The word "translation" only shows up about two or three times, maybe four, but it is a word that is used very exclusively in the Bible. I have told you many, many times that the key to understanding things about God is to get the Bible's definitions, not man's definitions. When you study the word "translation" in the Bible, you see, we think of the word "translation" as going from one language to another, and I am not saying that that is not true, it is. But in the Bible, God never uses the word "translation" from one language to another. God uses the word "translation" from one place to another.

In Hebrews 11:5, it talks about Enoch was translated that he should not see death. What did Enoch do? He went from one place to the other. Now that is one of the greatest keys into the Bible that you are ever going to get into, and we certainly do not have time to talk about it this morning, but we are going to talk about in a general sense of finishing out this chapter, our translation. We are going to go from this corruptible to an incorruptible body. We are going to talk about that process today, and we will finish out that chapter. So I would put those five breakdowns in there as you come down through that chapter, and we will look at that process as we get our glorified body.

I. The Rapture of the Church

Now last week, I told you that the number one thing our life should be revolved around is Christ coming and His coming for us. You find two days in the Bible. Those of you that just finished Bible Basics, you know now that there are two key days in your Bible. The one day is called the Day of the Lord, and you will find that throughout the scriptures, and that always will set the context for the Second Coming of Christ. The other day in the Bible that you are going to find is called the Day of Jesus Christ. Now most people today think that they are the same, and of course they are not. The Day of the Lord will always be a reference to the Second Coming of Christ, and the Day of Jesus Christ will always be a reference to the rapture of the church. That is the way we look at it and understand it today.

It has always been an amazement to me. When you study the Bible, I love character studies in the Word of God. I think that you gain so much from them. Herbert Lockyer, years ago, he is long dead now, he wrote a series of books that I thought were absolutely spectacular, and they were called the "All Series." He put out about 14 or 15 volumes that really make studying the Word of God a lot easier. He put out a book that had all of the feasts in the Bible, all of the holy days in the Bible. He had a book out that had all the children in the Bible. He had a book out that had all the names of Christ or God in the Bible, and it made studying the Bible really an easy thing. Unfortunately, today, we carry in our bookstore the two books that they put back in print, and I think they themselves are worth their weight in gold. One of them is "All the Women in the Bible," and the other one is "All the Men in the Bible." What you get out of those studies is character studies.

I think Arthur Pink, before he got all screwed up on Calvinism, in his early books anyhow, I think he did a great job of laying out, like in "Gleanings in Genesis," the character studies of the characters in Genesis, really great stuff. I have learned a lot over the years, and I think one of my favorite ways to study the Bible is to study people in the Bible because in the ministry, we are working with people, and you will find every kind of person that you are going to deal with throughout the Word of God in the form of character studies. But I think the most amazing one that I have ever studied that really goes along with what we are talking about today, the process, the rapture of the church, the catching out, the Day of Jesus Christ, is the Apostle John. I think that without a doubt, anybody who would know their Bible would know that John in the New Testament is probably the greatest picture of the church in all of the New Testament, and he is a great picture of what your life and my life should be.

Now we know that originally there were 12 apostles, and out of that 12, we know that there were three that were commonly called the inner circle: that is Peter, James, and John. When you look at the 12 apostles, you basically get a slice of what Christianity is like. You had 12 apostles, one of them was a phony, so it tells you that in any church, not everybody who says they are a Christian probably is. But within the other 11, there were three that really had a closer relationship with the Lord Jesus Christ. In fact, if you would study it through the scriptures, you will find that every time there is a major event, only three men are present: at the Mount of Transfiguration in Matthew 17, when God transfigured Christ beyond the cross and at the Second Coming and glorified Him, you will find in the text there Peter, James, and John. It was Peter, James, and John that were there at the raising of Jairus's daughter.

Just like today, in any church, certainly this church, but certainly any church, you are going to find that within any congregation across America, there are certain people who just tie in closer to the things of God than other people. You find that in the model there, those 12, but yet within that three, Peter, James, and John, you will find there was one that went all the way, and he sets for us the model of what we want to look at today and what we want to talk about today, because he was the Apostle John.

I do not know how much you have studied his life. I have preached messages about this many, many times over the years, so for some of you, this is old stuff too. But you will find that when you come through the accounts, you realize that the Apostle John was the only Apostle that Jesus says that He loved. Now I know that He loved them all, but in Bible study, you are going to find that when you see that, of all you got here, this is the only guy that Jesus says He loves, and Jesus had a special love for John. May I step a little bit farther out and say that in this room, Jesus, I do not mean this in a bad way, but Jesus has a special relationship with some of you more than He has with other people in this church or any church. You say, "How can that be? For God so loved the world, He loves anybody." I am not talking about loving you; God loves everybody. But you know as well as I do that when you study it, John and Christ had a special relationship, and there are God's people in this church and churches across Christianity today that have a more special relationship than just average Christians. It was not the fact that God loved John more than the rest of them; it was the fact that John loved God more than the rest of them. That is really the key, and you see it in everything that happens, you really do.

You are going to find that John is the only one that goes all the way to the crucifixion. Immediately when the world starts to shake, everybody is gone. The closest one to it is Peter, bless his heart, but he is outside at the fire, and he denies the Lord there. But John is on the inside. John goes all the way with Christ no matter what transpires. You know what? There are some of God's people that are just like that. Some of you will go to the end. I say it many, many times, when everybody gets here, we probably run close to 300 people, but I am not under any illusion. If somebody asked me, "Well, how many run in your church?" I will say, "Oh, 250, 270, somewhere in there." But I just say that because I do not want to get into a protracted conversation with them. The truth of the matter is, if push came to shove and the world came down around our shoulders like it did with the 12 apostles, we would cut down our size considerably, I guarantee you. You say, "How do you know that?" That is what happened there. You see, those 12 apostles are a picture of what we are, and I am not under any illusion. I do not mean to be negative this morning, but I am not under any illusion that everybody sitting in this room is saved, just like there was one that was not saved among the 12 that the Lord picked. I am not under any illusion that the majority of Christians in the world and in churches today are doing the job. It will always be the inner three, but when push really came to shove, even the inner three, they all bailed except John.

One of the interesting things that I find that really makes John a type of the church, did you ever notice this? When Christ is being crucified, John is right there, and Mary, the mother of Jesus, is right there. Mary, the mother of Jesus, in your Bible, is a picture of the nation of Israel. It is so clear, it is unbelievable. And a strange thing happens while He is hanging on the cross. He looks

down at John and His mother, and He says the strangest thing. He says to His mother, looking at John, "Mother, behold your son." And He says to John, "John, behold my mother." In other words, Jesus gave the watch care of His mother to John. Now, she is a type of the nation of Israel, and John is a type of the church. You find in Romans chapter 9 and Romans chapter 11 that the church today, you and me, has the watch care of the nation of Israel. See how it works? John is an incredible study, he really is.

