

# 2 Corinthians 4:3-7

Sunday 6/17/2012

## I. The Personal Side of Ministry

I want to invite you to turn to the book of 2 Corinthians chapter 4. That is where we have been. You know now that 2 Corinthians chapter 4 is probably the greatest book in the Bible on the aspect of ministry. That is what we are trying to learn. I am trying to get some of you up to speed so that you could really take an even more active part than many of you already have in working with people.

So far, as we come through chapter 4, which is the chapter on the personal side of ministry, we have seen two great concepts about ministry.

1. How not to do the ministry.
2. What was the right way to do the ministry.

You remember that there were three things that we were told not to do when it comes to the ministry.

- The hidden things of dishonesty.
- Walking in craftiness.
- Handling the Word of God deceitfully.

We spent a lot of time showing you how, unfortunately, in the world that we live in today, this is where most churches and most pastors are. Then we saw what a ministry should be biblically, with two tremendous aspects. We spent some time with this, and we put our own church to this test, looking at our own ministry under the microscope. I am not preaching about other churches or other places; I am talking to us about what we should be.

We talked about how a real ministry ought to be two things:

- By manifestation of truth.
- Commending ourselves to every man's conscience.

That is really what a church should be: open and transparent about whatever it does, whatever is taking place. There are many churches where if you ask the wrong question, you will wind up behind the eight ball. Not here. You have a right to ask whatever you want to ask, and we will give you the answers based on the truth of what we are doing and where the Word of God is. That is just where it is at.

You remember this chapter deals with the personal side of our ministry and being accountable to it. Today, we are going to see yet another principle in ministry, and I think this is a vital truth. I know there are many of you right now, as we speak, who are working with people. As people come in and they need to be discipled, or they have personal problems in their life, or marital issues with their children, whatever, we take that opportunity. For example, the dear lady Patty, who just got out of the hospital, there is a ministry opportunity right there. You go to teach her

the Bible and take what you know and, in a very structured way, give her the Word of God and help her through it.

But today, you are going to learn what I think is probably the single greatest fundamental thing you have got to know and understand and always keep before you. Today is going to help a lot of you who are dealing with people. I want to talk today out of this chapter simply about why so many people simply do not make it today when you try to help them.

## II. The Reality of Ministry: Why People Don't Make It

You need to know that much of the ministry, and this is certainly true, much of the ministry is spending a lot of time with people who simply do not make it. I wish that everybody would. We have to go after it and approach it like everybody would, but at the end of the day, that is just what we do. We liken the church to a hospital, and people come to a hospital who are sick and need care and need help. But you know as well as I do that not everybody makes it out of a hospital. Not everybody gets well. You have terminal cases in hospitals, and believe it or not, you have terminal cases spiritually within churches.

But that is what we do. We spend an enormous amount of time with people who simply, after two or three months, maybe four or five months, six or eight months, or maybe even a year, find a better deal and move on. All the time that you put into them, if you look at it from a worldly standpoint or from a life standpoint, you might think, "What a waste of time that is." But that is never the way that it is. That is what we do. That is what pastors, ministers, and churches are all about: giving people the opportunity to do right, even when they do not do what is right.

This is why it is so vital to learn that great principle that I gave you last week in our third set that we talked about in great detail when we went through that chapter in 2 Corinthians 2:14, where it says, "And thanks be unto God which always causes us to triumph." That is really where this principle fits. Today, I want you to understand why they do not make it. If you are here this morning and you are somebody maybe trying to claw your way out of your problems in life, it will be good for you. I did not intend it for you, but I am sure that you will get something out of it, whether you do anything with it or not, I do not know. But for my people who are desiring to have a part in ministry and to really do with the Word of God what God wants you to do, this will be some insight for you. It will be something that you will always want to remember, something that you want to keep in mind, because people can be discouraging.

Some of you kids out there are great people, and you are such giving people. I watch you, and you pour yourselves into people. You give yourselves to people to a great degree. I know that when you get a little more mature in the things of the Word of God and a little more Bible under your belt—not that you do not have a lot now, but on the practical side of things—you will learn how to balance it all out. But people that you put a lot of time in, when they seemingly walk out the door and literally, as my favorite expression, "get a better deal" than what God had for them, if you do not have this principle down, it can throw you for a loop.

I have seen many, many Christians in my years who were working with people and got discouraged. The first thing that goes through your mind, because you are such good people, is

that you think you did something wrong. You think it is your fault because they did not make it. I am not saying you cannot do some stupid things that will hurt people, but for the people that are working with me, I do not believe that is true. I know you well enough to know where your heart and your intent and your attitude about it are. But because you are good people, that is exactly what happens. You think you failed them. You think you did something wrong.

How many times have some of you said, when we talked about so-and-so who punched out and went back to the world system or whatever, and some of you have said, "You know what?" And I say, "What is the matter?" And you say, "Well, I just do not know. Maybe I did not do everything I could do." Let me tell you something: when you give people the Bible, you are doing everything you can do. You have heard me say it many, many times: people have to take responsibility for their own circumstances and their own actions in life. This is going to help you today. It really will.

Over the years, I followed something very closely. I saw this probably 30 years ago and began to watch it very closely. I call it a kind of goofy name; I call it my "keeper ratio." Twenty-five years ago, I watched things happening in my own ministry and my own life with people, and I came to the conclusion, on a general, across-the-board basis, that to keep one person in your church, ten people had to come through the church. Now, there are times that you will get two or three people, and they will stay. I mean, it is not like every ten, "Alright, one, two, three, four, five, six, seven, eight, nine, ten, you guys are not coming. You are going to stay. You are the tenth one." That is not what I am talking about, but it averages that way. In other words, what I am saying is you have got to go through a lot of people who will not do what is right to find one who wants to do what is right.

Some of you know this is true, who have been discipling people. You have said it to me, you know, you will get a couple of real goofy discipleship situations where you just have to, it is a struggle and a fight. Then you will get that one person who just wants to hear everything you have got to say, and you feel like you are on Mount Sinai with God. That is the way it works. Well, today, in 2012, that was back in the 80s. Today, in this church and dealing with people in general, I would say that it is probably closer to 25 or 30 to one today. It is just because times have changed, but they certainly have not changed for the better.

Tonight is our mission night, and many of you are going to go down to the mission, and you guys will do your thing down there. I started going down to the mission in 1977, and I have been down there a long time. When I went down in 1977, to show you my point, the average age of the men down there in that mission was probably in their 50s or their 60s. Now, tonight, you will see that the average age down there is probably 18 to 25. This is what I am talking about. I do not think, in talking to God's people, I do not think I have ever seen a time of a more dysfunctional group of people than God's people today. In Christianity in general, I mean, here they are. They have the power of God, they have the Holy Spirit, they have the Word of God, they have everything in their life, and they can get nowhere with God. We are going to talk about why that is today, and it will help you.

