

## I. The Minister's Heart: A Spirit of Giving

We have learned from our study in 2 Corinthians chapter 8 that there are two chapters Paul set aside to deal with the attitude of heart of the minister. We now know that the attitude of the heart of the minister needs to be one of giving.

I remember, and many of you will remember this with me, for years starting about 1976 or 1977, I was with a very, at that time, very famous pastor. I was a youth pastor myself in that church. All of you old-timers will remember the stewardship banquets we used to have. Every year, right about this time, right after the first of the year, they put a big push on to raise the offerings. They would always have a stewardship banquet. We would start preparing for it like two months ahead, and they would write special lessons about giving and all of this stuff. They would pass out commitment cards. Then we would have this great banquet, and everybody had to come and bring their commitment card and hold it up before the Lord. Then they tallied it all up, and they were really disappointed because they never got as much as they thought they wanted to get.

All the time that they put those lessons together, and I will never forget this, I was just a young guy then, but I would say I had a pretty good handle on some of the Bible at that point in my life. They always used 2 Corinthians chapter 8 and 9 to beat the people up about giving money. They would do some horrendous things; it was incredible. It really put people on a guilt trip. I remember thinking back, and I thought back this week as I was putting this together, I remember looking at those lessons, and I always just threw them away and did my own. I just could not understand why 2 Corinthians 8 and 9, the way they were portraying it, in reality had nothing to do with money. It has to do with giving, but it has hardly anything to do with money. They were forgetting what it really dealt with because their full focus was money. They were squeezing that thing to get every dime out of the people that they could. I will never forget looking at those passages and thinking to myself, "This is totally ridiculous. There is nothing in here that is even about money. It is about the giving of your own self first," and that is how we approached it when we talked about it.

## II. Defining Principles of Christian Ministry

Last week we finished the middle section on the second principle. We talked about God's will in your life versus God's plan for your life. This is very vital in the two aspects, and there are three different aspects. We are going to look at the third one today. The first one was your attitude of heart and giving. That was our first week. Last week we talked about God's will in your life versus your will in your life. I explained to you the difference between God's will and God's plan, how they are different, and how important they really are. We based last week around 2 Corinthians 8:12, and you remember there that it talked about having a willing mind. We saw the great truth that if you are willing to do what God has called you to do, He will give you everything you need to accomplish it. That is really what we focused on last week.

I remember I gave you another great concept. In fact, I gave you this one first; it was in 2 Corinthians 8:9. I am telling you, it is one of the greatest verses in the Bible where it says:

*2 Corinthians 8:9*

*For ye know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that, though he was rich, yet for your sakes he became poor, that ye through his poverty might be rich.*

We talked about the fact that God, who had everything, all the riches of glory, God who had everything that the universe contained, gave it all up simply because He saw that your need and my need was greater than all He had. That is the basis by which we as Christians minister for God. That is the basis by which we do everything we do for God. We look at all God has given us, all God has provided us, and all God has laid at our feet. Then we have a choice. We can either amass it around ourselves and enjoy what we have, or we can see that what God has provided for us, somebody's need is greater than all we have. We, through our own free will, choose to give back to God based on understanding the grace that God has done all the things that He has done for us.

In the Bible, and it is also true in life, I find there are some very defining principles in the Word of God that really define who we are. You have great principles about life, marriage, training your children up, and doing all the things, but there are some great principles in the Bible that simply define us for who we are. This is one of them. These two here that we have talked about—the willing mind and 2 Corinthians 8:9—they are the principles that define us. Understanding all that God had, yet He gave it all up because He simply saw that my need was greater than all that He had. You can blow off a lot of things, and a lot of God's people do, but for a Christian to see that and to hear that and to go on living their life, doing what they want to do the way they want to do it, and completely ignoring all that God has for them, there are some serious issues, some serious flaws somewhere along the line in what you have with the Lord.