John is the only man in the history of the world that I know of, he does something that no other man does. He accomplishes something that nobody I ever knew anywhere down through the Bible ever did. It is at the Last Supper, and Christ is telling them who is going to betray Him, and every one of the disciples, every one of the disciples, it starts, it names them right down the line, everyone looks at Him and says, "Lord, is it I? Lord, is it I?" You see, deep down inside, they all had a doubt that they might just be the one to sell Him out. When it came to John, John did not say, "Is it I?" John just says, "Who is it?" John knew it was not going to be him. Do you know today it is not going to be you? See, that is how it works.

Then John does something that nobody else does through the history of the Bible, and I think this is probably the catalyst for me that really moves my heart. At that Last Supper, the Bible says that he lays his head on the breast of Jesus. Now that may not be significant to most people, but to me, it is a real thing when I put it into context, because John is the only man in the history of the world that I know of that really heard the heartbeat of God. You know that is what it takes for you to become a John today.

Back in the book of Proverbs, the Bible talks about a strange man and an evil woman, and that evil woman back there is likened to a street-walking prostitute. The Bible says that the simple guy walks down on her corner, she has got her face all painted up, but yet when you study this hooker, she is a religious person. What the picture is, she is trying to entangle this young guy and get him all messed up, and that is a picture of false religion in your Bible. The Bible says in Revelation 17 and 18, "Mystery, Babylon the Great, the mother of harlots." There you are.

Now I always thought it was instructive that taking that into an inspirational application, I am supposed to be a type of John, and the world out there is a type of the seduction that wants to pull me away from Christ and get me to commit spiritual adultery or fornication with the world. So this woman on the street corner who pictures religion without Christ is drawing this guy in. But yet, I cannot miss the parallel. Every prostitute in this town, when she talks about the guy she picks up, or the guy that they all call him a what? A trick. Why is that? The picture is incredible. He is a type of the church, and John is the only guy in the Bible that lays his head and hears the very heartbeat of God, because Jesus Christ was God manifested in the flesh, and inside of Him was the sinless Spirit of God. When he listened to that heartbeat, it shows the relationship that he had that the others did not have. I want to tell you something today, my friend, that is what separates the 12 from the three to the one. The only other person that I have ever found in the Bible that can hear that heartbeat is a New Testament Christian, because the heartbeat of God is the Word of God. When you lay your head into this book, just like he laid his head on the breast of the Lord Jesus, this is where you get yourself separated from the world. This is where the things that were once sparkly are not as sparkly anymore. This is where the things of this old

world grow dim and do not have all the attraction anymore. Why? Because you hear the heartbeat of God, and the heartbeat of God changes everything about your life, because in that heartbeat of God, you find what God wants you to do, and then you do it.

It is no accident, based on all of that, did you ever notice how John was the one that wrote the book of Revelation? To me, it is the capstone of the Bible, and what it shows me when we put this type together, and we are not doing a very good job this morning because there are millions of things I could talk to you about, but we are just trying to get to where we want to go here. The book of Revelation is a book where it shows us all the intimate details. It is really a closed book. Not too many people understand the book of Revelation, and a lot of people think they do, but there is a systematic way of laying out the book of Revelation, and God closes that loop with a lot of people simply because they do not really believe what they are studying, and they will not take it the way they find it. But you are going to find that John now is a type of what you and I should be. God reveals to him all the intimate details of the coming of the Lord Jesus Christ in the time to the end.

I think the most instructive thing that we learned, and this is where we really stopped last week, all of Revelation deals with Christ's coming, and we know that we should be focused totally and completely on the coming of Christ. That ought to be the thing that drives us every day and keeps us when this whole world tries to overwhelm us. I think that the thing that sums up John and his life of what you and I should be as a type of the church is the last prayer that is offered in the Bible, and the last thing that he says in Revelation 22:20, and it is a prayer that should be on all of our lips, and he simply says this: "Even so, come, Lord Jesus." You see, the thing that got him through, and historically he is on the Isle of Patmos, and he is exiled. There are various things about the way our stories are out there, how he died. I am not sure anybody ever knows how he died, but I guarantee you it probably was not pleasant. But the thing that got him through is the same thing that will get you through, and that is his relationship with Christ and his looking and his prayer for Christ to come back.

Now we know that there are three parts to this harvest of God's people. We learned that in 1 Corinthians 15:23 where he is talking about, and he says, "Every man in his own order." Then he gave us the order. He talked about the firstfruits. Now we know that that is the Old Testament saints that went up with Christ. Then he says, "Afterward they that are Christ's at his coming." That is the rapture for you and for me. That is what we are going to talk about today. And then he talks about the end, and then cometh the end. That is the gleanings, those are the Tribulation saints that go out right before the Second Coming. So we got that pretty much down now. Today, we are going to look at the resurrection of the church. We are going to look at the concept which is commonly called and understood by the term "the rapture," and we are going to look at two different passages that make up two definitive passages in your Bible on the rapture of the church, and you want to mark these two in here.

Let us read the first one here, 1 Corinthians chapter 15. Let us pick it up in verse 50.

1 Corinthians 15:50-58

Now this I say, brethren, that flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God; neither doth corruption inherit incorruption.

Behold, I shew you a mystery; We shall not all sleep, but we shall all be changed,

In a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trump: for the trumpet shall sound, and the dead shall be raised incorruptible, and we shall be changed.

For this corruptible must put on incorruption, and this mortal must put on immortality.

So when this corruptible shall have put on incorruption, and this mortal shall have put on immortality, then shall be brought to pass the saying that is written, Death is swallowed up in victory.

O death, where is thy sting? O grave, where is thy victory?

The sting of death is sin; and the strength of sin is the law.

But thanks be to God, which giveth us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ.

Therefore, my beloved brethren, be ye stedfast, unmoveable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, forasmuch as ye know that your labour is not in vain in the Lord.

Now, Father, we thank you and praise you for the Lord Jesus today. I pray, Father, you will take this time, that you will use it for your honor and glory, that everything that is said and done will be pleasing to you, that you will touch our hearts today, challenge our hearts, and bring us back on point, bring us back to the focus of what you have for us. We will thank you and praise you in Jesus' name, for His sake we ask it, amen.

Now, traditionally, in a historical sense, the Baptists are basically the ones who hold to a concept of the rapture of the church. Not exclusively, but from a historical perspective, that is certainly true. You are going to find that the Methodist Church does not believe it. The Lutheran Church does not believe it. The Catholic Church dismisses it. The Jehovah's Witnesses do not believe it. The Mormons do not believe it. The Episcopalians do not hold to a concept of a rapture, nor do the Presbyterians. You are going to find that the Congregationalist churches do not, and you are going to find that some evangelicals do, but some do not, and you are going to find that some Charismatics do, but many do not, or they have got it screwed up. But my point is that it exclusively is one of the Baptist distinctives that go back down through history.

Now, I say that because in our second passage here, we want to turn over to 1 Thessalonians chapter 4. Once we get this complete, then we will start to go to work on this here. Let us read that passage here. 1 Thessalonians 4, pick it up in verse 13.

1 Thessalonians 4:13-18

But I would not have you to be ignorant, brethren, concerning them which are asleep, that ye sorrow not, even as others which have no hope.

For if we believe that Jesus died and rose again, even so them also which sleep in Jesus will God bring with him.