Unsaved people today can be very hard to reach. You need to understand, to be successful, the process of really reaching them today, how to make it work. Even then, it can be tough because people are who they are. I think personally, the number one problem today with people, saved or lost, is they have a zero attention span to what is being said about God. I will tell you why that is: there are just too many things out there in the world that run competition with God. God's people and unsaved people have basically zero attention span.

I have had people, after I preached my heart out and preached my lungs out in a message, come up to me and say, "Man, that was great. You really laid that thing out. That is exactly what I needed." And I am looking at them, and I am thinking to myself, "Did you not hear a thing that I said? You are doing exactly in your life what I just preached on." And yet, they have an attention span that they just do not grasp and get and see what they need to see. This is part of the problem. We are going to talk today about why people do not make it based on this passage.

As I said, for those of you who are here today who desire to have a part in this New Testament local church ministry, this is going to be of great help to you. This will be a few more pieces to the puzzle of how you put it all together. You remember a couple of months ago, I laid out of 2 Corinthians 2:11, a great verse. It said, "Lest Satan should get an advantage of us, for we are not ignorant of his devices." I told you then that that is what the devil wants to do. The devil always wants to have the advantage over you, whether you are saved or whether you are lost. That is what he wants to do. The problem is, the reason why he does, whether you are saved or you are lost, is because you are ignorant of the fact of what he is doing to you and how he is doing it. You fall right into it. We talked about that day how the devil does what he does, and we will see it from a more personal aspect, a more, I guess, ministry-oriented aspect today.

Now, I want to read 2 Corinthians chapter 4, and this is where we are going to start today, picking it up in verse 3.

*2 Corinthians 4:3-7*

*But if our gospel be hid, it is hid to them that are lost:*

*In whom the god of this world hath blinded the minds of them which believe not, lest the light of the glorious gospel of Christ, who is the image of God, should shine unto them.*

*For we preach not ourselves, but Christ Jesus the Lord; and ourselves your servants for Jesus' sake.*

*For God, who commanded the light to shine out of darkness, hath shined in our hearts, to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ.*

*But we have this treasure in earthen vessels, that the excellency of the power may be of God, and not of us.*

Now, Father, we thank and praise You for today. We ask You to take the Word of God and open our hearts. We thank You for those that are here today, and Your blessings upon our time in Your Word. Take this, Lord, and use it in my life first, and then filter it down to the lives of Your

people in all that we do. We love You. We thank You now and praise You for all You are going to do. In Jesus' name, for His sake, we ask it. Amen.

### III. The Two Lights: Christ and the Devil

Now, I want to look at verse 6 here, draw your attention to that, because that is really going to be a key thing in what we are talking about today.

*2 Corinthians 4:6*

*For God, who commanded the light to shine out of darkness, hath shined in our hearts, to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ.*

That verse is really our theme for our study today, and that verse opens up this great study that we are going to talk about. What it does is it begins to lay out for you the study in the Bible of two great lights. I do not know if you know it or not, but when he said there in 2 Corinthians 4:6 about God commanding the light to shine out of darkness, that is a reference to Genesis 1. I do not even know if you know that. Genesis 1:1-5 is what he is referring back to, where he said, it is very familiar:

*Genesis 1:1-5*

*In the beginning God created the heaven and the earth.*

*And the earth was without form, and void; and darkness was upon the face of the deep. And the Spirit of God moved upon the face of the waters.*

*And God said, Let there be light: and there was light.*

*And God saw the light, that it was good: and God divided the light from the darkness.*

*And God called the light Day, and the darkness he called Night. And the evening and the morning were the first day.*

This is what he is making a reference to in 2 Corinthians 4:6 when he says, "God commanded the light to shine out of darkness." When you read that verse down there, one of the interesting things that you see is you know that both "Day" and "Night" are both capitalized. Over the years, a lot of people have asked me why that is, because as it stands there, it really should not be in English punctuation. Of course, the reason why it is, is because this "Day" and "Night" here is not talking about day and night or light and darkness as we understand it here.

I always get a laugh out of the commentaries on Genesis that I read, and when a writer begins to write on this passage, he talks about this being the first day and night and sunlight. Yet, that is impossible because this is the first day of creation; the sun was not even created until four days later. There is no sun here. The reason why this is called Day and Night, and they are capitalized, and one is called the light and one is called the darkness, is because we are talking about two personalities here. We are talking about two men whom the whole Bible is going to be built around. One of them is the Lord Jesus Christ, and the other one is the devil himself. The Lord

represents the light, and the devil represents the darkness. That is why the Day is capitalized. Jesus is called the Day Star, stars that shine, and the Night is capitalized because Night is the darkness, and it represents the devil.

We saw it all the way through here. In fact, when Paul wrote in 1 Thessalonians 5:4-5, he brings it into a practical application. You and I can look at it.

*1 Thessalonians 5:4-5*

*But ye, brethren, are not in darkness, that that day should overtake you as a thief.*

*Ye are all the children of light, and the children of the day: we are not of the night, nor of darkness.*

He is not talking about people who work at night versus people who work during the day. Do not go out of here thinking if you work the night shift, you are in trouble with God. That is not what he is talking about. He is showing you the two families that are on this planet, spiritually speaking. God's family is the children of the Day, the light, the light of God. The devil's crowd, as in John 8:44, "Ye are of your father the devil, and the lusts of your father ye will do," that is the darkness or the Night, saved and lost people.

So now, follow me. The light is Christ; the darkness is the devil. But 2 Corinthians 11:15 says:

*2 Corinthians 11:15*

*And no marvel; for Satan himself is transformed into an angel of light.*

You see that? You want to see that. The devil is darkness; he is night. In fact, the Bible says in John 3:19:

*John 3:19*

*And this is the condemnation, that light is come into the world, and men loved darkness rather than light, because their deeds were evil.*

If you are here this morning and you are unsaved, you want to know what the condemnation issue against you is? It is a very simple verse, a great verse. Verse 19: "And this is the condemnation, that light is come into the world, and men loved darkness rather than light, because their deeds were evil." Most crimes are committed at night. It is nighttime when we are always thinking about the great party times and the great sin times and everything that goes on. Why? Because of that verse right there. Man loves darkness rather than light because their deeds were evil. The condemnation against man, or the condemnation of man, is rejecting the light of God. That is what we want to talk about today.

But before we get to that, I want you to see that Satan transforms himself into an angel of light. This is an amazing thing. Satan, we already know, was the great imitator of God. He imitates light with a false light that the Bible, we have already studied, blinds people. You know, the devil imitates everything about Christ. If you would get a compass, your compass always points toward north. If you know anything about the Bible at all, you know that the Bible says in places

like Psalms 76 and other places where it talks about heaven, where God is, being north. When God fixed the thing in the physical world, he fixed the physical world so that every compass that you ever got pointed the arrow to where God was.