On these two concepts, 2 Corinthians 8:9 and 2 Corinthians 8:12, lies all that we do, everything. We can take every aspect of the ministry and put it into these two chapters, but it boils down in these two chapters to these two concepts: giving back to God based on what He has given to you, and recognizing that He gave up everything that He had because He deemed your need and my need greater. Then we look at people's lives and what they need, and we deem what their needs are greater than what our needs are. It is a willing mind based on understanding God's grace, and then the concept of giving your own self first. These two verses form for us the great principles that we have talked about the last couple of weeks.

Now today, I want to read the rest of this chapter, and I want to talk about and focus on the third and final aspect of being the minister that God wants us to be with the heart that we should have. So I am going to pick it up in 2 Corinthians 8:15. Follow along with me if you will.

*2 Corinthians 8:15*

*As it is written, He that had gathered much had nothing over; and he that had gathered little had no lack.*

2 Corinthians 8:16

*But thanks be to God, which put the same earnest care into the heart of Titus for you.*

2 Corinthians 8:17

*For indeed he accepted the exhortation; but being more forward, of his own accord he went unto you.*

2 Corinthians 8:18

*And we have sent with him the brother, whose praise is in the gospel throughout all the churches;*

2 Corinthians 8:19

*And not that only, but who was also chosen of the churches to travel with us with this grace, which is administered by us to the glory of the same Lord, and declaration of your ready mind:*

2 Corinthians 8:20

*Avoiding this, that no man should blame us in this abundance which is administered by us:*

2 Corinthians 8:21

*Providing for honest things, not only in the sight of the Lord, but also in the sight of men.*

2 Corinthians 8:22

*And we have sent with them our brother, whom we have oftentimes proved diligent in many things, but now much more diligent, upon the great confidence which I have in you.*

2 Corinthians 8:23

*Whether any do enquire of Titus, he is my partner and fellowhelper concerning you: or our brethren be enquired of, they are the messengers of the churches, and the glory of Christ.*

2 Corinthians 8:24

*Wherefore shew ye to them, and before the churches, the proof of your love, and of our boasting on your behalf.*

### III. Integrity in Ministry Finances

In ending this chapter, Paul is telling them that he is sending Titus and another brother. It does not tell you who the brother is, but if anybody knows the Bible, it is probably without any doubt Silas. Silas went with Paul everywhere and did everything, and he certainly was well known, and that is probably who it is, even though he is not named there. Yet there is a basic lesson here, and the basic lesson here is another principle for churches: to protect the integrity of the ministry.

He is saying here that when they collect up this money to go to Jerusalem, you have Paul, then you have Titus coming into the picture, and then you have Silas. What he is doing here is taking three guys. Paul does not want to be responsible and be the only one who has control of the

money. He does not want somebody coming back and accusing him of doing anything wrong. So he follows a smart plan that every church ought to follow, and that is that he puts multiple people in charge of the finances. Those three guys are responsible. Silas watches Titus, Titus watches Silas, and Paul watches both of them, and all three of them together get the job done.

That is a basic format, and so much of this that you find in here is just what you transpose out of what they are doing and you put into a church. It is true in our church. We have four or five people who oversee the basic offering that we take up every Sunday. Over and above that, there are what, I do not remember, 12, 13, 14, 15 guys who oversee the overall financial structure of making any major decision. Those are the kind of things you have to have in place to make sure that nothing goes sideways or that nobody can accuse you of anything.

You remember a while back, and again I have been in these situations with churches all my life, it was about a year or two ago, Jerry Johnson got himself in trouble over there in Kansas, who had First Family or whatever it was. The fact that he was called into question on some financial things of what he was doing and how he was doing it. One of the things, and I follow along in the paper, and I know you do not get the whole story in the paper, but I follow along. I think one of the fatal flaws that he made is that anytime somebody accuses you of something and then you refuse to show them the books of whatever you have, you are in trouble. If you have nothing to hide, then let them see it.