For this we say unto you by the word of the Lord, that we which are alive and remain unto the coming of the Lord shall not prevent them which are asleep.

For the Lord himself shall descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel, and with the trump of God: and the dead in Christ shall rise first:

Then we which are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds, to meet the Lord in the air: and so shall we ever be with the Lord.

Wherefore comfort one another with these words.

Now in the Christian world, and I use the word loosely, you have basically, and my goal is not to turn this into a theological session this morning, but there are certain things that you have to learn to understand where you are coming from. There are basically three schools of thought taught on the Second Coming of Christ, and of course you know that the Second Coming of Christ includes the rapture of the church.

The first school of thought, and you need to learn these if you do not know them already because you are going to bump into it a lot, the first one is what we call post-millennialism, "post" being after. This means that in this form of thought, Christ will return after the religions of the world clean the world up. This is why you find the social gospel today. This is where you find, believe it or not, this is why it even extends itself into the environment crowd that want to make the... I was looking at some guy's blog here a year ago, who used to be a very strong Bible teaching guy, and now he is talking about how to save the earth, just like he was talking about at one time saving lost people. It is a mindset that we have got to clean the world up. That is why you find the same mindset that you see, we have a lot of crime in our country, Kansas City has a lot of crime, and the city's answer to youth and gangs and crime and unemployment, nobody wants to get a job, they always say the same thing. They think the answer is more education. The more you get educated, the more you come out of the ghettos and you become a good product of society.

You see, that is not true. Man does not need to make more money to be better. He does not need more education to quit killing people. He does not need to go to school and have better teachers, that he had better grades to get out of the gangs. He needs a heart change. He needs what Jesus Christ does for him that changes his attitude about those things. When it starts with a heart, then it works its way out, you see? But this is what the social gospel mindset is. We make the world a better place to live. We bring in all these great things. We do all these things to get the world better, and when we clean it up, then Christ looks down and says, "Hmm, the religions of the world really got that place looking good. Now I am coming back." See? That is what they believe. Many religions believe that. That is why they are so big on social issues. That is why many of them support revolutions and get behind revolutions. There are some religious organizations out there that teach that Jesus was a revolutionary. They actually teach that if you are having injustices in your country, that you have a right or a Christian right or a Christian duty to take up arms, overthrow that country, because that is what... and that is what happened in Nicaragua. That is what happened in El Salvador. That is where liberation theology came from. It started with a Jesuit priest down there that was assassinated down there in El Salvador. I stood

right in the very square where they had that massacre in that very cathedral where Romaro was his name, and they killed him right there in that spot. So you get that, but all coming about to bring in the kingdom to make it a better place.

Then you have amillennialism. Amillennialism says that Christ's coming is a spiritual thing. Nobody sees it. It is something that takes place inside man, or it is something that happens spiritually. We just keep going on and on and on and on and on, and it just gets better and better, and Christ comes in a spirit form, but we just never see it, never completely, no visible return of Christ. Now, both the post-millennial and the amillennial do not accept a rapture. That was my point in telling you about that. They do not believe in a rapture. A rapture does not figure into their theology.

Now, basically here, and all down, and I believe the biblical perspective on it is that we believe in a pre-millennial return of Christ. I do not say that based on any books I read. I say that based on the Bible is set up after a pre-millennial concept. It is just that simple. I could take you into the Bible and show you the order of the books of the Bible, and it drives a lot of people nuts, especially the higher educated crowd. I could take you into that Bible and I could show you how the order of the books in that Bible show you the pre-millennial return of Christ. Of course, that just drives people nuts today, and that is part of my job. I enjoy that part of it.

Anyway, we believe our position is that the Bible teaches that Christ will come back at the Second Coming. When He comes back, He is not coming back... and I told you this last week. The first time He came, He came as the loving Savior. He came as the prophet. We know what they did with Him then. So He is not coming back that way next time. Next time He is coming back, He is coming back with an army. That army is going to take this world by force, and they are going to set up, as our chart says over there, we have talked the iron rule, Millennial reign, for 1000 years. He will visibly come back. The Bible says in Revelation 1:7, "Every eye shall see him." He will sit on the throne in Jerusalem. He will bring in the kingdom of God and the kingdom of heaven. He will put it under an iron rule, military dictatorship, Revelation 19 and 20. That is the Bible format from Genesis to Revelation.

But before He does that, in 1 Corinthians 15 and 1 Thessalonians 4, He comes to take away the church. You remember in our Bible Basics, I have showed you how the Bible was broken down basically, that God has His wife, the nation of Israel. We talked about this Thursday night, and Mel had a good question, and Christ has the bride, His bride, the church. We have studied now, and we know now how that all works and all takes place. It all kind of lays itself out. Christ, before He comes back to put the nation of Israel back in her place, Christ takes His bride out. We know that as the rapture of the church. We believe and teach that. This is called the rapture of the New Testament saints. The Bible calls it a harvest, and of course it is. You can see it all through the Bible in picture and type, absolutely.

We all talk about the fact that Noah, in Genesis chapter 6, the Bible says that Noah built an ark. When Noah built that ark, he got into that ark with his family, and then God's judgment fell on all the earth, did it not? Yet when you get to Matthew, the Bible says that is a picture of something. See, how do you know that? Because in Matthew, it says, "As it was in the days of

Noah," remember that? "So shall it be in the coming of the Son of Man." Now that is a parallel. It shows you that the times that Noah lived in are going to be like the times that before Christ comes back. It does not take any rocket scientists to go back and figure out how wicked the world was. But that is not my point. Did you ever see what happens in Genesis chapter 5? In chapter 5, you have a man named Enoch. Enoch is in chapter 5, and he walks with God. The Bible says, "Enoch walked with God: and he was not; for God took him." Enoch is the only man in the Bible that will never die. You say, "Elijah never died." No, he is coming back and going to die in the Tribulation. You need to study the rest of your Bible before you say that. Enoch is the only man in the Bible that never dies. Do you know why he is the only man in the Bible that never dies? He is a picture of the church going out before Noah and a picture of the coming of the Lord in His judgment. It is all through the Bible. It is all through the Bible. You could not miss it if you wanted to. I mean, I guess you could.

In Song of Solomon 2:13, that great book, where he is talking about and expressing his love for the church, Christ of the bride, what does he say down there? He says, "Arise, my love, my fair one, and come away." Picture the rapture of the church. When you come through Revelation, the book of Revelation is an incredible book. Revelation runs 21, 22 chapters. If you break it down in a spiritual sense, we know John wrote it now. If you break that thing down, not doctrinally, but in a spiritual application, you know what you find? You find in the first three chapters, you find the church, the church, the church, the church, the church, the church. In fact, you find a reference to the church 19 times. Then in Revelation 4:1, the Bible says, "After this I looked, and, behold, a door was opened in heaven: and the first voice which I heard was as it were of a trumpet talking with me; which said, Come up hither." Just like 1 Corinthians 15 and 1 Thessalonians 4. You know what you find? I will tell you what you do not find. You do not find the word "church" anymore in the book of Revelation. Do you know why? It is gone. So if you really want to get the book of Revelation down, here is what you got. Revelation 1, 2, and 3 is a picture of the church. In chapter 4 is a picture of the rapture of the church. Chapter 5 is a picture of what takes place up in heaven. 6 through 19 is a picture of the Tribulation period. Somebody comes down, Second Coming of Christ. 20 is the Millennium. 21, new heaven and new earth, and 22 out in eternity. The whole book of Revelation just broken down that simple. That is the way John wrote it. That is the way John wrote it.