But yet, in reality, we know that Satan imitates God. So there are two norths. When you are some kind of navigation person and you are navigating around, you are going to find that there is a magnetic north and there is a true north. Magnetic north is in the general direction of north, just a couple of degrees off, but it is not true north. True north is based on the pole star. Magnetic north is based on the magnetic pull of our Earth. If you know anything about how it is all set up, you know that we are not exactly lined up the way we should be. We do not have time to get into all that this morning. My point is this: magnetic north will get you north, but it will get you three or four degrees off north. Now, three to four degrees may not sound like much, but when you put three to four degrees to a trip of 100,000 miles, that is a big error. In other words, the devil always represents the false light, and the false light will always look close. Maybe it will just be two or three degrees off the true light, but that two or three degrees is enough to send you to hell. That is the picture of how he imitates.

You have heard me give you the great verse in Romans 1:19-20 that says:

*Romans 1:19-20*

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

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

In other words, you have heard me say it many times that all of the physical things that God created are some kind of picture of spiritual things. That little example I gave you of true north and magnetic north, there is an example of that. Everything that God did, and that is why you find in the Bible, God talks about trees. He talks about animals. He talks about certain kinds of animals. That is why we know when he talks about a dove, it is a picture of the Holy Spirit of God. When he talks about a raven or a vulture or a buzzard or an owl, it is a type of the devil or the devil's crowd. All of those things mean something.

What you have here is God represents the light, the devil represents the darkness or the night. Yet the Bible says that Satan himself transforms himself into an angel of light. What we are going to look at for just a few moments, so we understand what we are dealing with here, is one of the greatest things that you will ever, ever, ever come across in the Bible: the light that the devil puts out.

Matthew 6:22-23. I found this verse many years ago, and it absolutely, I had to sit down when I saw it. It is one of those things that when you see one of those great pieces of my puzzles, when I actually saw it, I had to just sit down for a minute and comprehend it.

*Matthew 6:22-23*

*The light of the body is the eye: if therefore thine eye be single, thy whole body shall be full of light.*

*But if thine eye be evil, thy whole body shall be full of darkness.*

*If therefore the light that is in thee be darkness, how great is that darkness!*

Now watch this: "If therefore the light that is in thee be darkness." How can you have a light that is darkness? How in the world can you have a light that is darkness? You know what? Before you got saved, when you wanted to have your wild parties and do all the things that you did, and you wanted to have some light, but you did not want to have enough light to take the mood off of the thing, you know what kind of light you got? You got a black light. A black light is a light that emits light, but it really does not emit light. It emits a black light.

Now, in the science around us today, science has made some great strides in the last 20 or 30 years. What they have discovered out there, and they talk about all the time, is what the Bible talks about here: some kind of light that gives off darkness. We know them in the scientific world as black hole stars. Most of you probably are not scientifically savvy enough, though you may have heard the term, but let me tell you what a black hole star is. A black hole star is a star out there that is so, the gravity of it is so strong. The gravity of it is absolutely so intense that it pulls everything inward. Now, this is a star, and you see the stars out at night, twinkle, twinkle, little star, some are bright, others are not. A black hole star is a star, but the gravity of that star is so intense that it sucks everything internally, including the light. That sucking in of that light produces a heat that is absolutely unbelievable.

Gravity has always been something, and I think of everything in a Bible sense. Gravity has always been a weird thing for me. I do not know if you know that inside this Earth, scientists have deduced in the last four or five years that they say now that there is a sphere within the Earth about 3,000 miles. Hello, like we did not know that if you know anything about your Bible, because the Bible said that is where hell is. They talk about a place that is completely like being in outer space. If you went up in outer space and you lost the Earth and could not see the Earth, you would not know where up is, down is, left or right. None of that would matter anymore, and you would be weightless. You know that the only other place that is like that is inside the Earth, and if you could get inside the core of the Earth right now, there is no up, there is no down. It is outer darkness, and you are weightless. Yet, the scientists tell us there is an absolutely intense heat.

It always bothered me that something called gravity is continually trying to pull us down somewhere. Years ago, when somebody died, you know what they used to say? They used to say, "Well, he died and he was buried." They used to say, "He went under." That is why we got the term of a mortician. We do not call him that anymore, but back then, they used to call him undertakers. You see, right now, your soul is in your body. What happens is when you die, your body goes back to the dust. But what is real about you, then the force of gravity takes over, and what has been trying to pull your soul down and keep it captive finally gets this opportunity if you are lost, and that gravity pulls you down, and then you are in a place, an absolute place,

where gravity controls you, and you are in a place of outer darkness, and you are in a place called hell. The Bible says that that is exactly the process.

Now, I want you to see these black hole stars. I want you to understand this thing about heat. The Bible says in Revelation 9:1:

*Revelation 9:1*

*And the fifth angel sounded, and I saw a star fall from heaven unto the earth: and to him was given the key of the bottomless pit.*

In the Bible, angels are likened to stars. So when we take that Romans 1:19-20, the Bible talks about the innumerable number of the angels. He said to Abraham, "Someday your seed is going to be like the stars of heaven." So in the Bible, angels are likened to stars. When you go out there and you see that starry night and you see all those stars out there, their pictures represent the angels that God has created that he talks about in the Bible. But we also know that some of those angels left God's presence, did they not? They went with Satan way back in Genesis 1, and those stars are the stars of darkness. So those stars are represented by the black hole stars, the stars that give off a light, but it is a black light, and you cannot see it.

Jude 6 says:

*Jude 6*

*And the angels which kept not their first estate, but left their own habitation, he hath reserved in everlasting chains under darkness unto the judgment of the great day.*

Then he says a little bit farther down in Jude 13, talking about the same angels:

*Jude 13*

*Raging waves of the sea, foaming out their own shame; wandering stars, to whom is reserved the blackness of darkness for ever.*

Now, there are angels who are stars. A star gives off light, but these angels do not give off light; they are black light. A black light is now what we understand hell to be. One of the things I talked to you about Thursday night when we were talking about hell is I was going to show you how you can have a place called hell that has fire, but yet the Bible says it is outer darkness. Well, if you have outer darkness, and you have fire, then you have light. This is the reason why you can have the intense heat and you can have the intense fire, but it is a black heat and it is a black light, and it is devoid of any light, and it is the gravity that sucks you in and holds you there. The fact that it is such intense heat, you can never get out. It is such intense heat that it voids itself of light. You have the outer darkness, and you have the fire, but it is that supernatural fire that is represented by the black hole. That is why the Bible says that the devil represents darkness, but he manifests himself as an angel of light, and it is a false light. This is my point: a false light that blinds men and women.