I have been in churches all my life where, going back to the 1977, 1976 stewardship deals, twice or three times a year they would always put out a financial statement and give it to everybody. I used to sit in those meetings and I used to watch those guys say, "Well, put that in, but don't put that in. Put this in, but don't put that in." Giving you a piece of paper means absolutely nothing. When I started this church, I had a clear open policy to everybody and told them, "If you are a tithing member of this church and you belong to this church and you tithe and support it with your tithes or sacrificial giving, you can see the books anytime you want to see them. All you have to do is make an appointment, go in, and whatever you want to see, where your money goes, wherever it goes, however it goes, you are welcome to do that." You have to be transparent in everything that you do, and that is the best way I know how to do it. I do not know how to do any better than that unless you can actually see where it is at, and that is the way it has to run.

He says down here in 2 Corinthians 8:20, "that no man should blame us in this abundance that is administered by us, providing honest things not only in the sight of the Lord but also in the sight of men." That is what you have to have. That is what you have to do. If you have nothing to hide, then there is nothing to hide. What is the big deal? It is when you close them up and will not let people see it that you have some problems. He ends with a great comment in 2 Corinthians 8:24, "Wherefore shew ye to them, and before the churches, the proof of your love, and of our boasting on your behalf." Paul was proud of this church. He was proud of where they had come from, what they had turned around in their midst, and he is proud of where they are going.

#### IV. The Third Principle: Unlimited Access to God's Word

Today I want to give you the third principle, and this is a great breakdown for this chapter. The third principle today is laid out in 2 Corinthians 8:15. Here is what he says:

*2 Corinthians 8:15*

*As it is written, He that had gathered much had nothing over; and he that had gathered little had no lack.*

That is another great principle. This quotation is out of the book of Exodus. If you do not have it already marked in your Bible, you want to mark it in. This quotation is found in Exodus 16. This third principle will really bring us, in our last two points last week, it will kind of bring it down to a central concept and a central theme. It is a great breakdown of chapter 8. We have given you some great valuable principles the first week and the second week that you should already have down. Today we are going to see in the final analysis, it all comes down to this: you can have everything you want. I can preach to you about all the different things that we talked about, but in the final analysis, at the end of the day, it simply comes down to your relationship, and this is where he is getting what he is talking about, and I will show you in a moment, with your relationship with the Word of God. It is the bottom line. It is where it all begins and where it all ends.

The final principle is very simple. The final principle that pulls it all together is really simple: when it comes to God, you can have as much of God as you want. There are no limits. God, when it comes to us, puts no limitations on Himself or His Word. God never puts brackets or bounds on how much of Him that we can have. That is a great concept, and I learned that very early in the ministry. I think that most pastors today are a sham when it comes to what they really ought to be. We get the idea, and this is a very damning thing, but we get the idea, and it is perpetuated from pulpits today by these guys who think they know more about the Bible than you do, or that they are somehow different than you are. They perpetuate the idea that God is untouchable. They perpetuate the idea that the Bible is untouchable. They will tell you that you, as a common man, can never understand the Bible. You have to come to this guy or this doctor who understands Greek and Hebrew, and he will tell you what the Bible means. When they do that, what they have done in one fell swoop is they have removed the Bible from you and made it inaccessible. They do the same thing with God. They want you to believe that God is some untouchable, unattainable person that you have to work and struggle all your life to really get any kind of relationship with. That is simply not true.

When I started pastoring, I saw the model that God gave to me, and I said, "You know what? That is the model I need to follow." A pastor needs to be accessible to his people. If they have problems, they need to be able to get a hold of him. You do not get some answering machine that says, "We will be in on Thursday." You get a live body when you need somebody. You ought to have the ability to spend an hour with your pastor a week, a month, whatever it takes, whatever your needs are, if you want to learn the Bible. Because a pastor represents God, and what he preaches is God's Word. You cannot have a pastor who represents God who does not act like God when it comes to giving you all that you need.