I will tell you something else. One of the greatest pictures of it is Christ Himself. Did you ever see Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John? Did you ever see that? When Christ was born? In the accounts when Christ is born, if you study it, you will find that when you lay that thing out, Christ came first privately to His family in a manger. Then 30 years later, He was exposed to the whole world and started His public ministry. You see that? He came privately first to His family, and then sometime later, He proclaimed Himself to the whole world. That was the First Coming of Christ. What is the greatest key to the Bible? Consistency. So at the Second Coming of Christ, He comes to His family first, me and you, rapture the church, and then seven years later, He reveals Himself to the whole world, and every eye shall see Him, Second Coming of Christ. Shall we? That Bible is a great book. That Bible is a great book. That is called consistency of scripture in Bible study.

Now in recent years, and I say this in the last 25 or 30, people have abandoned the teaching of the rapture. You might as well know that. Much of it is based on the silly minds of pathetic Christians who cannot figure out the Bible. That is my own injection into it. I have been told many, many times by somebody that said, "Well, you still believe the rapture?" And I said, "Yes, I believe the rapture." And that one guy said, "My Baptist preacher," he said to me one time, he says, "Well, do you still believe the rapture?" I said, "Absolutely." He said, "We do not believe it anymore." And I said, "Well, why is that?" And he said, "Well, I read a book and it really opened my eyes." And I said, "Well, I read one too, it opened my eyes, but you did not read the same book I did." I was talking about the Bible, he was not. He said, "Well, the word 'rapture' is not even... the word 'rapture' is not in the Bible." I said, "Well, I never knew that. It shakes my faith." I said, "Are you a Baptist?" He says, "I am." I said, "Show me the word 'Baptist' in the Bible." I said, "Is that your Bible there?" "Yes, it is." "Show me the word 'Bible' in the Bible." How stupid people are? They think because you cannot find it in there that it cannot be. That is just the way people think today. I mean, that is just the way they think. I mean, the word "rapture" not found in the Bible.

He goes on to say, "Well, the idea was started back in the latter part of the 1800s there with the start of dispensationalism." I said, "Oh, dispensationalism started in the 1800s now, huh?" "Oh yeah, yeah, yeah, it did." "And Darby." "Oh," I said, "Darby's Rangers?" He said, "No, no, no, no, Darby. Darby was the great Bible teacher." "Oh," I said, "that Darby. Oh, okay." I thought, I did not say anything to him because he is an idiot. How do you help an idiot? I do not know what to tell you. When people get their brain cells dead on something like that, you are not going to change his mind. I felt sorry for the guy because here is again, here is a typical Baptist. I am going to tell you something, probably in the next 10 years, five years, 15 years, if Jesus does not come, most Baptists are not going to believe it anymore because they have gotten away from the Word of God.

I tell you all the time that the two things you have got to have in your life to really get the Bible together. One of them is the Bible itself, and the other one is the history of the Bible. Now here is a guy telling me that the word "rapture" is not in the Bible. He does not even know where the word "rapture" came from. You think before I would read somebody's book and just buy into it, I would do a little investigation on my own, but people are lazy today. He did not know where the word "rapture" came from. I know where the word "rapture" came from.

Back through the Dark Ages, when the Roman Catholic Church really ran the world and threw the world into darkness by cutting off all of the Eastern religion material that was coming out of Antioch. We know from Acts 11, where they are first called Christians at Antioch, that Antioch is the hotbed of Bible Christianity. Do you know where Antioch is at? Antioch is in Syria. That is Turkey today. Antioch is in Syria. In the first, second, and third century, right up to about the beginning of the Dark Ages, which starts around 500 AD, that was the hotbed of Bible Christianity. Once the Dark Ages came in, you had a bunch of Bible-believing groups that would not buy into all the heresies being taught, and they formed the nucleus of what we would look back in history as Bible believers. One of those groups is called the Waldensians. The Waldensians come out of Italy. The Waldensians probably in church history were the greatest

single force that carried the Gospel forward. It was the Waldensians who first coined the term "rapture," not Darby. But when you do not know your history, then you fall for these things. It was the Waldensians out of Italy that first coined the word "rapture." It came from during that time, the only Bible that they had was the Old Latin. There was an Old Syriac and then an Old Latin, both out of Antioch. I am not talking about Jerome's Latin, which came about 400, that was a corrupt text. But they had what was known today as the Old Latin, out of the Old Syriac, out of Antioch. That Old Latin Bible was the Bible of the Dark Ages, and it was the Bible of the Waldensians all the way up till the 12th, 13th, 14th century when the English translations began to come out. But it was from that Old Latin that they got the word in Latin, *rapto*, which meant "to be taken by force," "to be seized by force." That is where they likened the concept to the rapture, "to be taken up," "to be caught out."

Anybody who knows what the word "rapture" means in our own language should make the Bible parallels instantly. The rapture has to do with intimate love. It has to do with being swept off your feet, as we say. It has to do with a girl meeting a guy the first time or a guy meeting a girl the first time and love at first sight, being swept off your feet, hopelessly in love, hopelessly gone, raptured off and just raptured, taken over this guy's love, taken with her beauty. Oh boy, that is the word "rapture." It has to do with a relationship. Fanny Crosby, she lived long before Darby did. She wrote in your hymnal there on page 225, a great song, "Blessed Assurance, Jesus is Mine." "Oh, what a foretaste of glory divine." Do you know what the second verse says? "Perfect submission, perfect delight, visions of rapture now burst on my sight." She knew about it. Evidently, the Waldensians had a better insight into the Song of Solomon and the love relationship they should have with Christ better than some of God's people. They understood exactly. So when a word saw the word "rapture" there, even though it is not in your Bible, that was a word that they coined. Of course, it puts it into context. It has nothing to do with whether it is found in the Bible or not. The concept is still taught. The real issue is, we have been a long time without a final authority of the Word of God. Without God's book, God's people lose all the truth that God has for them. The end result is, they get into all these goofy things and do not know what they are dealing with.

II. The Mystery of the Rapture

Now let us look at 1 Corinthians 15:51. We are going to see the second issue with the rapture. The first issue is there is not one. The second issue is, and here is why people cannot get it. Verse 51: "Behold, I shew you a mystery." Now, the real reason why God's people cannot get anything out of His book, and I find this all the time, the reason why the Bible is a closed book to them, and the reason why it is, is they approach the Bible like any other book. The moment you do that, the door of revelation is slammed shut in your face. You are not going to get a thing out of it. Within the Bible, the Bible says, "Behold, I shew you a mystery." The rapture in the Bible is a mystery.