## IV. The Battle for the Mind

Now look at 2 Corinthians 4:4. It says, "In whom the god of this world hath blinded." Here is what I want you to see: it is not a blinding of your eyes. You still see fine, but this blindness of this world, it does not blind your eyes, but rather it says that it blinds the minds of them that believe not. So this light that is a false light, that is a black light, that does not give off true light that Satan manifests himself into, it does not blind your eyes; it blinds your mind. We are going to see how important that is as we come on down through here.

Down through church history, you know there have been different battles that had to be fought, spiritual battles, doctrinal battles. They fought a battle over the deity of Christ, the virgin birth, eternal security, all that stuff. But there is one battle that has raged down through every period of church history, and it rages today, and it is the battle for your mind. This is why I put such an emphasis on you parents with your children. I do not know if you know it or not, but every parent ought to be absolutely familiar with Daniel 1. Every parent ought to have Daniel 1 outlined, detailed out in their Bibles, and have it in their heart and in their mind because it shows you the actual battle that your children are going through every day of their life, and there is a battle for their mind.

I do not know how many times I have seen situations where it lines up to this so great. These kids, Daniel and the boys, were taken from their homeland, put in there, and the Bible says that Nebuchadnezzar, now Nebuchadnezzar is a picture of the world system. He is a type of the devil, and they try to change everything about that child, and it is the exact picture of what the devil is trying to do or will do with your child. The Bible says that the first thing they did is they gave them a daily portion of the king's meat. That is a picture of what your child gets every time they go to school, every time they hang out with their unsaved friends, or they are around people. You are not going to stop it. When they go to school, when they get into somebody else's domain and world, the devil says, "I have got a portion served up for you. Here it is."

One of the other things he did is he changed their names. When you go back and look at those three Hebrew children, their names that God gave them all represented something with God. But when the devil changed their name, it all represents something to do with the false gods, and that is what the devil wants to do. He wants to change your child's name. He wants to change your name. He wants to get you to be something you are not. I do not know how many times parents have called me on the phone over the years and said, "My kid has lost his mind." I always, I do not say this, I try to help them, but you know what I think inside? I said, "No, no, your kid, your child has not lost his mind. You just lost the battle for your child's mind." That is what happened.

There are some things parents ought to be doing. There are some things parents ought to be doing to ensure that your children do not lose that battle over their mind: what they see, what they listen to, and what they are taught. You have to have a counter to that based on the Word of God. You have got to counter that daily portion. You have got to counter the changing of their names. That is why you have a sweet little gal, and she is nine or ten or twelve years old, and she is a nice gal, and all of a sudden she goes to school someplace, and then she comes home. Now she is dressed, she is 13, 14 years old, and your mom or dad lets her dress like she is 20. She starts wearing makeup. She starts wearing the short skirts. She starts wearing this. I know that kids like to do some of that stuff, but when you take a 14-year-old girl and let her dress like a 20-

year-old girl, that girl has changed who she is. That is your fault. That is not her fault. This is what I am talking about. The devil blinds us.

When he says "the god of this world," that is not talking about, very important, that is not talking about the physical world as we know it with the trees and the birds and all that stuff, but rather the world system in which everything in every way goes against God and His Word. There, my friend, is the battle. It is what you think and what I think versus what God's Word says and what God thinks. It is the mind of God versus the mind of this world. This is why the Bible says in 2 Corinthians 10:5-6, good advice for you and me:

*2 Corinthians 10:5-6*

*Casting down imaginations, and every high thing that exalteth itself against the knowledge of God, and bringing into captivity every thought to the obedience of Christ;*

*And having in a readiness to revenge all disobedience, when your obedience is fulfilled.*

Now, a lot of God's people have revenge. They are very revengeful people. They say they are saved, but they like to get revenge on people. Every Christian ought to be a revengeful person. In other words, revenge for a child of God is something you ought to have in your life, every day of your life, but not the way you are thinking or the way you use it, because the next verse shows you how to use that revenge: "and having in a readiness to revenge." Here it comes. You want to get revenge on somebody? Here it is: "all disobedience when your obedience is fulfilled." Revenge on yourself, but on yourself, on your mind, on the imaginations, on the things we think.

This is why the Bible says in Philippians 2:5:

*Philippians 2:5*

*Let this mind be in you, which was also in Christ Jesus:*

That is why the Bible says in 1 Corinthians 2:16:

*1 Corinthians 2:16*

*But we have the mind of Christ.*

This is why the Bible says in 1 Peter 4:1 that we are to arm, arm like, get a gun, get a knife, get a club, arm ourselves with this same mind. Of course, the mind of Christ.

You see this exact same problem of the nation of Israel right before they went into their final captivity and their destruction. Look back at Ezekiel 8, and this is a good passage to mark in your Bible down the line, and you will work with people with this who have problems with thoughts or imaginations or the battle for the mind, because that is where the battle is. It starts with you and then works right down to your kid. Satan blinds us.

*Ezekiel 8:7-12*

*And he brought me to the door of the court; and when I looked, behold a hole in the wall.*

*Then said he unto me, Son of man, dig now in the wall. And when I had digged in the wall, behold a door.*

*And he said unto me, Go in, and behold the wicked abominations that they do here.*

*So I went in and saw; and behold every form of creeping things, and abominable beasts, and all the idols of the house of Israel, pourtrayed upon the wall round about.*

*And there stood before them seventy men of the ancients of the house of Israel, and in the midst of them Jaazaniah the son of Shaphan, with every man his censer in his hand; and a thick cloud of incense went up.*

*Then said he unto me, Son of man, hast thou seen what the ancients of the house of Israel do in the dark, every man in the chambers of his imagery? for they say, The LORD seeth us not; the LORD hath forsaken the earth.*

That is us right there. The images, that is your mind. That is our mind. Come on, we all know the bottom line truth. We would all take our mind places we would never take our body. That is exactly what he is talking about. That was Israel's downfall, because Israel lost the battle for their mind. You want to know why people fail in a fundamental aspect of it? It is they lose this battle. Boy, if that is on us right there, we live our lives. I love the last part of verse 12: "Every man in the chambers of his imagery, for they say, The LORD seeth us not; the LORD hath forsaken the earth." We as God's people live our lives, do not kid me, brother, me included. We live our lives, and we really think God does not see what we are doing.

Let me say this to you: this is why you ought to be around like-minded people. When you get around people who have the same mind of Christ that you have, that old "iron sharpeneth iron" concept.

## V. The Devil's Blinding Tactics: World System and False Religion

Light in the Bible is defined as God's truth, which is the Word of God.

Psalms 119:130 says that "The entrance of thy words giveth light."

Psalms 119:105, "Thy word is a lamp unto my feet, and a light unto my path."

The Bible says in John 1:9 that "he was the true Light, which lighteth every man that cometh into the world."

John 1:5 says, "And the light shineth in darkness; and the darkness comprehended it not."

