

# Zechariah 7

Sunday 1/1/2012

He told me he wanted to wait until he was taller. I told him he has about as much chance of that as he does of waiting until he gets better looking. But anyway, I am in a good mood this morning. Do you know why I am in a good mood?

Years ago, a buddy of mine and I were squirrel hunting, and we trespassed on somebody's land that had it posted, "No Trespassing." We were young then and foolish and did not think much about it. So we were in there banging away and getting our limit of squirrels, and all of a sudden, some old crotchety farmer comes up behind us. Boy, he fires off three rounds from a 12-gauge pump, and we just froze. He leveled that gun right at both of us. We were about 10 feet apart. He informed us that he was going to shoot us for being on his property, hunting his squirrels.

Well, being the philosophical giant that I am, I tried to reason with him and tried to tell him, "Was it really worth killing two people just for a couple of squirrels, or killing two squirrels among the other squirrels that we had already killed?" He promptly informed me he felt nothing about killing me or shooting either one of us because we had been warned to stay off his property.

So I feel good today with what I am going to preach because you have been warned not to be here today. I feel absolutely no remorse or no sympathy or nothing for any of you today. I told you Thursday night, this was a good morning to get a headache. I told you a couple of times, "You better get a good example." This is a good time to get the flu, a good time to have all kinds of problems that you just could not be here today. It would be a good thing for you to be here because the first of the year is always a special time for me, just because it has been ingrained in me.

## I. The Context of Zechariah and Lessons from History

I was going through the Minor Prophets the last couple of weeks, Ruckman's book on the second volume, just absolutely incredible. We had a little downtime before my world all went to pieces with the baby dying and everything else that happened. So I got about four or five days in there where I really got it worked out. I was coming through the book of Zechariah, and Zechariah has always been one of my favorite books of the Bible. I do not even know where I did this. I told you this Thursday night: I found an outline that at some point I had jotted down and completely forgotten. I do that a lot. I will be someplace, and somebody will say something, and I will think about it, and immediately a great sermon outline will fall into place.

I can hear preachers who are the worst preachers in the world, but they will take one little point that they did not explore and see that thing as an incredible message to preach. When I am coming through the Bible, many, many times I will be looking for something else or doing something else, and what will hold me up is, bang, right there in front of me will be one of the greatest sermon outlines that really teaches a great truth. So in my Bible, I just kind of outline them quickly. Unfortunately, in many cases, I forget they were there. I have started since then just going through my Bible from Genesis, and I am somewhere up to Joshua or Judges now,

putting in a notebook just page by page where those sermons are and what they are so I can better have a handle on them.

But I thought to myself as I looked at Zechariah and came through this book, "Now that would be a great message for the start of the new year," because there is a lot going on. We are all busy with things. I think one of the things that really happens without us knowing it, a lot of things happen in our life that are just bad choices. But there are a lot of things that happen in life just because we get busy and we get sidetracked, and we begin to, within the busy time, lose our focus and lose our perspective just because of the busyness of things.

The context of the book of Zechariah, the Minor Prophets, has always been my favorite group of books. One of the reasons is because they are almost impossible to get anything doctrinally out of because they are just closed books. I do not know what to tell you. Somebody asked Dr. Ruckman years ago, after he did his first volume, when he was going to write the second volume on the Minor Prophets, and his answer was, "As soon as I can figure out something to write about them." They are really hard, but from a practical application, I think they are probably some of the richest books in the Bible that you are ever going to get into. I will tell you why that is.

You have heard me say many, many times of the great parallels between the nation of Israel and where they were at with God, and where we are at with God as Christians. The book of Zechariah is a book, as you probably know from coming through it, that is a post-exilic book. It is written after the 70 years of captivity. It goes along with Haggai, Malachi, and Zechariah. They are all post-captivity books. When you begin to put a context to that book, which I always try to encourage you to do, you will find that the book of Zechariah takes place about 12 years after the events of Ezra and Nehemiah.

You remember now in Ezra and Nehemiah, that is after the 70 years of captivity. Darius, King of Persia, makes a decree that the Jews can go back and rebuild Jerusalem. So in Ezra, they go back, and in Nehemiah, they rebuild. When they start this work, they begin to get it done. Nehemiah covers that great work, that great time. In fact, that is why we taught the lessons, if you remember, about how to build a church, about the nine gates and building the walls as they rebuilt the city and all that stuff.

But in the book of Zechariah, it is now 12 years later, and the work of building God's temple had stopped. Not only had it stopped, but Haggai, who is a contemporary of Zechariah that writes during that same time, in chapter 1 of Haggai, he adds to our story by telling us that not only had they stopped the work of the building of God's house, but they are actually taking the very materials that God had set aside for building His temple, and now they are building their own houses with that. I think that is very instructive.

From our perspective, the Jews in the post-captivity time, which Zechariah writes about, is really a great example, as I said, of where Bible Christianity is at today within what we commonly know as the Laodicean Church. They never learn from the mistakes of others. You have heard me talk about 1 Corinthians where it talks about the examples and the ensamples.

*1 Corinthians 10:11*

*Now all these things happened unto them for ensamples: and they are written for our admonition, upon whom the ends of the world are come.*

Just as we never learn from history, we never learn from other people's mistakes, and we truly do not, neither did the nation of Israel. Because if they would have done that, they would have remembered back in the book of Kings, in 1 Kings chapter 7, where when Solomon was building the temple of God, the Bible says it took seven years for him to build that temple and finish it. But then it also tells you, and this is the beginning of the demise of Solomon, he took 13 years to build his own house. Anytime you take more time doing something for yourself than you do for God, you are going to be in trouble. Solomon's demise began when he started to put the emphasis on his world more than God's world.