You do not come here because I am good looking. You do not come here because you love me. You come here because of what I give you. In reality, it has nothing to do with me. You may like me. We may have a relationship. You may have seen my heart. You may have my heart. But at the end of the day, you come here for one reason: it is because of the Book that God gives you, and you know that if you want it, you are going to get it here. I took New Year's Eve and spent what, four or five months before we ever did that night, laying out the complete Bible from one end to the other for three and a half, almost four hours. I did that because that is what God did to me. God gave me that. My job is to give you that. Your job is to give somebody else that. That is how it works.

This idea that pastors have today, "Don't touch me. Stay away from me." Most pastors, if you have a terrible problem in your world and you need help, you do not get them. You get some underling down there. You get some second-stringer, a third-stringer. You cannot get to the man. The man does not have time for you. I am not sure who he is ministering to, or what he is ministering to, but he has no time for you. You are the most important thing in this church next to that Book. What your needs are in that Book is my primary concern. My job is to make sure you get what you need. Your job is to do something with it after I get it to you. It is a two-way street. That is a great thing I learned very early in my ministry. That is just the way it works. But the mindset today is pastors are untouchable. You come on Sunday morning, and he will bless you with all that he has, but you need something during the week, or you want to sit down and really ask him some questions? It will never happen. The real reason it will never happen is because he does not know what to answer you, but that is beside the point.

This verse is a quotation from Exodus 16:18, which is 2 Corinthians 8:15 here. Based on last week in 2 Corinthians 8:12, we now know that it is not what we have or what we do not have that really matters, but it is a willing heart. That is another game pastors play. Pastors look at people in their congregation. If you do not know this, you are as stupid as a fence post. These big-time guys look at you, and all they look at is your wallet. They look at what you do for a living. They look at what you are going to bring into them, what you are going to do for them. If you are just a common, ordinary blue-collar worker in a big 5,000-person church or 3,000-person church, you will probably never get to be a deacon. You never get that; that is reserved for people with status. That is how it works. That is how it has always worked. You are going to realize that they cater based on what you have.

I have never cared about what anybody had. I only look for one thing in a person. I do not care how much money you make, how much money you do not make. I do not care if you are broke, out on the street on your rear end, and cannot even get up. All I care about is one thing in your life: your will to do what God wants you to do. That is all I care about. The abundance of getting all you want from God's Word, there is no end to it.

## V. Exodus: God's Discipleship Book

I told you this is a quotation from the book of Exodus. We are going to go back to the book of Exodus. I want to show you how Paul, how we develop this thing that Paul said. In one little verse, it is incredible. The first message I heard after I got saved and right with God was a

message I went to church one night, and Dr. Peter Ruckman was preaching. It was the first time I had heard him. This had to be back in about 1972, maybe 1971. The first time that I heard him preach, I sat up there and listened to that old boy, and he preached a message that I have never forgotten. In fact, I still have it on cassette. I would not dare play it; it would probably break in pieces. But he preached "The Gospel According to Exodus." I sat there that night, and I am listening to that old boy lay that thing out, draw that thing out, and put that thing down there. I have never forgotten that sermon all of my life. A little bit later on, I got Arthur Pink's book on the "Gleanings in Exodus." Wow, did he do a job on the book of Exodus.

After a while, I came to the place to realize how important the book of Exodus was. The book of Exodus to me has always been, I call it, God's great discipleship book. It is the only book I know that lays the format before you and I were saved, when we got saved, and every event that needs to be in our lives after we get saved. I have never seen another book like it in the Bible. I know a few things about some of the books in the Bible. I think the name itself is an incredible book. It is called "The Exodus." You know what "Exodus" means? Exit. That is a great book. It is a book about somebody exiting one place to go someplace else. That is what I am going to do. The nation of Israel, the Exodus, they left. It is a great book.