Light in the Bible is God's Word. It is God's truth. What the devil does is he imitates that light, that truth, with a false light. He does it two ways:

- Religion. Ephesians 6:12 talks about spiritual wickedness in high places.

- The second way that he does it is found in 2 Corinthians 4:4, what we are looking at right now, and that is through the world system.

That is what you have. When you begin to work with people, when you begin to deal with people and their issues, this is what you are up against and what you are trying to work through in their lives. We have a message that we are trying to get out. As ministers of life and light, we have a message. That message is found in 1 John 1:5, and it is the answer to the condemnation that we saw that is against man.

*1 John 1:5*

*This then is the message which we have heard of him, and declare unto you, that God is light, and in him is no darkness at all.*

There it is. There is the difference right there: light versus darkness. The devil imitates that light. He transforms himself into an angel of light to deceive and to blind the minds. That is what happens. That is what you are up against. That is what you have got to deal with: the god of this world and his false light, or the real God of this world with a true light.

This is why Titus 3:5, and this is what, you know, some of the things you are going to have to understand that you have got to do. It talks about renewing the mind by washing of regeneration and renewing of the Holy Ghost.

*Titus 3:5*

*Not by works of righteousness which we have done, but according to his mercy he saved us, by the washing of regeneration, and renewing of the Holy Ghost;*

Romans 12:2 talks about being transformed by what? The renewing of your mind.

*Romans 12:2*

*And be not conformed to this world: but be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind, that ye may prove what is that good, and acceptable, and perfect, will of God.*

Now, when you start to deal with people, I said all of that to say this. I have given you a basis of showing you how this thing works. What the problem is, what the devil is doing on a more personal, practical level. But when you start to work with people, this is what you are up against. If you are here today and you are struggling in your life between the world and God, I love you to death, but kids, this is what you are up against right here.

The first thing you have got to understand in dealing with people, or if you are here today, the first thing you have got to understand about where you are at, if you are going to take any steps to get past this battle, is simply this: you cannot, this is a great counseling principle, you cannot solve the problems that you have or people have with the same kind of thinking that caused those problems. You have to change the pattern of your thought. You have to look at things differently. You have to change the thinking process of your mind because that is what the devil went after. That is the battle that you lost, and until you start there, and if you are working with somebody, if they cannot change the thinking patterns and the process, they are not going anywhere because

you cannot solve the problems in your life or my life with the same thinking that caused those problems.

## VI. The Two Aspects of the Gospel: Received and Fulfilled

Now, in this passage here, he is talking about men rejecting the gospel, unsaved people, but also in the Bible and life's application of it, you will find that there are really two aspects of this gospel that men reject. The gospel means good news, and if you are looking at it and you know anything about it and you can read the Word, and you know and you have heard me say it many, many times that God saved you for a purpose, and yet we have the word gospel, the word good news. You realize you cannot spell the word "gospel" without the word "go" because God wants you to go. You realize that you cannot spell the word "God" without the word "go."

Years ago, Madalyn Murray O'Hair, who is now dead, was getting into a debate with Phil Harrington. Phil Harrington was an evangelist way back, used to call him the chaplain of Bourbon Street. They are both dead now; it has been years ago. He took on Madalyn Murray O'Hair in a debate. It was all over the TV; in fact, it was on the Donahue show live, and they were going back and forth, and they are both sharp minds. But Phil Harrington was talking about her, and she said to him, she says, "Now, why would a guy like you want to waste your time running around the world telling people about God?" Phil Harrington came back and he said, "Well, Madalyn," he says, "you know what? Because God has called me to go." He says, "You know what, Madalyn, you cannot spell 'gospel' without 'go.' You know what, Madalyn, you cannot spell 'God' without 'go.'" She turned it around and said, "Oh, you are so stupid. Take 'God' and turn it around, you have got the word 'dog.'" In a split second, without even thinking about it, old Phil came back and said, "You know what, Madalyn, anyway you say it, He is still man's best friend." You see, you cannot spell those words without "go." You know why? Because when you get saved, God wants you to go and do something with it. He wants you to go and do something with it. He has called us to go.

When it comes to that gospel, you will view it in two ways, and both ways man will reject, saved and lost. Now, we are sitting here this morning, and you are saved, and you are saying, "Well, I did not reject the gospel. What has this message got to do with me? I did not reject the gospel; I got saved." Well, wait a minute before you say that, because there are two aspects to the gospel, and many saved people, many saved people sitting under the sound of my voice today and throughout this city and throughout this country who are saved and on the way to heaven, have rejected the gospel in this aspect because there are two aspects.

You see, when we talk about the gospel received, we talk about salvation, but we do not stop there. Not only the first aspect is the gospel received, but then there is another aspect of the gospel, is there not? It is the gospel fulfilled. You see, most of God's people have received Christ; they received the gospel. They just never fulfill the gospel, and in that, they rejected the gospel. I am not saying they are lost. I am saying the gospel received, now that is salvation, and there is a battle that goes on trying to keep people from getting saved, and the devil blinds them. Getting people to see their need for salvation is the thing that you have got to deal with in dealing with people.

Let me give you another great principle, and this is generally true. The worse a man is, the more he can see his need. The more struggles he has in his life, the more down he is, the more his life has come to a crashing train wreck, the easier it is that he can see his need. On the other hand, the better off he is, in many cases, the harder it is for him to see his need, and that is a general rule that you are going to get in with people because the things of this world, his possessions, they blind him. He thinks he must be a good guy because look at all that he has.

Matthew 19:28, the Bible says that it is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle than for a rich man to go to heaven. It is simple: the things of this world, your possessions, and all you have, the more things you have, it is a simple fact, the more it runs competition with the things that God has for you. It is just that simple. Over there in Matthew 19 is another story about the rich young ruler, and he wants, he comes to Christ, and he wants to be his disciple. He says, "I want to follow You. I want to be with You. I want to do everything that I can do." The Lord looks at him and he says, "Hey, that is great. We need all the help we can get. One thing I want you to do: go back and sell everything you have and get rid of everything you have." The Bible says the young man went away in sorrow. You know why? Because he had great possessions.

You see, the devil blinds us in our minds with what we have, and that is why you and I say it all the time, and I am kidding about it to a certain degree, but it is true: we are all blinded. We go around saying, "Oh, I love this car. I love that shirt. I love this suit. I love this house. I love this. I love that." And there are people dying and going to hell around us, or people that have problems that you know cannot deal with. We do not ever think about loving them. We have tricked our mind off the things we ought to love, and now we are loving inanimate objects. We are loving a car. We are loving a house. We are loving our clothes. We are loving this. "Oh, I just love that dress. Oh, I just love that shirt. Oh, I love those shoes. Oh, I love those glasses. Oh, I just love everything about..." We fall in love with things that cannot love us back. If that is not a society that is off the edge, I do not know what is. But see, possessions, the things that we have, it blinds us. Position and possessions in this world will be a mindset that blinds you and me from the light of the gospel. That is why people do not get saved.