Here is the nation of Israel who now have been given a decree to go back and to build the house of God and the temple, and yet they again do not learn the lessons of history because now they have stopped that building process, and they are taking the very things that God had set aside to build His house, and now they are using it to build their own. Cleon said it last night, did he not? Cleon was a great intro to what I am going to say to you today. His message went right down the line and laid the whole aspect out of basically what I want to build upon today, and we had no idea. He had no idea what I am going to preach today. I had no idea what he was going to preach today. So you are in double trouble today because not only do I want to whack you, obviously from the events around us, God wants to whack you, whack us.

## II. The 400 Silent Years and Modern Parallels

One of the greatest studies in the Bible is this time period from Malachi, Haggai, and Zechariah up to the first coming of Christ. The scholars call it the 400 silent years, and there is so much interesting stuff that goes on in that time period historically and even biblically, even though during that time God is not writing anything. That is why they call it the 400 silent years. You have a period of time from when God ends the revelation of the Old Testament, Malachi, where God speaks to no man. God gives no visions. The only thing that God says and the only thing that God gives man is from what He has already written in the revelation of the Old Testament that now is complete. Those 400 silent years bring us up to the first coming of the Lord Jesus Christ.

It is an interesting thing. Somebody noted many, many years ago, it was not me, that the Bible in its consistency, that your King James Bible was written in 1611, finished in 1611. Somebody picked up on it that in the Bible's consistency during that period of time, God did not speak any other way other than through the completed revelation of the New Testament. Just by a wild stroke of coincidence, it has been 400 years since God last spoke to us with the completion of the New Testament. Then the guy went on to teach and say, and it is very interesting, that just as the 400 years from the end of Malachi to the first coming of Christ where God spoke to no one and only gave revelation from the Old Testament, that it would be 400 years from the writing of the New Testament, the King James Bible, to the second coming of the Lord Jesus Christ. In that

period of time, God gave no revelation. If that would be true, then the rapture would be taking place in 2011.

Now, because it did not take place in 2011 does not necessarily mean that that is not true. That is just one more of the great indicators in the Bible that tells you and me that as New Testament Christians, you should not be straying too far from home. A lot of factors come into that; that is not our message today. But in both cases, they are not learning from history, and they are certainly not learning from the mistakes of others. In both cases, God has given them the final revelation of His plan to them and to us. The parallels here are quite incredible.

This is a time period for Israel, much like we have today, because the Jews, the nation of Israel, has completely lost its way. It has completely lost its purpose. It has no idea of what its perspective should be. Yet also like today, my, my, my, there is much religious activity going on with the nation of Israel. A lot of spiritual things are happening. We just finished December, and today is the beginning of January. For the Jews, this is their Christmas time; it is their Hanukkah. Hanukkah is the Festival of Lights. Hanukkah stands as a good example today because all the Jews, and you see it all around and everything that is going on, everybody for the Jewish, they are very careful. It is "Merry Christmas" to you, and if you are a Jew, it is "Happy Hanukkah."

Yet the truth of the matter is that you could not find Hanukkah in the Bible if your life depended on it. The Jew was never told to keep Happy Hanukkah or unhappy Hanukkah. There is no Hanukkah in the Old Testament under the giving of the Jews. There is no Festival of Lights. All of that comes in during this 400 silent years where they have rejected the Word of God, and yet to maintain their spirituality, they have to come up with a lot of spiritual Christian things that make them look like they have really got something with God when they do not. In fact, if you want to take it one step further, I would dare say today that 90 percent of what the Jewish people are doing today in what they believe and what they teach really has absolutely nothing to do with the Bible in any way, shape, or form. It all goes back to this 400 years where they are adding all of these things. You will see what I am talking about in a minute.

One step further than that, Christianity is the same way today. I would say on the authority of the Word of God, and I have the authority to say this, I have watched Christianity much longer than probably anybody in this room. I want to say to you today, in the same breath, I will tell you that in the church today, in Christianity today, in God's people's lives today, very little of what they do for God really has anything to do with the Bible. That is just the great parallels that we find here. The lessons of history and its parallels, I tell you all the time, they are vitally important, but we never learn it. We never learn it.

In both cases, the nation of Israel in the Old Testament and us in the New Testament, we simply major on the minors. We take the things that have no relevance to God, and we major on those. The most important things that we have, in their case, finishing the temple, is the farthest thing from their mind. That is where we are at. They are doing many religious things, but the temple, and remember now that the building of that temple is central to their relationship with God, much like the Bible says in 1 Corinthians chapter 6, verse 19.

*1 Corinthians 6:19*

*What? know ye not that your body is the temple of the Holy Ghost which is in you, which ye have of God, and ye are not your own?*

You know how it worked. This is not all new to you. In the Old Testament, God had a fixed building called the temple, and that temple was the central point of everything that Jew as a nation had in their relationship with God. All of the world came to that temple to see the glory of God. In the New Testament, it is now different, is it not? Now, there is no building. This building means nothing. The real glory of God is not housed in a permanent building. The real glory of God is housed in your temple, which is your body.

Where in the Old Testament all the world came to the temple, in the New Testament, we take our temple to the world. Do you know what you are going to do this afternoon? Many of you, when you go down to Restart, down along the riverside, and down there in the park, and down there at 16th and Cherry, and all of those places we go, you say, "We are going to pass out food." Well, that is true. "We are going to give them some trash." Yeah, you are right. We are going to give them some food and some donuts and some bagels and some clothes. You are absolutely right. But what we are doing is basically what the Bible says we were supposed to do, and we are taking our temple to them. That is the job of the New Testament church.