When I built my 10 discipleship lessons, probably 35 years ago, I built them on that concept and that format that I found in Exodus. I figured, "Hey, how do you go and improve on God's discipleship?" If these are the things that God wants us to know that He put in His Book, I am going to write my discipleship lessons around those things. I followed that basic format, and it is an incredible format. When you start to look at it, Exodus 4:22 talks about how Israel is God's son. By a strange coincidence, you and I are God's son. Now, they are God's son corporately, but you and I are God's son as part of His body and His children. It is the same concept, a different aspect, but the same concept.

I started to come through there, and I saw an outline that was absolutely invaluable in understanding the process. I have to give you the outline to get you where Paul is at to make it all make sense.

### ➤ Exodus Outline: A Picture of the Christian Life

- Exodus 1-3: A picture of Israel down in Egypt. Egypt is a type of the world. They are under the bondage of Pharaoh, who is a type of the devil. The devil wants to destroy the nation of Israel. He wants to wipe them out, so he puts them under hard bondage of labor, building the pyramids, his tomb, and all the other stuff. For 430 years, they languished in the iron furnace of Egypt, and they died by the hundreds and hundreds of thousands. They died, and they built it, and they cannot get out. They are stuck. That is a picture of where I was before God saved me. I was under the bondage of this old world, and my Pharaoh, the devil, wanted to destroy my life and everything about it. I languished in this old world. I languished through the heartache of building those pyramids for the world.
- Exodus 3-6: They cry out. They say, "Oh God, I cannot take this anymore. Oh God, I need out of this. What am I going to do? My life is a mess." God sent them a deliverer. That deliverer

is Moses. Moses is one of the greatest types of Christ anywhere in the Bible. God sent me a deliverer when I cried out that day.

- Exodus 7-11: The adversary shows up. Pharaoh says, "I am not letting them go." There is a contest between Moses and Pharaoh, just like there was a contest between God and the devil over your soul. Sometime, you do not have time to do it this morning, but sometime you go through there and you study those chapters, there are three things the devil tried to do, or Pharaoh tried to do, to keep them from going, to compromise them, but never get them to leave. They are the exact same three things you will do in people's lives today.
- Exodus 12: Salvation by the blood of a lamb. The day Israel got redeemed. Forget that. The day Bob Alexander got redeemed. That lamb had to be a male, the first of the flock, without blemish, just like Christ. It was killed by Israel, just like Christ, on the 14th day of the month, just like Christ. They put the blood on the door. When they put the blood on that door, it was not just one big bloody mess. It was blood over here, blood over here, and blood at the top. There is one thief, there is the other thief, and there is Christ at the top. It is a picture of the day my Deliverer got me out of Egypt. They said, "When you take that lamb and you put it at the fire, don't put any water on that fire and don't let any water touch that lamb." You know why? Because when you take that Lamb and you put Him at the cross, He says, "I thirst."
- Exodus 13: They come out. Exodus 13 is a great chapter on my sanctification. Exodus 13:1-2 says, "Sanctify unto me all the people." The first thing you need to know when you get saved, gentlemen, is you have now been separated from the world. You are going to see it in a moment. This is why Paul is making a reference to it. The first thing that happened after you got your exit sign printed on your head as you entered into Egypt, this world, you are now separated from the world, never to go back.
- Exodus 14:1 Corinthians 10:2 says, "When they crossed the Red Sea, that's where they got baptized." After you get saved, you need to get baptized.
- Exodus 15: Talks about the new song. They call it the song of Moses, the new song that they now sing. Psalms 40:1-2 talks about the song I sing, where David said: Psalms 40:1  
I waited patiently for the LORD; and he inclined unto me, and heard my cry. Psalms 40:2

He brought me up also out of an horrible pit, out of the miry clay, and set my feet upon a rock, and established my goings. Psalms 40:3

And he hath put a new song in my mouth, even praise unto our God: many shall see it, and fear, and shall trust in the LORD. Did He give you a new song? You should have picked it up on your way out.