That is why when you start dealing with people that we deal with, we deal with them in a specific way. Now, I do not know the exact story, but I know the people are not here today, so if you play softball, it is not you. But somebody told me the story last night that there is a family coming out, and they are a lost family, a wonderful family, the nicest family in the world, but they are not saved. Nicest people you could ever meet. I love them to death. They started playing softball, and one of the boys started playing softball, and the boys loved it. Mom and Dad come, and the Dad is playing softball, and these people are lost. I guarantee you if we had met them at the mall someplace or met them at a party and you tried to give them a tract and you tried to witness to them, they would have shut you down so fast you would not know what happened. You know why? Because they are blinded by everything, and they think they are just fine. They have no idea they are lost.

I have watched them sit there through the devotions, and they smile and they say they like it, they enjoy it. If the rapture took right now, they would be the last ones on the ball field. They are blinded to it. But you know how you do it? You do it exactly like you guys do it. You take them

in, you love them. They come to your devotions. They hear the gospel. No pressure. You play with them, you have fun with them. Mom and Dad see the difference. Then I heard last night that Mom and Dad want some of you boys to work with this kid and some things in his life. How it goes, I could predict right now, and I am not a prophet. I left my sandals at home, and I shaved my beard off this morning, and my robe is at the cleaners. But I am telling you right now, you get the boy, they see the change, you get the mom, you get the dad, you get the whole family. See, they are blinded. There has to be a process to that. The average Baptist church, they would never think that a softball league would ever do anything to get anybody saved. You could only think of softball. See, you never, I told you before, when I put you in charge as a captain, I tell him all the time, I said, "I am putting you in charge. I said your job," and most leagues, you know, you have a softball team, and then you find out how to minister. That is not what we do here. You are here to minister, and then you figure out how to play softball because that has to be the bottom line, and that is the approach you take because sometimes blindness, blindness takes some time. It does not all happen just like, certainly not today, not today. It is just being smarter than the problem, you see, and it is the way it works.

Then you find that where the world will not work, and the possessions and the things that you have will not work, then the devil blinds you with religion, and this is where he is really good at it. The devil has a Bible. We now know that the devil has a church. We also know that the devil has ministers. We know that the Bible said the devil himself is transformed into an angel of light. I mean, all the way back to Genesis 3:1, when the devil came to damn mankind for all of eternity in the world, when he went to Eve when Adam was not there, it was not, "Hey Eve, let us go out and get drunk." "Hey Eve," it was not, "Go out and smoke, get high." "Hey Eve," it was not, "Do this or do that." It was, "Yea, hath God said?" And then he changed what God said. He blinded her with a light. He blinded her with a light.

Now, when it comes to religion, false religion, spiritual wickedness in high places, the Bible calls it. We are dealing with another problem with people, which is self-righteousness. Now, you find self-righteousness in the world, but boy, do you find that in false religion? Self-righteousness always comes from the key word that brings it about, and it is the word "pride." I know you have pride in the world, sure you do. Pride keeps unsaved people from getting saved, I know that. But I am talking about the fact when you start to deal with unsaved people who are religious, you are going to see pride personified and self-righteousness personified. I mean, I have met people, I have seen people defend their faith and defend their church and want to fight over it, and they had not been in church in 25 years. I had one guy tell me, I knew a guy told me, "Well, I will tell you the greatest preacher there, and he is so-and-so, and he is the greatest man. He is twice the man you ever are, and he is a great godly man." I had to inform the guy that he died 20 years ago.

Now you understand why that is. Pride is the original sin in the Bible. The original sin was not on Adam and Eve. The original sin went before that when the devil left the presence of God in Genesis 1:1-2, which is talked about in Isaiah 14 and Ezekiel 28. The original sin of the Bible becomes the number one sin of man: that is pride. The devil said, "I will be like the most high. I will be lifted up and sit on the side of the north." The Bible says by reason of his wisdom and his

beauty he was lifted up. You see, pride blinds you. Again, we see the same thing when it came to the nation of Israel in Hosea 5:5. It says:

*Hosea 5:5*

*And the pride of Israel doth testify to his face: therefore shall Israel and Ephraim fall in their iniquity; Judah also shall fall with them.*

You see pride in the face. Remember how we talked about a couple of weeks ago when Moses was up on a mountain, he came down, and you could see the glory of God in his face? Well, you see it one or two, you can see pride in people's face too. Proverbs 6:16, the great verse that lays out the character of the devil, the six things that God hates that would make up the character, make up of the devil. You know what the first one is? A proud look. Because we always wear pride in our face, and that was Israel's problem.

The Bible says in Proverbs 16:18 that "pride goeth before destruction, and a haughty spirit before a fall." Of course, we are talking about the devil's fall, but we are talking about the fall of man. We are talking about unsaved people who get into false religions who think that they, you know what? You can go along with religion, and you can get people to come to church and get involved in church as long as you can tell them that they can do something to go to heaven. Because the moment you tell them they have no control over their destiny spiritually, and you have got to put it to the cross, what Christ did, and your good works do not make it, their pride jumps in, and you are in trouble. That is the way it works. I told you a couple of weeks ago, Proverbs 19:21, "Many devices in a man's heart; but the counsel of the LORD, that shall stand." Religion is one of those devices. The world system is one of those devices.

Now, that is the first aspect, and that is the gospel received, and that is basically for unsaved people. Now, let me show you the second aspect, and this is why when you start working with saved people, now you have a better understanding why unsaved people have a tough time getting saved. Now I am going to show you why saved people have a tough time doing right, and this will be the gospel fulfilled. This will be after salvation.

It is a simple reason. There is a simple reason why saved people who come to this church, really any church, and want help, and then in time they are going, you hear it all, you know, they come in, "I want help. I want to do this. My life is a mess. It is a train wreck," you know, "and the bus is piled in, and it is a car wreck, train wreck, plane wreck, the whole nine yards." And after they get going for a while, you know, and then basically you see that it does not work anymore. The fundamental thing, and everybody out of here, hear me on this, no matter where you are at today, I am telling you this is the absolute fundamental problem right here. The real problem is why God's people do not get it and stay with it and keep it going is simply the fact that they will not separate themselves from the world completely. They will not break with the world completely.

The world will blind you. It is the difference between real gold and fool's gold. You will find that all that glitters in this world is not gold. The great story of this, and we will get into this when we get into our counseling principles in the first of the year, and you have heard me saying before, is Samson. Samson is a perfect example of a saved man, and he represents the same woman too. He

is a picture of a saved man, and at the end of his life, because he disobeyed God and everything that God said, and he did it his way, we find the three things, and it is a great sermon in itself, and I am not going to preach it to you today, but it is a great sermon. The sin in his life did three things:

- First thing it did is blinded him.
- The second thing it does is it binds you.
- The third thing it did to him is it grinds you.