Now, I am not saying that everybody that does not go down to Restart has this problem, because I realize that certain people do certain things. But you will know in a heartbeat if I am talking about you or not. Do you know why there are so many people who will not get involved in something like that? Because they have not finished building their temple, and they have no real care to finish building it. So to them, it is stupid. To them, they look at that and they say, "Why would I want to do that? That is stupid. Why would I want to come to New Year's Eve last night? That is stupid." That is where God's people are at today. That is exactly where they are at.

### III. The Call for a New Year's Revolution

When Zechariah writes, he challenges them to get back on task. He does basically what I do every Sunday morning and every Thursday night. He does what Cleon did last night. Cleon gave you a challenge last night to get, he said it in a very eloquent way and laid it out in a very good way. But he basically told you, "You better look, because there is a way that seemeth right unto men, but the end thereof are the ways of death." He talked about how that we inherently always make the wrong choice. That is why you have to have a church. That is why you have to have men who will stand in a pulpit, who, as Jim Clark said last night, will peel your hide off, because we all need our hide peeled off.

You all think that I just enjoy it up here preaching and screaming and sweating, and as I have got what you said this morning, "the splash zone." I like that. He is sitting in the splash zone this morning. Thought I would never find out about it. So I am going to lean this way today as I preach. I love things like that. He gave them a challenge, and a challenge really sets up the great theme of this book.

There is a reason why God, because if you understand anything historically, you know that when God scattered the nation of Israel, He scattered them all over the place. But there was a reason

why God brought a remnant. Ah, that old concept of a remnant. God brought a remnant back to Jerusalem. The reason for that is that at the first coming of Christ 400 years later, the Jews have to be in the homeland for that to happen. So God in His wisdom and working out, and as the Bible says, "the heart of the king is in the hand of the Lord," He brings about the events and changes the times and the seasons like He tells us in Daniel. He puts in Darius's heart to let those Jews go back.

Zechariah tells them, "Hey look, guys, come on. Stop looking at this thing the way you are looking at it. You are not just building a building. You are building your nation's future." But they could not see it. Yet it is the same concept I challenge you with today. You think this is just a church. You think this is just a building. No, what we are doing here today, we are building your children's future. Where they were building it toward the first coming of Christ, we are building it toward the second coming of Christ and the judgment seat of Christ and all that God has for it. Where they had an opportunity to give to their children back what the glory of what Israel had was now lost, we have a chance to give back to our children the glory of things that are going to happen.

You realize that what this church is in its greatest mode for your children. This church is the greatest insurance policy you have with your children. I have seen a number of studies where they will go out and they will ask children just about secular things. They will ask them who the... many of them do not even know who the President of the United States is. They will ask them historical questions like, "Who was Adolf Hitler?" They do not even know. They are absolutely void of any kind of roots and understanding of what has gone on in the world. How in the world can you function today in a world with so much around us if you do not know all the things that have happened and transpired through history?

You never want to find your child in that position when it comes to the Bible. You never want your children to not know who Moses is and who Jesus was and who Joshua was. You do not want their heroes to be the fornicating sports stars and rock stars and the drug addicts of this world. You want your children's heroes to be the great men and women of the Bible. The only way that you do that is to do what Israel failed to do, and that is to always keep before us the challenge. We are not building just a church here. We are not just building a church. We are building the future of your children if Jesus carries His coming, and we are building toward the greatest event in the history of the world, and that is the second coming of the Lord Jesus Christ.

But Israel missed it. Israel failed to see it, and I am going to tell you right now, history always repeats itself. 99.999% of God's people will miss it too. I will not be in that 99.9999%. Maybe you will be by choice. I will not be by choice. It is as simple as that. Yes, the message deteriorates from here on. I have marked at the top of page three, "Killer page." Not a good thing. In fact, I do not remember writing that. I think God wrote that last night while I was sleeping.

Turn to Zechariah chapter 7. I want to read just a few short verses here. Before we do, let us have a word of prayer.

Father, we do thank You and praise You for the Lord Jesus. We love You. We thank You for the time that we have set aside today. We thank You for what You did in our church last night. Lord, I cannot think I would rather want to be anywhere on this planet than where we were last night. Lord, to see what God has done in the lives of men and women, and to see, Lord, what He is doing in this church. Lord, it just was, as tired as I am this morning and as much as I have got to do yet today, Lord, I will tell you what, I would not have traded it for anything in this world.

Lord, I thank You for the Word of God. I thank You for men and women in a church that for the most part understand what I am talking about today. That they put away the sin of their life. They put away the sin that so easily besets them. All of us have struggled with it, but they came to a point where they said, "I am done. I am finished. From this point on, it is going to be for me and my house, we serve the Lord." Lord, it is people like that that make the difference and make this church or any church work. I pray today You will take this, the beginning of this new year, and You will challenge our hearts, and we will thank You and praise You in Jesus' name, for His sake we ask it. Amen.

Now he says in chapter 7, verse 1:

*Zechariah 7:1-6*

*And it came to pass in the fourth year of king Darius, that the word of the LORD came unto Zechariah in the fourth day of the ninth month, even in Chisleu;*

*When they had sent unto the house of God Sherezer and Regemmelech, and their men, to pray before the LORD,*

*And to speak unto the priests which were in the house of the LORD of hosts, and to the prophets, saying, Should I weep in the fifth month, separating myself, as I have done these so many years?*

*Then came the word of the LORD of hosts unto me, saying,*

*Speak unto all the people of the land, and to the priests, saying, When ye fasted and mourned in the fifth and seventh month, even those seventy years, did ye at all fast unto me, even to me?*

*And when ye did eat, and when ye did drink, did not ye eat for yourselves, and drink for yourselves?*

*Zechariah 7:7*

*Should ye not hear the words which the LORD hath cried by the former prophets, when Jerusalem was inhabited and in prosperity, and the cities thereof round about her, when men inhabited the south and the plain?*

#### IV. God's Rebuke of Hypocrisy

I am not much on the idea of New Year's resolutions. I know that New Year's and Christmas, it is probably for you a great time when you are off from work and you do not have anything to do, and you get vacation time and catch up on everything. But for people in the ministry, as myself,

it is always the roughest time of the year, and it is really rough because it is the time when everybody's world falls apart. If you have been in the ministry any time at all, you will know that the two worst months of the year where people's problems just seem to go off the scale will be the end of December and the beginning of January.