- Exodus 16: My Bible. We will talk about that in a minute.
- Exodus 17: My prayer life. That is where you get this concept that we talked about Thursday night. We talked about 1 Timothy 2:8 about lifting up holy hands. I told you it had nothing to do with these hands. Back there you have a picture of your prayer life. Everything is in the right order. When you get to that point there in Exodus 17, you have a picture of a battle that goes on. You have Amalek, who is an enemy of Israel, fighting with Israel. You have Moses standing on top of the rock watching the battle, and he is praying for them. The Bible says that when he lifts his hands up to God, the battle goes their way. When he gets tired and he drops his hand, the battle goes Amalek's way. The Bible says when he got so weary that he

could not hold his hands up, Aaron and Hur came over and helped his hands up. That is a picture of when you are weary in your prayer life because of the battle you are fighting, you get your friends in your prayer group holding up your hands. Moses did not fight the battle. Joshua fought the battle, a type of Christ. Your job and my job is to do the praying. Jesus does the fighting. This is a great book. In fact, I may never read another book in the Bible again. I could spend my life reading that one.

- Exodus 18:He talks about the people you have to be careful of in your life after you get saved. This is a great story about Moses and Jethro. Jethro was Moses' father-in-law. All the preachers in the land will tell you that, and I have heard them teach this in Bible college, pastors teach on this, that this is the exact good advice that he gave to Moses, and it was great advice, and this is what a young preacher had to follow. That was the most damning, heretical information Moses ever got. It was totally against God. It is a picture that once you get saved and God starts working with you through that Book, you do not need some highbrow guy out there to tell you what the Book means. It will take care of itself.
- Exodus 19-24:He talks about the Old Testament law. He goes through it, and you learn how the Old Testament law will affect you.
- Exodus 25-27:He lays out the tabernacle. You find that it is a picture of your body and your life. There are seven pieces of furniture in that tabernacle that match up to the seven things that we have to have in our life to have a relationship with God. It is incredible. See how it brings you through?
- Exodus 28-31:The priesthood. You are a priest after the Order of Melchizedek, the book of Hebrews says.
- Exodus 32-40:Deals with the work of the ministry.

Nothing I know of, nor any other book in the Bible that I know of, lays out the right order with all the aspects from before I was saved, the day I got saved, and puts every order of event exactly the way it is supposed to be for every believer in this room today.

Now Paul, when he quotes this, he is quoting in 2 Corinthians 8:15. He is quoting out of the section that we just kind of skipped over because I told you I was going to come back to it. Exodus 16 focuses on the Word of God. The verse he is quoting there is Exodus 16:17-18. The key to my will and my attitude of heart with God, as I have already told you, comes down simply to a Book and what are you going to do with it? I have already told you, the third principle here is, you can have as much of God as you want.

How come there are people in this room that have been saved the same amount of time or shorter times than other people, and they know more about the Bible than you do, and you have been saved three times longer? Why is that? You find that at every church. You find it with any group of Christians. I know there are some of you guys and some of you gals in here that probably know the Bible as good as I do. I am happy for that. That is a great deal. But there are others of you who have been saved as long as I have, or longer. Why do you not know it as good or better than I do? I know what the answer is. "Well, I did not have your training. I did not have the people in my life." All I really had in my life was God and my will to do what God wanted me to

do. God got me what I needed. Did you not hear last week? When you have a willing heart, God will get you the things and the people you need to give you what you want.