In truth, if you really want to get into it, we are not going to get into it very far today. This will be something for Thursday night. There are seven key mysteries in your Bible for the church. Now there are 12 mysteries for the nation of Israel, in addition. At rightly dividing the word of

truth, you get the seven mysteries to the church, you get the 12 mysteries to the nation of Israel. You do not get them down, and you are a joke when it comes to figuring out your Bible. Because this is the system that God did. You see, you are not going to learn the Bible your way. You do everything in life your way, so do I. That is what we are all famous for. Your parents told you that all the time. You did not believe them until you were 20 and had your own kids. But we have done all our life, we wanted to do things our way, and God pretty much goes along with it and lets us bump our nose, bloody our nose, scratch our knees, whatever. But the bottom line is when it comes to that book, you are going to do it His way or you are not going to get it. If you do not get these down, you do not learn your Bible.

Now in 1 Corinthians 4:1, and I think this is hilarious. Paul, remember him? I think he is somebody pretty important. Paul told us as pastors and Christians, we are told to be stewards and to be faithful in keeping the seven mysteries of God before our people. Paul said that. This is not me up here saying I think these are important. Paul said that we should be stewards of the mystery and faithful in keeping them. Yet I guarantee you, you went out this thing, went from church to church to church today. I have been around this business for 40 years. I know where it is at. I am telling you, you could not find two guys in this city who either understood them or were teaching them if he did understand them. Yet we are told to be stewards of it. You see, the seven mysteries are the lead off in the Bible to understanding God's systematic theology of laying out the Word of God. It is based on God's perfect number seven.

Now I know a lot of people do not like numerology, and they reject numerology. That is okay, that is okay. I understand you can prove anything with numbers. I understand that. But you would be hard pressed to explain away some of the consistencies in the Bible when God uses the number seven over 1200 times in the Old Testament alone. I guess you suspect that is just a coincidence too. Come to truth, maybe it is a coincidence, but I do not know. But you are going to find that seven in the Bible is the number of perfection. Seven in the Bible is the key to that thing. You see, the seven mysteries that we are told, and the rapture is one of them now. The seven mysteries are the gatekeepers to really the rest of the system. Because when you get into that, it opens up the whole book.

I started to write down at one time in my Bible, as I went through the Bible over a number of years, all the different seven series. Because my hopes were to put them in a book at some point called "God's Systematic Theology." But I gave up. One, I ran out of pages of my Bible. They are just everywhere. Every time I thought I had them all, I found 20 more I did not have. I just realized that it is an impossible task. But I will tell you, I realized that when you start to come through your Bible, once you get the seven mysteries and you understand them, it opens up the concept of:

Seven resurrections in the Bible.

Seven distinct baptisms in the Bible.

Seven judgments in the Bible.

You will begin to find out when it is talking about the first Adam and the second Adam, there are seven trees in the garden.

You will find there are seven marriages in the Bible that match up to our great studies of your marriage to Christ.

You will find there are seven barren women in the Bible in the Old Testament who are a picture of Israel and her barrenness of not bearing fruit.

You will find that there are seven titles of God in the first five books of the Bible, commonly called the Pentateuch.

You will find in your Christian life and my Christian life, there are seven stages of spiritual growth.

You will find seven major fundamental laws in the Bible.

You will want to study a complete relationship with Christ, and there are seven Old Testament men that will give you every aspect of what you need to have in your life.

There are seven things you are told not to be ignorant of. First, this is 1 Thessalonians chapter 4. We already saw the rapture is one of them. We are not to be ignorant of seven things, yet God's people would not even know what they are.

There are seven things that changed about you the day you got saved found in the Bible.

There are seven things that God hates, yet there are seven things that God loves.

There are seven types of kisses in the Bible. We talked about that a couple of Thursday nights.

There are seven things you are told that after you get saved, you are supposed to add to your faith.

Thinking of committing suicide, are you? Well, there are seven suicides for you to study in the Bible, just so you do it right.

There are seven literal keys in the Bible that open doors in the Word of God, very important.

There are seven divisions of the prophets in the Bible.

There are seven things that please God.

There are seven character qualities of God.

There are seven Old Testament men, like I told you, there are seven New Testament men that lays it out. That is God's systematic theology.

Across this country and church history, you will find that God had seven great awakenings, starting with Whitefield back in the 1700s and right up to the 1950s. Then you will find also that the devil had seven counterfeits to counterfeit those seven great outpourings of the Holy Spirit of God. The whole world is built on that system.

Now, with that system and the seven mysteries given to the church, here they are, real quickly:

1. 1 Timothy 3:16: The mystery of God being manifested in the flesh. That will take you about a year to work out.
2. Colossians 1:27: Christ in you, the hope of glory. That deals with the fact that how does a holy God live inside somebody's sinner like you and me? That is a good theological question.
3. Ephesians 5:32: The mystery of the church. How are you and I, even though you are still in your physical body and yet our spirits, how are we one in Christ? That is a good piece of theology for you.
4. Romans 11:25: The mystery of Israel's restoration. Nobody believes that today.
5. 2 Thessalonians 2:7: The mystery of iniquity. That deals with the Antichrist.
6. Revelation 17:5: Babylon mystery religion, the mother of harlots. That will take you a while.
7. 1 Corinthians 15:51: The mystery of the rapture of the church.

Now you have heard me say that many times that God's people today say that there is no rapture. Yet they could not lay out any of these seven mysteries. I am very suspect of somebody who likes to make grandiose statements about the Bible because he read them someplace. But when you put the spotlight on him and throw him an open Bible, he folds up like a broken accordion. I am not impressed by that. I do not care what you believe. I respect anybody what they believe. But my thing is, you want my respect? Do you know why you believe what you believe? Do not tell me what so and so told me. Open up that book and show me why you believe what you believe. If you do not, the bus will be here in a minute. Now these mysteries are only given to people who love that book and love God.

III. Keys to Understanding Scripture

In putting all this together, there are five keys to you getting this out of the Word of God. There are five keys that unlock the scriptures.

8. The first thing in Joshua 1:8, you are told that you have got to read it. I understand that.
9. John 8:47 says, then after you read it, you have got to believe what you read. Okay, I can deal with that.
10. Once you get to that thing, John 5:39 says, you have got to search the scriptures. Then you have got to get in there and dig these things out. They are not going to come to you. The time that you spend digging out your Bible, and I tell you all the time, people always say to me, "I just do not feel like coming to church anymore. I just do not feel like I get anything out of it. I do not have any kind of relationship with people there." I did not know you were coming here to have a relationship with people. I must have misunderstood. I thought you were coming here to have a relationship with God. I will tell you something else. I just do not get anything out of it. My grandmother used to say a great truth: You only get out of something what you put into it. That is just simple stuff, is it not? Some of you are great ball players. Some of you are great basketball players. Some of you, did you ever think you just walked on the court and were good at it? I mean, you played little league, played basketball, played football from the time you could walk. That is what made you good. Do you know why you

got out of it what you get out of it? Because look at all you put in it. You wonder why you cannot get the book down. Why? It is just that simple. It is just that simple.