The reason why that is, is because, whether you know it or not, if you are saved this morning, the Holy Spirit of God is living inside you. Probably in many, many cases in God's people's lives today, it has been 365 days of absolute grieving the Holy Spirit of God. You cannot grieve the Holy Spirit of God as a Christian and not have it affect you physically. Do you know that? Do you realize that you not doing what is right with the Word of God, as much as you want to pretend you are and as much as you want to play the game, when you grieve the Holy Spirit of God inside you, it affects you physically? The things that you do, it affects you emotionally. It obviously affects you physically because you make bad choices, and those bad choices lead to complications that are disastrous. It is something that is absolutely true.

So we hear a lot about, "Well, I am going to make a New Year's resolution." Let me say this to you, my friend, and I love you to death, but in most of God's people's lives, not just people here today, but in most of God's people's lives, a New Year's resolution is just not going to cut it. What needs to happen in most of God's people's lives is not a New Year's resolution; you need a New Year's revolution. You need to dethrone the king that is sitting on the throne of your life and put the Lord Jesus Christ back on that throne. You do not need a resolution; you need a revolution. You need to overthrow the king that is sitting on your throne of your life and my life.

In keeping with 2 Corinthians, which we will be back in next week, you remember that little four-point examination outline I gave you? We will need it today too. That is, do not look around to the person next to you. Forget the person sitting in front of you. If I say anything, do not let me see you nudging somebody and pointing to your ex-husband or your ex-girlfriend or your ex-boyfriend. No, no. All I want you to do is look at yourself today. That is all I want you to do. As best as you can, and I know it may be hard, I know it may be tough, but I know it is something you are not used to, but if you would today, just for a few short moments, examine yourself in light of what we are going to talk about on the first day of 2012. If you would just work at knowing yourself and being honest with yourself, if you would then take the steps based on those two things and what I am going to say today, because it will be very clear today, to take heed to yourself and then prove yourself.

This is a great, great study to take. Mel Subaca, we always had a Bible study on New Year's Eve, much like we do, and he always used to say this, and I thought about it all night last night, and I am thinking about it this morning as I am speaking to this, I can hear him saying now. He always used to say at the end of this year, beginning of the next year:

*Do you love Him more?*

*Do you love Him more now than you did at the beginning of last year?*

*Are you closer to Him now than you were last January?*

*Do you love the Word of God more now than you did last January?*

*At the end of this year, are you doing more and have it more in clear focus what God wants you to do now than you did last year?*

Think about that today. Think about that today. Now let us examine what is taking place in chapter 7 and what an incredible picture it is of us today and what is taking place in modern-day Christianity. Remember, we learn from the lessons of history, that would be ourselves, and we learn from the mistakes of others. Let me explain what is taking place in chapter 7 here.

You already know this, that in 606 BC, Nebuchadnezzar comes down. Already before that, or shortly after that, Sennacherib comes down, and he takes Israel into total captivity. We know now that a remnant goes back in Ezra and Nehemiah for the purpose of the first coming of Christ. But the truth of the matter is, for the rest of their lives until Christ comes, they are no longer a free nation. They are now under the bondage of Gentile nations, and this now has started what we should know in our Bible study from past studies: the times of the Gentiles. It pictures for you and for me the church in the Laodicean church period, which is no longer under the direction of the Holy Spirit of God, but now under the direction of a worldly process that we pretend is Christianity, that many of God's people fall into. They are in a bad situation. Never again will they be a free nation. They have some freedoms, but they have many adversaries.

The real issue with them, no matter what else we want to see today, you need to always keep this in mind, because the real issue for them is the same real issue for us, and it is the fact that they are not finishing the temple. But what they have done is they have created two months a year, verse 5, the fifth and the seventh month, to fast and to mourn their terrible ordeal. They come up with, "Out of 12 months a year, we are going to take two whole months, and we are going to fast, and we are going to pray, and we are going to mourn to God." It is a great study. In response to this action, God sends them Zechariah.

Here lies our study today for many of God's people, and all of us really, it should be like looking in a mirror. The first thing that I see out of this, and there are a number of things I want to talk about here, but the first thing that strikes me, and I saw this the other day, and I have seen it many times through the Bible, is that God loves you and me so much that God will always send somebody to correct you when you are wrong. God will always do that. The Holy Spirit of God should be enough. You ought to be as close to the Holy Spirit of God as you can get, and when you do something wrong or step over that line, the Holy Spirit of God pricks your heart just like that. But some of us get to the point where we kind of blow Him off. So do you know what God does? God will put somebody in your world. God will put somebody in your life. Maybe it will be a sermon you hear. Maybe it will be a Christian friend that will come to you and say, "I love you, man, and hey, pal, you know what, you are my buddy, and we have been through a lot, we have played ball together and all this stuff, but let me tell you something, I see something coming your way in your life." God cares enough about you and me to always send somebody to correct you and me when we are wrong.

I do not title my messages, never have, but I think about titles that I would put on them just because they just come to mind. But if I would title this one, I would call this "Anything But What God Says," because that is what we do today. Not going ahead and finishing the temple,

which is central, but setting up two months a year totally given to fasting and praying. Let me translate that for you. That translates in 2012 to violating every biblical principle that you hear preached and the Bible teaches, yet putting up some phony spiritual facade, some cloak of spirituality to hide behind, to keep from showing your real lack of biblical relationship with God. It is the single fundamental issue that we find with God's people today.