They tied him up, chained a child of God to a Philistine grinding wheel, and he is made sport of and laughed at as he grinds out food for the godless people who hate God, hate him, and everything about it. The child of God today, there it is. I mean, I am telling you, let me say this to you: if you, when you start to put your life back together and you want to make the break and you want to do what God wants you to do, and you want to, you are saved and you want to fulfill the gospel, I am just telling you, if you do not make the complete total break with the world and the old friends and the places and the things and the music, you are never going to make it. That is the bottom line. That is the bottom line. You are not going to make it.

It is a simple principle. Matthew 6:24:

*Matthew 6:24*

*No man can serve two masters: for either he will hate the one, and love the other; or else he will hold to the one, and despise the other. Ye cannot serve God and mammon.*

It is just that simple. It is just the way that it works. You see this great example in the book of Judges and Joshua. In Joshua, they get into the land. They came out of Egypt, the picture of their salvation in Exodus, and now they go through the 40 years wandering. In the next book, Joshua, they cross into the land, and now they have everything that God wants them to have is right there at their fingertips. God tells them, He gives them two key phrases that are the key to their success, and it is the exact two key phrases to your success and my success. He tells them two things:

- Totally obey.
- Utterly destroy.

Totally obey what the Word of God says and utterly get everything out of your life that is not pleasing to God. In your songbook, we have a song that goes along with that book. It is called "Trust and Obey," for "there is no other way to be happy in Jesus than to trust and obey." That is it. In the book of Judges, they cannot do it. In the book of Judges, you find them keep going back to the world system one more time. They just have to go back. They cannot make the breaks, and those people keep coming in and dragging them down and destroying them.

You know, years ago, I flew into Las Vegas, and you talk about a great example of being blinded by the world. I was flying into Las Vegas, and Las Vegas was out in the desert, and we were a hundred miles out, and I could see the light glow. When we got 50 miles out, it was so bright, it looked like the sun was coming up. We were 30 miles out, and he was telling us that, you know,

and he could hear the wheels going down and lights come on. I could look out that window, and I saw the most out there in the darkness, the most spectacular, unbelievable, I mean, lights everywhere. I mean, it was flashing and dashing, and it was absolutely an unbelievable event. When we got into that thing, and we came around the south side to come to the airport, I mean, you looked out that window, and it looked like that was the most fun place to be in your life. But you know the truth of that story is that is one of the most sin-ridden and miserable, broken people and live places on this planet. But from the air, with all the lights, it looked good. That is what the world does to you. It twinkles and it glitters and it glows, and it makes you think, "Oh, it is so wonderful," but in the end, it destroys your lives.

There are people who went into those gambling casinos and lost their house, lost their kids, lost the money for their kids' school, lost everything they had. There are people down there that are drunks and drug addicts. There are people down there they get caught up in all the filth and all the godlessness of this world. But from the air, boy, it looks like, "I cannot wait to land because boy, it is going to be a great place." I am telling you, all that glitters is not gold, and the devil blinds you with that. That is what happened in the book of Judges. In the book of Judges, they go right back to it. They could not make that break.

I always look at that as people today, and you know, when you start to deal with people, you are going to have people who are in a bad relationship or they come out of a bad relationship, and you know the first thing they do, they start getting into the Bible, and the first thing they do, the first thing they do, they get into another relationship. They will find some old boyfriend or girlfriend. They will get on, you know, "My Face" or "Dating.com" or "Dating Sluts for Jesus" or whatever you want to do and type it in, and bang, they get into that, and those are the things you have got to deal with. No, no, I am telling you the truth, man. I have dealt with it. You can laugh at it all you want. I am going to tell you something: you get out of a bad relationship, and you just get saved, stay out of any relationship until you learn to have the proper relationship first.

I know, I know what happens. I have heard it all my life, "Well, I am lonely. See, I am lonely. I am by myself." No, you are not. You have got the greatest friend now living inside you you could ever have. You are just looking at it from the world system. You are blinded. How a gal told me one time, "He is my soul mate." No, no, Jesus is your soul mate. It is how you look at it. You look at it completely backwards. Somebody says, "He is the man of my dreams. He is the man of my life," or "She is the woman of my life," or "He is the love of my life. He is the man that I want to spend the rest of my life with." Let me tell you, that ought to be the exact things you say about Jesus Christ. First, build the relationship, and then apply it after the one He gives you. Yes, it is.

Right now, in the book of Ruth, the greatest story ladies could ever have. Ruth was a Moabitess. Ruth was a sinner. Boaz was in the line of Christ. He is a type of Christ, and it is a beautiful picture not only of Christ and me, but it is a picture of the kind of man a woman ought to want and ought to have. Boaz was a great, a great, a great guy, and it was everything that Ruth wanted, and their marriage in their life, it was absolutely great. But she had to wait. She had to wait. Boaz, the moment she said to Naomi, "Your God, my God," and all, Boaz just did not appear. He did not materialize. She had some things that she had to get through. She had some things she

had to learn. My, I am telling you, ladies, wait for your Boaz. God will bring him to you. Wait for your Boaz. Do not get messed up marrying one of his kinfolk. Do not marry Jerk-Ass. Wait for Boaz. Do not marry Lazy-Ass. Wait for Boaz. Do not marry Dumb-Ass. Wait for Boaz. Cheap-Ass. Wait for Boaz. Do not get hung up with his third cousin, Drunk-Ass. Do not marry Lying-Ass. Do not marry Worthless-Ass. And do not marry Broke-Ass. Wait for your Boaz. Now, you can laugh at that, but that is exactly what happened. If you are not willing to do this, you will never make it.

Now look at 1 John 2:15. How do you want to do this? Go, because I cannot finish this with you laughing a little. This ought to be on every young Christian male and female, three by five cards, in this battle for your mind after you are saved.

*1 John 2:15-17*

*Love not the world, neither the things that are in the world. If any man love the world, the love of the Father is not in him.*

*For all that is in the world, the lust of the flesh, and the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life, is not of the Father, but is of the world.*

*And the world passeth away, and the lust thereof: but he that doeth the will of God abideth for ever.*

Boy, you ought to have that on your heart. "Love not the world," because there is a god of this world. "Love not the world, neither the things that are in the world." Look at them: the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life. Did you ever see that when the devil came to attack Eve all the way back? This is nothing new. All the way back in Genesis 3:6, when the devil came to Eve and Eve had that little conversation with him, when Eve saw that fruit of that tree, she said the same thing. She said that food, that tree, is "good for food" (lust of the flesh). She said that fruit of that tree is "pleasant to the eyes" (lust of the eyes). And she said that fruit of that tree "will make one wise" (pride of life). And then she ate it. It never changes.