11. So you have got to read it, you have got to believe it, then you have got to search it out. Then you have 2 Timothy 2:15. You have got to study it.
12. You take all of those things and do all of those things. You still will not get it unless you put the fifth ingredient to it. That is found in Psalms 119. That is you have got to love it.

It is hard to love a book. We talk about loving God, that is simple. Talk about loving Christ, that is simple. You do not hear many people talking about loving a book. Do you know why? They do not believe they have a book worth loving. I believe I have a book worth loving. I believe that God wrote that book. He parachuted that down in my backyard and gave it to me. I am sorry about you. You got yours in a bookstore. Mine just fell down there, and I grabbed it. He wrote it to me. That is my book. I love Him for it.

I heard an old guy one time tell a story where this young kid wanted to be a... in his town, they lived in Tibet. There was this old man who lived on a mountain. He was the greatest, wisest man, called him the guru. This young kid grew up in the shadow of that. You watch people going up to this old man and having all kinds of things with him and just enjoying all those things. That kid wanted to be part of that. So he went to this old man one day, and he said, "You know what?" He says, "I have watched you. You have got the wisdom of the world." He said, "I want to have that." He said, "I want you to give me that." The old man said, "Well, okay, son, you want to get it. Come on down about three o'clock this afternoon. We will start your training." The kid was elated. He went telling everybody, "I am going up to study with the old man. I am going to be a guru too, or a guru also. I guess I am going to be like him, and I am going to have all of the great knowledge of the world." Everybody was patting him on the back and shaking hands. He showed up at three o'clock. He thought the whole town would be there. Nobody but the old man. There was a lake right there, and the old man was standing out there in the water about up to here. The old man says, "You want to be a guru? You want to know all the secrets and you want to know the truth of the world?" The kid said, "Absolutely." He says, "Come on out here. We will start your training." Well, he said, "Wow, this is really spectacular. We are going to do this. I mean, getting into the water. This is some kind of ceremonial thing here." The old man came out there, and the old man brought him out, backed up. The man was a little bit taller than him. Got him, old man was right here. The guy was right about here. He said, "Oh, here it comes." He began to look up, and he said, "What is next?" About that time, the old man, he had hands like two tree trunks. He just put his hands on that kid and just put him down on the water. The old man just stood there and looked forward, like the little grasshopper guy on the television years ago. He just held his hand down there. He held his head down. The kid was squirming around, screaming about things. The old guy waited for about a minute, minute and a half. The kid, and then he brings that kid out there, and he throws him down on the beach, and he just stands there like that. The kid is puking, choking, coughing up water. I mean, just trying to talk because he is so enraged and so mad. Now he feels like he has been duped. This guy was supposed to be a wise guy, and now he is a fool. Now he looks like a fool. "How am I going to go back and tell everybody, 'Well, my initiation was he stuck my head under the water. I almost drowned.' That does not sound like a wise guy to me." He got up and began to scream and spurt when he got

under composure. The old man just looked there with his arms crossed looking at him, and he got there, and he just railed on him back and forth. Then he stopped, and the old man looked at him, and he said, "You want to be a guru? You want to have the wisdom of the world? You want to know all the truth? Well, let me tell you the key to it. Young man, when you want truth, just like you wanted air, then you shall find it." You want that book? When will you want it? Like you want the breath that keeps your body alive when you do not get it. Then and only then are you going to get it. You have got to love it. You see, the key is not studying it. The key is not reading it. The key is loving it. I know lots of people that read it. They do not know it any better than anybody else does. The key is loving it.

So it is no wonder that God's people turn from the clear teaching of the rapture. They have been kept out of the loop, and they have been told all their life. So when Paul writes in 1 Corinthians 15:51-58 and 1 Thessalonians 4, he writes as he believes that Christ could come in his very day. You can feel the urgency in what he does. He was expecting it any day. So we teach that the rapture could take place at any moment. We call that the imminent return of the Lord Jesus Christ. I believe that too. I believe that He could come anytime, anyplace, anywhere.

He says in 1 Corinthians 15:51, "We shall not all sleep." Some of us are going to be alive when He comes. Sleep in the Bible over there in Luke 8:52 is defined as death in the Bible, in some cases. So when he says, "We shall not all sleep," it means not everybody is going to die. Some of us are going to be alive when He comes.

1 Thessalonians 4:16-18 says:

For the Lord himself shall descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel, and with the trump of God: and the dead in Christ shall rise first:

Then we which are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds, to meet the Lord in the air: and so shall we ever be with the Lord.

Wherefore comfort one another with these words.

I love that. "Wherefore comfort one another with these words." You know, one of the amazing things about God, and I love things when I see things like this in the Bible, I know God is a loving God. I know God is a good God. I know that even though I have been through some tough times in my life and hard times in my life and probably have some hard times coming, I know that it is not because God has anything against me. Even when I am against God, God is not against me. I know that many things I have done that God should have turned His back on me because many times in my life I have turned my back on Him, but God never did. I know God loves me. But it stings like I am about to show you here, you know, that are incredible.

Now many of you have lost loved ones. I lost my dad when I was 19 years old. I am 61. There is not a day that does not go by that I do not think of him or see something about him that reminds me of him. I wish I would have had a lot of time to say some things to him that I never said, but I never did. But that has not changed the fact that I think about him all the time. I found a few pictures of him, and I just hang on to them. I have them put away someplace, and every once in a while I get them out and look at them. But when I read that thing there, you know what I see? I

see God understanding my pain. When we lose a loved one, the first thing we want to do is blame it on God. That is the way we always go. That is of the devil. "Why did God take my brother? Why did God take my dad? Why did God take my mom?" God did not take anybody. Let me tell you something. God's plan never was that anybody died. God's plan was that Adam and Eve eat of that tree of life, and that thing would just keep on going. It was man that screwed it up. It was not God. In fact, after man did mess it up, you know what God did? He came down and fixed it again. Then we want to get mad at God. I understand. I understand, but you are wrong.

I look at that thing down there, and that verse says this. It says, "For the Lord himself shall descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel, and with the trump of God: and the dead in Christ shall rise first: Then we which are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds." You see that? And then we go to meet the Lord. Do you know what God does? Do you know what God is going to do? I love Him for this. He is going to let me meet my dad before I even meet Him. On my way up, I am going to meet my dad, and then me and my dad are going to go together to meet the Lord. That is what it says. Do you know why? Because He is a high priest that can be touched with our infirmities. That is why. He understands the pain of a loss of a loved one. God is such a good God that even though He cannot wait to see you and me, He understands our human side because that is the way He made us. So in the resurrection of rapture, I am going to get to meet my dad. My dad and me and him are going to go in hand in hand to meet the Lord, and then we are going to be forever with the Lord. I love that. No wonder He says, "Comfort one another with these words." You betcha. I do.