I have seen people go to absolutely dead churches, completely apostate, and yet they know what the Bible teaches. I have seen them go to dead, apostate churches that were totally against anything that God said, and yet these churches have no Bible, they have no preaching; that is just a bunch of fluffy, syrupy crap, and they pretend what a great place this is, in spite of what the Bible says. I have seen people hook up, I have seen it all of my life, I have seen people, male and female, hook up with unsaved people, which is a clear violation of 2 Corinthians chapter 6, verse 14.

*2 Corinthians 6:14*

*Be ye not unequally yoked together with unbelievers: for what fellowship hath righteousness with unrighteousness? and what communion hath light with darkness?*

All of my life, we have got a book on it, I think, over there. I have taught Genesis chapter 24, how many of you have been through male and female, Genesis chapter 24, about how to find a mate, the 19 points that you go through. Two times in that chapter, two times, one there and one in the middle, two times in that chapter, he tells you there is no future fooling with, messing with, getting involved in, under any circumstances, an unsaved person. In spite of that, all my ministry, all of my ministry, there are people who always think that they are the exception to the biblical principle. That is just the way the nation of Israel was. They have come up with two days. It sounds good, does it not? Two months, boy, two months, man, that sounds Christian, that sounds spiritual. They do that so they do not have to do what God told them they needed to do, which was finish that temple. We as God's people today, we are not going to finish the temple. We are just not.

I think the two months a year concept is a classic. Tell me God does not have a sense of humor. They set up two months a year to be spiritual, and then they live like they want to live the rest of the year. God's people today, we set aside Sunday morning and Wednesday night, or in our case, Thursday night. Where they took two months, gave it to God, and lived like hell the rest of the year, we take Sunday and Thursday, give them to God, and then we live like hell the rest of the week. I think it is classic. God's people are famous for coming up with nice Christian spiritual things to do so they do not have to do what the Bible tells you you have to do. Some things never change in Zechariah's time or in 2011 and 2012, our time.

I want you to notice that God sees right through all of this. In verses 4, 5, and 6, God says:

*Zechariah 7:4-6*

*Then came the word of the LORD of hosts unto me, saying,*

*Speak unto all the people of the land, and to the priests, saying, When ye fasted and mourned in the fifth and seventh month, even those seventy years, did ye at all fast unto me, even to me?*

*And when ye did eat, and when ye did drink, did not ye eat for yourselves, and drink for yourselves?*

The answer is no, they did not. "And when you did eat and when you did drink, did you not eat for yourselves and drink for yourselves?" Yes, you did. You did not do it for Me; you did it for yourself. He is saying, "You as a nation, you did not do it because you wanted to seek My face. You did not do it because you wanted to do what is right. You did it because you do not want to do what is right. You do not want to finish the temple. You do not want to build what is central in your relationship with God, and you want to pretend you are spiritual." There it is. We are not done yet.

I will tell you something else for the child of God, for every man and every woman sitting under the sound of my voice today, get this: for a child of God, there is no difference between the secular and the sacred. For a child of God, all ground is holy ground. Every step you take needs to be made in light of the relationship you have with God.

For some of you husbands, do you know why your wives do not respect you? Do you know in many cases why your wives secretly do not want to be with you? Have you figured it out? It is the same problem that Israel had. It is the same problem that Christianity has. We have got a tract back there that we put out and pass out; it was called "This Was Your Life." I am ordering a new one that some of you men ought to get; it is called "This Was Your Wife." The reason why she does not is because of your hypocrisy. The reason why the church has nothing going with God is because of its hypocrisy to God. The hypocrisy in our lives: we treat our wives one way at church, and then we cuss them out on the way home. We treat them one way when everybody is around, and then we beat them up and we belittle them when nobody is looking.

The key to leadership, ladies and gentlemen, is one word, and it takes a lot of character qualities to be a leader, but the bottom fundamental line of character is one word: it is the word consistency. You are consistent in what you do for God. I have told you men time and time again, I have told you women time and time again, "You have got problems in your marriage, you have got problems with your wife, pal, it is your responsibility to take the charge to fix it because she does not have the ability to fix it. You do, but you will not." You will put up all the spiritual front. You will do all the things that show everybody what a great Christian you are, but when the rubber meets the road, you have no credibility.

I will talk to some of you parents who are on the way to losing your kids or maybe have lost your kid. You wonder why your kids do not respect you. They see the hypocrisy at home. They see one thing at church, something else at home. They see you putting on a facade of a holy life, and they see the absolute despicable Christian life we display in front of them. Just as the husband's parents never get it, you think your kids are stupid? Your kids are a hundred thousand times smarter than you are, pal. They pick up every phony everything, everything that is inconsistent. They see it, they map it, and then they reprogram it into themselves.

Years ago, a thought came to mind this morning as I was listening to something on the radio, and a similar thing came up, and I brought it right back, and I had, boy, I needed that. Years ago, I had a guy come in to see me who was a guy in our church, at this church, a former church, and this is probably 15, 20 years ago. He was a nice guy, but he was a spiritual zit. He came in, and immediately I could see there was something wrong. He was visibly shaken, and he began to lay out the tragic story of how his boy had just gotten some girl pregnant, and they had told him last night, and he and his wife were just broken about it. I mean, he was broken about it, and he was just absolutely beside himself. He was not married at that point, and he was absolutely beside himself, and he said to me, "I do not understand how this happened. I said to my boy, 'How could you do this?'"