Listen, if you are going to make it and you are going to fulfill the gospel in your life after you are saved, then you are going to have to forsake the world. You are going to have to get rid of the old friends, the old lifestyle, the old places, the old habits, and you are going to have to replace it with the things of God. I think that is one of my big gripes about most preachers. Most preachers get up there and they tell you all the things you have got to give up, but they never provide you anything to replace the things you give up with. If you are going to tell somebody to give up something, you had better have something to replace it with, because if you just tell them to get rid of it, it will never work. It hardly works when you have something to replace it with. You are going to have some new friends. You have got to have some new places to hang out. You have got to have some new things to replace those things. But if you do not make that break, you are not going anywhere. That is why when you start dealing with people, these are the problems you get into. You see the world for what it really is: the tool of the devil to blind you.

## VII. The Treasure in Earthen Vessels

Now, this is why people do not make it. This is why some people will not receive the gospel and they will stay lost. Then this is why some people will receive the gospel, but they will never fulfill the gospel. You have been blinded. The devil's plan for you is real simple, and it is twofold. If you are unsaved here this morning, the devil will blind you to keep you from ever getting saved, therefore damning your soul to hell. If by some stroke of grace of God that you do get saved and you do receive the gospel, then the next plan the devil will have is to get you never to fulfill the gospel. Because the devil just plays the odds, and he will keep your life messed up. He will keep the old friends in it. He will keep the old things in your world that will destroy your life and never let you fulfill it. You know why? Because if he cannot get your soul in hell, he is sorry that he lost you, but what he will do is then he will just make sure that you never get anybody else in heaven, and they all go to hell that you would have reached if you would have fulfilled the gospel. It is pretty simple, pretty simple.

Now 2 Corinthians 4:7 says this:

*2 Corinthians 4:7*

*But we have this treasure in earthen vessels, that the excellency of the power may be of God, and not of us.*

What a great verse that is, and understanding all of this is incredible. You see the treasure there that he talks about, this treasure in earthen vessels. That treasure is the light. It is the Word of God of verse 6. We have already looked at how we are to be ministers of life and light. We know that already. It is the Word of God in us, the epistle that the Bible talks about is read and understood of all men. I think a great verse that goes along with this is Colossians 1:27, a great verse. It says:

*Colossians 1:27*

*To whom God would make known what is the riches of the glory of this mystery among the Gentiles; which is Christ in you, the hope of glory:*

There it is. Now, that is not all he says down there, but "we have this treasure in earthen vessels." Now, that earthen vessel is our body, made out of clay. One of the great studies in the Bible that you ought to take if you have not ever taken it is Jeremiah 18. Jeremiah 18 is Jeremiah goes down to the potter's house, and I know historically it is talking about the nation of Israel, but inspirationally it is a picture of you and me. When he goes out to that potter's house, that potter takes a lump of clay and he puts it on that wheel, and that man takes that clay and begins to mold it and begins to make it, and he begins to make it into a vessel. That potter is God. That piece of clay is you and me.

You see, when you get saved, God takes you as a lump of clay, and He begins to mold you. He begins to fashion you the way that He wants. That is why you find in the Bible, when it comes down over there in 2 Timothy 2:20-21, it talks about that God in the great house has vessels of honor and vessels of dishonor.

*2 Timothy 2:20-21*

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

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

You, as a child of God, you either let God make you into a vessel of honor, or you will not let God make you, and you refuse the gospel and reject the gospel, and you will become a vessel of dishonor. It is just that simple.

You know, back in the days of when pirates roamed the seas, especially down in the Caribbean, they would get ships, sink ships, loot ships, take all kinds of jewels and all these things. Pirates were always, always afraid that other pirates would steal what they had. So they would take the precious diamonds and rubies and the emeralds, and they would coat them in mud, and it looked like just a ball of mud. Then they would hide them someplace, and many times the pirate would either get killed or he would never get back to where it was. Three or four hundred years later, people walking along the beach and walking along the deal would uncover the cache where they put these little mud balls with the diamonds, and they had no idea what they were. I got this out of a story I read a number of years ago. A guy had actually picked up a whole bunch of them, and they were so perfectly round, but by three or four hundred years, they had so hardened on it that it just looked like a little rock. He is taking these things, and he has got a whole handful of them, and they really hit the water nice. He is throwing them all in there, and he happened to drop one at his foot. He looked down in the water, salt water had taken it off, and he sees something shiny, picks it up and smooths it off, and it was an emerald or a diamond, a ruby, I cannot remember what it was. He only had about three left. He had thrown like 40 of them away.

I thought to myself when I read that story, "Boy, that is the way God's people are inside here today." If you are saved, there is a treasure, a ruby, a diamond in the rough, and so many of us, just like that guy walking down the beach of the Caribbean, you do not recognize what is inside this clay, and you just throw it away on the sea of life. I am telling you, two aspects to the gospel: there is the gospel received, and then there is the gospel fulfilled. When you start to deal with people and you start to work with people, this is what you are up against. The devil has blinded them that they never find out who they really are and what God has for them.

Paul said it best in Acts 26:18. I think one of the greatest verses that really speaks to what we are talking about today and really speaks to ministry when he said this, and I can read his frustration and feel his anxiety because he dealt with many, many people, and it is a picture of our ministry and our mission.

*Acts 26:18*

*To open their eyes, and to turn them from darkness to light, and from the power of Satan unto God, that they may receive forgiveness of sins, and inheritance among them which are sanctified by faith that is in me.*

There it is. God saved you for a purpose, and it is one thing to receive the gospel and get saved, but do not stop there. Then you take the gospel that you received and you fulfill it. The reason

why people will not make it that you are going to work with, and I have worked with all my life, and maybe some are sitting here under the sound of my voice this morning, they will not, if they are unsaved, they will not because they are blinded by what they have. They are blinded by what they want. They are blinded by the things of this world, by the god of this world. Then you have others who are caught up in religion that is going to send them straight to hell, and their pride is involved, and all of the things that go along with it. Then you have others who receive the gospel, but now are not willing to fulfill the gospel. What a shame that is.

You know why you will not? I will tell you very simple, and these are the things you learn in dealing with people: it is not complicated. You simply will not do it because you are not willing to make the ties, break the ties with the world. You have still got people, things, things that you are holding on to that will always pull you back, and until you decide to totally obey and utterly destroy, you are not going anywhere. The example has been set for four or five thousand years now. We have seen it with the nation of Israel. We saw it with Samson. We see it with everybody in any situation who simply does not want to fulfill and do what God wants them to do. You have to come to the place in your life where you leave it. You have to receive the gospel, and you have to then fulfill the gospel. Well, let us hold up there and let us have a word of prayer.