IV. The Victory in Christ

Now 1 Corinthians 15:52 says, it all takes place in a twinkling of an eye. That is instantaneous. A twinkle of an eye is a sparkle. We are talking about it in our sense, when somebody first falls in love, you know how it is. You first fall in love with somebody, and you think about that person all day, and finally you are separated, you have got to work for a living, and finally you get together in the evening or something like that, and you are waiting for her, you are waiting for him, and they walk into the place where you are, and you look at each other after being separated for 20 minutes, it is a terrible time. You can see it, the sparkle. The sparkle. That twinkling, that sparkle. It is a picture of that love relationship. That rapture is going to take place in the twinkling of Christ's eye. The sparkle in God's eye is the church, you and me.

In 1 Corinthians 15:52 says, "the last trump," the trumpet shall sound. 1 Thessalonians 4:16 says, "the trump of God." I gave you Revelation 4:1 a little while ago. It says, "the voice of a trumpet, Come up hither." Now you need to know this, this has messed up a lot of people who do not know the Bible very well because they think they see a set of trumpets over there in Revelation, and then they see these trumpets here, and they fail to search the scriptures, so they think they are the same trumpet. So it leads to the heresy that many people think today that the church is going through the Tribulation period because they see these trumpets, and they think they are the same. Duh, there are two sets of trumpets. You are told to search the scriptures, you are told to study to show thyself approved. When you search the scriptures, you try to match these trumpets up, they

do not match up in any way, shape, or form. You have got to study to show thyself approved. There are two sets of trumpets. There is one for the church, and then there is one for the nation of Israel. The one for the church, when you hear that trumpet, we are gone, we are gone. But it is like a voice. It is like a voice. The one for Israel is not a voice. It is just a trumpet being blown.

Now he says in 1 Corinthians 15:52-53, "the dead shall be raised incorruptible, and we shall be changed." Why? Verse 53, "For this corruptible must put on incorruption, and this mortal must put on immortality." That is exactly what he has told you. We saw it last week in 1 Corinthians 15:45-50, did we not? We saw the first Adam was of the earth, earthy. Because of the first Adam, death passed upon all men because of his sin. But we saw the second Adam was the Lord from heaven. Where the first Adam put him into corruption, put us into that terrestrial body, the second Adam put us into the celestial body and put us into the glory of God and gave us the image back, raised in His glory. That is what he is saying. It goes back to what I told you in the Bible. There are two lines concerning me and you. One represents death, that is Adam's line. The other one represents life, that is Christ's line.

Now look at 1 Corinthians 15:54, this is where it starts to get good. Not that it already has not been good, but this is where the victory is. "So when this corruptible shall have put on incorruption, and this mortal shall have put on immortality, then shall be brought to pass the saying that is written, Death is swallowed up in victory." Now, I love the way the Bible lays itself out. It says, "Death is swallowed up in victory." Let me ask you a question. Why did he use the word "swallowed" there? That death was swallowed up in a victory on a passage that deals with Christ's resurrection and it brings you and me into the resurrection. Let us test your spiritual cap this morning. Why did he use the word "swallow"? Why would he choose any word? This is the Bible, this is God's chain of events working all the way through the scriptures, through the Holy Spirit of God. Why did he use the word "swallow"? Nobody? Oh, Jim back there, big Jim, the drinking shirt on. What is it? Yeah, absolutely. What is Jonah a picture of? The resurrection. So he uses the word, chooses the word, "death is swallowed up in victory." Do you know why? Because Jonah going down there and being swallowed with that whale, when you get over to Matthew 12:40, and they wanted a sign of the resurrection, Christ said, "There shall no sign be given to it, but the sign of the prophet Jonas: For as Jonas was three days and three nights in the whale's belly; so shall the Son of man be three days and three nights in the heart of the earth." The fact that death swallowed up Christ, you and I have got the victory this morning.

I said last week, my dear friend, the victory lies in this fact. I am telling you, in this life, if you do not learn to use and hold on to what is coming in your life, you are never going to get through the struggle today. The victory that you and I should have, the victory that you and I should hang on to, is the fact that when Christ died and when He came out of that tomb and He resurrected and you got in Christ, bless God, you already got the victory won. You have been listening to the wrong propaganda. The people, the world, the devil, and your friends have been telling you that you do not have a victory, and you believe them. You are not focused on what is coming based on what Christ did. The victory for me, the victory for me, Romans 8:26-28, "For I reckon that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory which shall be revealed in us." Why? Because right now, my victory does not lie in the fact that I may fail

tomorrow or I may fail today or I failed yesterday. My victory lies in the fact that yes, in this life, I may lose some battles, but bless God, we have won the war. Amen. We have been set free. There is the victory.

That will get you through tomorrow and no matter what comes. Hebrews 2:14 says, "Forasmuch then as the children are partakers of flesh and blood, he also himself likewise took part of the same; that through death he might destroy him that had the power of death, that is, the devil." Oh boy, there is the victory. When Christ went down in that tomb and He came out the third day, the Bible says, Revelation 1:18, He had the keys of death and hell. Those keys in my life and your life give you the victory that even though you may suffer through this life, you are supposed to. That is why you draw nigh unto God, get in that book, let God do everything that book says it is going to do for you. That is why you have got to stand, be strong. God has got a job for you to do.

He says in 1 Corinthians 15:57, "But thanks be to God, which giveth us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ." He gives us the victory. That is the present tense. That is for today.

V. Steadfast, Unmoveable, Abounding

Look at 1 Corinthians 15:58. "Therefore, my beloved brethren," now based on what we have seen so far, based on what we now understand about the process of our resurrection, the rapture, the changing of our glorified body. I told you before, I will tell you again, you will never get through the struggles of tomorrow. You will never get over the defeat of yourself or your friends or the filth of this world until you start focusing on what He did for you and what is coming. "Therefore," because of what I just said, "my beloved brethren, be ye stedfast, unmoveable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, forasmuch as ye know that your labour is not in vain in the Lord."

He says, my friend, what is lacking in our life today is simply this: to be steadfast. Colossians 2:5 says, "For though I be absent in the flesh, yet am I with you in the spirit, joying and beholding your order, and the stedfastness of your faith in Christ." See that thing, "beholding your order"? We use that, "get your life in order." We use that to say, "I need to get my life in order." Yes, your life is either order or it is chaos. It will be order when it is in God, in the Word of God. It will be chaos when you try to do it yourself. But he says, "and the stedfastness of your faith in Christ." Steadfast, standing fast, steadfast. Why are so many of God's people up today and down tomorrow? Why will you go out of here today all pumped up and fired up and thanking God and selling God to your son for being so stupid, but by next week, you will be right back down into it again? I will tell you, the answer is you are not trusting in the victory God gave you, and you are not steadfast in that victory. You are not beating up the world, the world is beating up you. You are not in control of your life, your life is in control of you. Your flesh is running you, and it is because of all of the things in our lives that we just simply will not do what the Word of God says.