Now, from my perspective, I am sitting over here saying, "You have got to be kidding me." This guy had been divorced for four, five, six, seven years. He was in a church. He claimed to be a Christian, but for the last year or so, he has been shacking up with some Christian bimbo, and he actually thinks his kid did not see that. He actually thinks he could sneak over there, stay overnight, lay that out in front of them, and just say, "They still think I am a great Christian." I looked at him and I said, "You are a fool. You have not learned one thing by what has transpired through this. You have not learned that how could they do this? Because they had the best teacher in the world: you and Miss Bimbo." He actually scratched his head and said, "How could this? What is wrong with you?" It happened because that is the lifestyle you taught them, Mr. and Mrs. Christian. What do you expect? What do you expect?

For the child of God, all ground is holy. There is no difference between the secular and the sacred. Israel had set aside two whole months to fast and to pray and to mourn, and the other 10 months they just did what they wanted to do, and they never finished the temple. God's people set aside Sunday, Wednesday, or Thursday, or whatever, and then do what they want to do the rest of the week. You do not live one way at church and then another way at home. You do not say, "Praise the Lord" on Sunday morning or Thursday night, and then cuss like a sailor throughout the week. You do not live one way at church in front of your friends and another way where you work. Some of you people are saved people, you are on your way to heaven, you are born again, and you could not get the people that you work with to come to church if you gave them all the money in the world. Do you know why? Because they see your hypocrisy. You do not live one way at church and another way when you are off at school. You do not live one way at church on Thursday night and then live another way on the volleyball court or the softball court. For the Christian, there is no difference between the sacred and the secular.

He says in 1 Peter chapter 1, verse 16:

*1 Peter 1:16*

*Because it is written, Be ye holy; for I am holy.*

Then he says, "Why do you not listen to what was spoken by the former prophets?" That would be Samuel, Isaiah, Jeremiah, Ezekiel, David, all the Minor Prophets. But just like today, they have got them some new prophets. They have got some prophets with a positive message. They have got them some prophets with spiritual insight for today. They have got some prophets that

will teach you about the purpose-driven life. They have got prophets that teach them everything but nothing about God or His Word. They have got them prophets that teach a new morality for us Christians today.

We have Christian booze today, did you not know that? We have Christian drugs that are okay for God's people to take. Yeah, there is a little office someplace that bless them. The booze is made not with the hops water, but holy water. We have Christian adultery now, did you not know that? We have Christian fornication. In fact, pretty quick, I am going to be out of a job because I have got nothing left to prove. I am going to be out of a job because I have got nothing left to preach. I do not think there are any sinners anymore because nothing is sin anymore. Christians now drink whatever they want, and they say it is okay. Christians take drugs and do whatever they want to do and think it is okay.

I had a guy that used to come to this church, does not come anymore, that went to another state and came back, and he was got into marijuana, was smoking marijuana, and the person that was working with him says, "What are you doing?" And he said, "Man, there ain't nothing wrong with that. It is legal out in California." You are laughing. That is Christianity today. We have got men and women who fornicate and commit adultery and look at it as ministry. You know, that was very popular back in the 70s and the 80s in, not Wichita, between here and Wichita, in Dora. Is there Dora? In Dora, in Dora. Anybody know what the big religious cult headquarters was in Dora 20 years ago? The Way. Who said that? Wow, watch him, Joe, he may have been, he may be an implant. Are you after an American? You know what their deal was? But I know this because we took a team there to work with a Baptist church, and what they do is they take all the hottest, skimpily clad young ladies that you could find, send them out on the street corner to invite stupid people to come to their Bible studies, and they actually use sex to get them into the church, pretend that they have a relationship with them, and then once they get their claws in them and they become part of The Way, then they move on with somebody else. I used to think that was a terrible thing. Kidding me? That is Christianity today. That is Christianity today. Dr. Dagle, he just started a new ministry. It is a great one. You know, you are going to pay for that the rest of your life. But every time I do that, just think of this, it was beer, was it not, Bob? Sure tasted like it. Had to be here for Thursday night to get that one.

I like the name of our church. I think it was God's design. I like our church because when I meet people, it pretty much tells me right out of the chute if they know anything about the Bible or not. Somebody will say, "What is the name of your church?" And I will say, "Old Paths Baptist Church." Now, if you know your Bible, you know that is Jeremiah 6:16. That is a good... Many people will say, "Yeah, Jeremiah 6:16, yeah, boom, I am impressed." I have had them say, "Old Paths," and they wrinkle their nose, "Old Paths," like that is the weirdest name in the world. It probably is for you because it has been a long time since you have been on the old path. But I call this church that name because it says in Jeremiah 6:16, it makes a statement. I like things that make a statement. That verse is my verse because it reminds me of me. You read it one time, you know where it is at. You hear me one time, you know where I am at. You may not like me, you may like me. Some people love me, some people hate me, some people love to hate me, but the bottom line is, you know where I am at. That verse tells you where we are at.

*Jeremiah 6:16*

*Thus saith the LORD, Stand ye in the ways, and see, and ask for the old paths, where is the good way, and walk therein, and ye shall find rest for your souls. But they said, We will not walk therein.*

The old way is the best way. The old Book is the best Book, and the old paths for you and for me as a child of God is the best path for a Christian to walk on in a world, a Christian world, with super highway shortcuts and fast tracks. We will always, until this day, until Jesus comes back, paint sin with the brush that it is to be painted with. We will paint it as what it is: destroying, damning, wrecking homes, wrecking families. There will be no new morality here. We are going to have the old preaching through the old Book to keep us on the old path. My dear friend, if you think otherwise, you are in the wrong place.