Then he says, "unmoveable." I think the best rendition of this in the Bible is found in Song of Solomon 5:15. When it talks about my Christ, when it describes the beauty of my Lord Jesus

Christ, and he says, "His legs are as pillars of marble, set upon sockets of fine gold." Marble is the hardest rock there is. You know that God would never use a man-made metal to display His Son. He would not use iron or steel, that is man-made. Now He picks the hardest rock because God is a rock, His work is perfect. The hardest rock known to man is marble, quite easy for tombstones, it lasts forever. The Bible says, "His legs are as pillars of marble, set upon sockets of fine gold." You see, He is unmoveable. It is one thing to be steadfast and hold your ground, but unmoveable, unmoveable. Your legs become like pillars of marble, set upon sockets of fine gold, deity of Christ. You stand on and in the Word of God. You are unmoveable, you do not change what you believe. I believe today exactly what I believed 40 years ago. If you would go back in the archives and dig out sermons that I preached 20, 30, 40 years ago, it would sound just like I do today. I say the same things then I say now. I believe what I believed 40 years ago, and I believe what the Waldensians believed 1500 years ago. On those things, I am unmoveable. I may be movable on some things, but when it comes to what the book says, what the book teaches, and what it lays out in the Bible, whether it is man, whether it is institutions, whether it is religion, I am unmoveable with that book.

My advice to you this morning, my friend, is real simple. Take a stand and then make a stand. Take a stand for God, and then clear off a spot and make a stand. Quit letting the world push you around. Quit letting your flesh push you around. Take a stand and then clear off a spot and make a stand and become steadfast and unmoveable. So He comes back. See, that is our job, that is what he is saying here. We are ending this chapter. He says, "Therefore, my beloved brethren," based on what I have told you in this whole chapter, you understand now completely where the victory is, the resurrection, how you got it, first Adam, second Adam, how it all comes to you, okay? Now that you know that, three things, my friend: steadfast, unmoveable, and then the third thing, always abounding in the work of the Lord.

Notice the word "abounding." God's people should be moving forward, not backwards. God's people should be moving forward, not standing still. This comes back to the thing that I talk about all the time is the continued spiritual growth that you have to have in your life. In reference to this great verse of being steadfast, unmoveable, and always abounding in the work of the Lord, in all reality, and you might as well, most of you, many of you already know this, but it never hurts to repeat it. If you ever get into the ministry at some point, or you ever get a large part of this ministry at some point, you need to realize what I am about to say. You always cannot count on everybody in any church, not just this church, any church. You cannot count on everybody to pull his or her fair share load, it is not going to happen. You might as well get it straight. I figured it out the first six months I was in the ministry. Get it straight, accept it, work with what you got, you just cannot. The work of God will always be carried out by the minority of people, not the majority. It does not matter how good the church is. You are going to find that that is a characteristic of Christianity. You are going to find that God's faithful few has always been the minority. You are going to find that God always gets the work done with a remnant, and you are going to find that you cannot count on everybody to pull his or her fair share load.

There are people who rush this city, rush this country, love to go to church on Sunday morning, they love to be in church, they even bring their Bible and take notes, they just do not ever do

anything for God at all. They might be wonderful people and great people, but you could not count on them if push came to shove, if your life depended on it, and maybe someday it will. In your Lord's work, you will find that doing the ministry, if you are faithful in what God calls you to do, this is what he is talking about abounding, and I have seen it, I have seen it all my life, I have seen it in some of your lives right now. If you are faithful in what God calls you to do, and God gives you to do, and you are faithful in doing it, you know what God does? God gives you some more. Pretty soon you are doing that, and you are doing more, God gives you more, and you are moving forward, and that is what the Bible means when it says, "always abounding in the work of the Lord," moving forward in ministry. That is exactly how it worked, and it is true of any church. It is true of any pastor. It does not matter if you have got a bad pastor, or a good pastor, or a bad church, or a good church. This is a characteristic that you find in all my 40 years, and thousands of places I have been in, talked to, been around, I have never seen a variation from it. It is just the way that it is.

But I watched that abounding process. I watched, like for instance, and this is what a pastor looks for. We kicked off our... we are going to look back, and we are going to see the issue we had, or they had at the City Union Mission of cutting us down to 30, was the greatest move God had. Now we could have looked at that in two ways. We could have got our nose bit out of joint, or we could have seen it like we talked about it, and said, "Hey, God's got something else." But when we launched this homeless ministry aspect, now, it is a great thing. I understand that it is a ministry where you can come once, twice, go back and forth, maybe your wife will go this time, you will go this time. That is fine. We have got plenty of people to make the thing happen, and it will always take care of itself. But what you see in that, as I see in everything, you know what you see? You see men and women coming up through that, and God getting a hold of their heart, and they are saying, "This is exactly what I have been looking for, this is exactly what I have been waiting for, this is exactly what I need, this is exactly where I can put my name." We have got three or four families in our church that were once homeless themselves. God takes something like that, and as it keeps abounding, that is how you bring people up. Not everybody is going to stand up and say, "This is for me." That is not what it is designed to do. It is designed that God will bring up those ones, and God will put what it needs to be. But in your life and my life, we always have to be abounding in the work of the Lord. It is just the way that it has to work. That is what makes some people absolutely invaluable in ministry. The pastor will tell you this, it is like going back to the 12. You had 12 men, one was a phony, left 11. Out of the 11, three were good. Out of the three, one was excellent. It is just things like this, when people grasp it and see it, it is what makes people invaluable in ministry, ministerially speaking.

Now, I love everybody, and I do, and I would do anything to help anybody, but I am not a fool. I know how much more we could do if everybody would just get on board, but that is not going to happen. It is not going to happen. Some of God's people, I have seen them all down through my life. I have had people that moved away from ministry, and they went to another state, they had something here they did there, or maybe they went and took their own church someplace, and it takes, when they leave, it takes four or five people to take their place. They are doing so much, and they are doing it so well, that it is like it leaves a little gap, and you have got to have three or

four, sometimes five people to fill their place. Someone else leaves, and you do not have to replace anything, for they are not doing anything. It is just that simple.

I had a pastor tell me one time when I was preaching. He said, "Last year you were here, and I am getting ready to preach, and he tells me this. He says, 'Last year you were here, what did you preach?'" And I said, "Yeah, we did that church history series." He said, "Yeah, a lot of people liked it. They had two families that did not like it." And I began to say, "Well, I am sorry about that." He started to laugh. And I said, "What is so funny?" I said, "I would not be laughing about six people leaving my church." He said, "Well, I would not normally either, but he said, 'It took absolutely nothing to replace them.'" So when all six people left, the offerings dropped a dollar and 86 cents. Abounding in the work of the Lord.

Then lastly, and here is what he says, "forasmuch as ye know that your labour is not in vain in the Lord." Why? Why is your labor of what you are doing now not in vain? Remember last week's sermon, how we ended? Get your fork out. Why? Why as you know that your labor is not in vain in the Lord? Why? Because there is something better coming. The glory. The glory, the joint heirship, and the day we get raptured and be with Him. Like the old song says, "And forever I will be with the one who died for me." What a day, glorious day, that will be. You know how it goes. Sing that chorus with me. "Oh, what a day that will be. Oh, when my Jesus I shall see. And I look upon His face. Yes, the one who saved me by His grace. Best part. And He takes me by the hand and leads me to the promised land. Oh, what a day. Oh, glorious day, that will be." You see, "Even so, come, Lord Jesus."

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