Let me ask you a question, to your shame, the old paths. Anybody, do not raise your hand, just think it through. Anybody know who William Chapman was? Anybody know who Bud Robinson was? Anybody know who Gypsy Smith was? Anybody know who Mel Trotter was? Anybody know who Charles Fuller was? Anybody know who Mordecai Ham was? Anybody know who J. Frank Norris was? My dear friend, if you cannot answer yes and explain those guys, you are in a sad state, and you are very close, probably if not already there, to being a victim of getting off the old path. That is the tip of the iceberg of the men, and it is the short last hundred, 150 years, that preach the message that I am preaching today and will preach till Jesus comes back.

If you think, if you are so stupid, if you are so idiotic that you think for 2,000 years men like that who paid for it with their blood, who preached a holy God with holy living and a holy lifestyle separate from sin for 2,000 years in churches after churches after churches, and you think that you are an exception to that principle, you are not the brightest bulb in the box. You are in the wrong place, my dear friend. There will be no new morality here. We will preach on sin and paint it for what it is. We will preach holiness. We will preach walking with God. We will preach getting sin out of your life. We will preach following the principles. We will stay on the old path with the old Book.

## V. The Call to True Judgment and Compassion

Now let us look at what the nation of Israel and the church today should be doing. Pick up in verses 8, 9, and 10:

*Zechariah 7:8-10*

*And the word of the LORD came unto Zechariah, saying,*

*Thus speaketh the LORD of hosts, saying, Execute true judgment, and shew mercy and compassions every man to his brother:*

*And oppress not the widow, nor the fatherless, the stranger, nor the poor; and let none of you imagine evil against his brother in your heart.*

Do you know what he is saying? He said, "Forget those two stupid months. Get back to the Book. Forget all the religious games you put in your life to keep the old flag up that I am really spiritual when you are not. Get back in the Book. Get back to the central thing in your life, and that is finishing the building that God started. Get back to real ministry." It is people. He says, "Execute judgment." Yeah, that is what we are doing this morning. We are preaching a Word of God straight, hot, and true. Like it or lump it. Call sin what it is. Nail it as sin.

Then he says, "Show mercy." Get back to soul winning. Get back to taking the Word of God into people's lives with a pure life. "Show compassion." Get back to helping people, taking away what you have got, giving it to somebody else what God has done. "Oppress not widows, fatherless, strangers, the poor." Get rid of evil in your heart toward your brother. In other words, start giving to people and quit taking from them.

Now, do not miss this. All these things that I preached to you about are going on there. If you were to walk into the midst of the nation of Israel at this particular time, you would have thought they were the most spiritual bunch in all the world, but it was all a sham. When you walk into most churches today, and unfortunately many Christians' lives, they put up the flag, they put up the front, but if you are a little bit smarter than the people that you are dealing with, you always know what to look for because you cannot fake true spirituality. You cannot have God in one hand and a can of beer in the other. You cannot have God in one hand and drugs on the other. You cannot say, "Oh, how much I love God," and become... Let me tell you something, the temple prostitutes did not die out with Constantine's time; they just all joined Baptist churches. You have got to have a difference between the world and Christianity, plain and simple. Do not like it? We have got wide doors back there. That is the way it is going to be. That is the way it has to be. You may think you are the exception of 2,000 years of holiness preaching. That is your problem, pal, not mine.

It is time to enact the great principle in our lives of 1 Samuel chapter 15, verse 22. When Saul is dealing with Samuel, and Samuel has disobeyed God, he is told to do one thing, and he does not do it, but yet he puts on this great spiritual facade, completely ignoring what the Word of God told him to do. Samuel looks at him and says, "You know what, pal, I know you are proud of what you did, and I know you think you did some great spiritual thing, but let me just drop a little bomb on you."

*1 Samuel 15:22*

*And Samuel said, Hath the LORD as great delight in burnt offerings and sacrifices, as in obeying the voice of the LORD? Behold, to obey is better than sacrifice, and to hearken than the fat of rams.*

"Put your sin away. Cleanse yourselves from all filthiness of the flesh and spirit."

*2 Corinthians 7:1*

*Having therefore these promises, dearly beloved, let us cleanse ourselves from all filthiness of the flesh and spirit, perfecting holiness in the fear of God.*

Brother, if this is not New Testament Christianity today, I do not know what it is.

## VI. The Consequences of a Hardened Heart

The end result in Israel's case and our case is a disaster. This is why a New Year's resolution will not do it. This is why it will take a New Year's revolution. But look at verses 11 and 12. Here we are today. Happy New Year. This is why I have no great hopes outside of this message. I told somebody the other day, talking about a particular circumstance, I said, "You know what? The people that do not need to hear it are always the ones that take it to heart, and the ones who need to hear it never take it to heart. They will put themselves as far away from anything that is going to be spiritual, really, as they can." That is just the way it works.

Look at verse 11:

*Zechariah 7:11-12*

*But they refused to hearken, and pulled away the shoulder, and stopped their ears, that they should not hear.*

*Yea, they made their hearts as an adamant stone, lest they should hear the law, and the words which the LORD of hosts hath sent in his spirit by the former prophets: therefore came a great wrath from the LORD of hosts.*

What hypocrisy! What absolute hypocrisy! "We are going to set two months a year that we are going to pray and fast, but we have adamantly hardened our heart to get what God really told us to do." By doing that, it exposed the real problem: their attitude of heart. Yet again, get this, they went right on pretending how right they were with God and how spiritual they were with God. "How dare you say I am not right with God? Look at that, two months!" "How dare me say you are not right with God? Look at the Bible principles!" You can pretend all you want, but when it comes down to either you or ripping out the pages of this Book, God will just rip you out. "Say, He would not do that!" You missed the last part of verse 12, did you not? "Therefore came a great wrath from the LORD of hosts."

I told you Thursday night, I just use this as an example because it is fresh. Most of you do not know this anyhow, but we had a girl in our church here, probably, oh, I do not know, she has been gone now for six or seven months. She came into this church, and we tried to help her, tried to do everything in the world for her. That is what we do. She got involved, she was still married, and got involved with a single man. We found out about it, and you know, my goal is to work things out. I never drop the hammer till all the other tools of the toolbox have been exhausted. But do know this, the last tool in that box is a hammer, and it is a hell of a big hammer.

I have got a couple of my ladies that have been working with her. We sat down right there where you are at. We talked to her. We tried to tell her that a single woman or married woman hooking up with a married man and living together, we did not know how that was going to fit in on what lesson in discipleship. We were not sure how we were going to blend that into some of my sermons. Could you imagine if, and I know some of you were probably absolutely livid this morning, I am so glad of that, but you realize that just stop and think about this: what if I just

took your life and what you do that you think is right, and I started preaching that lifestyle from that pulpit, that that is what we all ought to do? How would that work?

It is like I said to people, I said, somebody said, "What about so and so? What about this? What about that?" And I thought to myself, I sure hate to try to build a church with a person like that because it cannot be done. This little gal sat down here, and my ladies were witness to it, two of them are sitting in this room right now this morning, we are witness to what I am about to say. We tried to talk to her about not doing that, that it was going to cause problems. This woman already had some real problems in her life. She had a very bad emotional instability. She had some real issues, and this was just adding to another bad situation. We tried to talk to her about that. Immediately, you saw what I just preached today, she got angry. It was like, "Who are you to tell me how to live my life?" I said, "I am not telling you how to live your life. I am just trying to help you quit making bad choices in your life." She got more indignant. She was a poster child for that verse when she hardened her heart. She pulled her shoulder back. Do you know what that means, do you not? She pulled her shoulder back, and she walked out of here, and the last thing she said when I got outside there, when she said, "I will show you."

Three nights ago, she committed suicide. Took a three-month supply of OxyContin. When the hospital got there, when the hospital got there, the paramedics got there, and the rest of the hospital, she was still alive. They had her on life support. "Say, what do you think about things like that?" I simply think she sure showed me, did she not?

*Job 9:4*

*He is wise in heart, and mighty in strength: who hath hardened himself against him, and hath prospered?*

The answer to that is nobody. This woman had made so many bad choices in life, and many bad things. Her own family hated her guts. They called her son, who lived in another state, while she was in a coma in life support system. Now get this, they called her son and said, "Your mama has committed suicide. She is on life support. We need you to come here." His answer was, "The only way I will come there is if I am the one who can pull the plug."

I do not know what you are upset about. Some of you are heading down the same road. Some of you have been despicable to your kids. Some of the things you have displayed in your life to your children, it is a wonder why they even still talk to you, only by the grace of God. Yet what you are going to show me, are you? You are going to walk out of this church angry at what I preached today because I love you and giving you the truth, and point your finger at me and say, "I will show you." Those words still echo down through eternity because I do not think she was saved. Yeah, you showed me. Suicide is just one more bad choice that comes because of a life of bad choices, but unfortunately, suicide is the last choice. You are not kidding anybody.

"Therefore came a great wrath from the LORD of hosts." Your life is going to be an ongoing disaster. Your life is going to be one bad relationship after another, one disaster, one bad marriage after another, one broken, disappointing event after another after another. When He told them that, "Therefore a great wrath from the LORD of hosts came," that wrath continued right up to

the crucifixion of Christ, and then goes right up to the next 2,000 years, right to today. It was passed on to generation to generation, just like you are going to pass yours on to generation after generation of your kids if you do not get the fact that all ground for the Christian is holy ground. There is no difference between the secular and the sacred.

## VII. The Essential Relationship with God

I told you Thursday night, and I end with this, the book of Job is a great book. The book of Job teaches us a lot of things, but the book of Job teaches one of the greatest truths, and that is simply that your relationship with God is all you really need. Because when we investigate the problems that Job went through in his life, we see that Job had no Bible. He had no church. He had no pastor. He had no Bible study. He had no discipleship program. He had no Christian friends; they all were gone. My point being, all he had was his relationship with God. My point being, you can have a Bible, you can have a church, you can have a pastor, you can have Christian friends, you can be discipled, you can have the right Bible, and still not have a relationship with God. Because the relationship with God, my dear friend, is not based on the right Bible. It is not based on the right church. It is not based on singing the right songs. It is not based on what classes you have been to. Having a relationship with God is simply built on one principle: "Be ye holy; for I am holy." All ground is holy ground.

That is the message. Forget the New Year's resolutions. You need to go out of here today after this message and start a New Year's revolution because that is the only thing that is going to get you where God wants you to be. It is time for the game to stop. It is time to examine yourself. It is time for us to look and say, "You know what? I am getting back to building the temple." That means you start living your life by the principles of God, putting the things, the people, the places, and everything out that God can have the freedom to build those things.

God wanted that temple, and I do not have time to get into it today, but inside of that temple, what the Bible calls the hallowed things, there were things that were dedicated to the Lord. There were plates, there were pitchers, there were cups, there were spoons, there were forks. Everything in that temple was something that was called a hallowed thing. They were holy to God, along with the furnishings that God had put into that temple. That is what God wants to put in your world and my world. He wants us to have some hallowed things. He wants us to have some sacred things. But my dear friend, you cannot have the sacred and the secular. No man can serve two masters. The double-minded man is unstable in all his ways. You have to decide if you are going to give it all to God or you are going to keep it all yourself. You are going to have to decide if you are going to keep running up this great spiritual flag, but on the rest of the week, set your Sundays and your Thursdays or Wednesdays, or wherever you go to church, whatever you do, aside, and that is your spiritual day, and then you just act like the world the rest of the day and the rest of the week and bring all the filth of this world into it. I am done. Every head bowed, every eye closed. Happy New.