Charles Jones, they used to call him Charles Tremendous Jones, was a motivational speaker back in the 70s and 80s. His big shtick was going around motivating people to be better than they are. He used to say this, and I heard many, many pastors quote him. I just kind of looked at them and laughed back in my mind when they said it. Charles Tremendous Jones used to say that you will be exactly ten years from now who you are today, except for the books you read and the people you meet. He was motivating people to broaden their intelligence, read books, meet people. I have heard many, many pastors stand in a pulpit and quote that same thing because it was kind of a buzzword at the time. But I would sit back and I would look at that and I would say, "Now that is the secular side of it, and that shows you how these pastors only think in a secular mindset." Let me tell you something. That is not true. Maybe it is true of the world. But for a child of God, if you are here this morning, I will tell you this: you will be exactly who you are ten years from today as you are today, except for the Book that you read and the people you minister to. There is the difference. And he was not a Christian.

Now I want to help develop this concept. I kind of gave you the background here of Exodus, but I want to bring us back to this verse now, and I want to look at our third principle and how it all ties in. So come on back to Exodus, and if you do not have these in, this is a great title. I want to break down this chapter for you. I will give you some things about how this is a chapter, a picture of the Word of God. This is great stuff. I have stuffed stuff in my Bible; it has been in there for 35 years. I will never forget cracking Arthur Pink's book on that thing, and I just went back and was like eating strawberries on a summer afternoon.

## VI. The Manna: A Type of God's Sustaining Word

Exodus 16:1 says, "The children of Israel enter into the wilderness of Sin." The wilderness of Sin, as we look at it in the book of Exodus, is a picture of the desert. They are now wandering for 40 years, and there is nothing in the desert that is going to sustain them. They cannot find any good water. There is no good food to eat, no McDonald's, nothing to go get any food. They are out there in a wilderness, in a desert, and it is called the wilderness of Sin. The reason why he called it the wilderness of Sin is because, whether you know it or not, that is a picture, once you get saved, of what the world now is to you. This is why he gave you the chapter on sanctification. This is why he called the book Exodus. Once you exit the world through the blood of the Lamb, folks, I am telling you something: there is nothing on this planet that is going to satisfy you ever again in a physical sense if you are truly saved. From this point on, nothing that they went anywhere they went, nothing in that desert sustained them. Once you get saved, there is nothing this world has to offer that is going to sustain you. It will destroy you, but it will never sustain you. It is called the wilderness of Sin. Nothing there that satisfies them. Nothing there that will give them water, no food. Remember now, water is a type of the Word of God, and so is meat as a type of the Word of God. What follows once they enter into the wilderness of Sin is the greatest picture connecting to your Bible, going back to why Paul used this quotation. It is a picture of what God gives us to sustain us in our journey through the wilderness of Sin.

I want you to see 14 things here. They are out in the wilderness. They have nothing to eat. They have no water. They got water out of a rock; that is another story. That rock is a type of Christ. But they have nothing to eat. Supernaturally, God gives them something called manna. I want you to see these 14 things about the supernatural food that God gave them to sustain them in the wilderness journey. I want you to apply it to your own life: if you are truly saved and you made the exit sign of your life, brother, then nothing in this world is going to sustain you. This is the difference why some of you will make it and some of you will not. I made a little statement a little earlier about we have 60 people for the people ministry. We will be down to 40 by the second round. I know why that is, because I know what happens. I have been in this business for a while. Everybody is excited about getting to learn all of this stuff and do all this stuff. But to whom much is given, much is required. Suddenly your work schedule will conflict, I guarantee you. You say, "You do not even know where I work." It does not matter. Your kids will be sick for the next 10 years every first Saturday of the month.

1. The manna was a supernatural gift from God. Exodus 16:4

Then said the LORD unto Moses, Behold, I will rain bread from heaven for you; and the people shall go out and gather a certain rate every day, that I may prove them, whether they will walk in my law, or no. This manna that God brought down to them was a supernatural gift to them from God and shows your Bible. The Bible says in 1 Thessalonians 2:13:1 Thessalonians 2:13

For this cause also thank we God without ceasing, because, when ye received the word of God which ye heard of us, ye received it not as the word of men, but as it is in truth, the word of God, which effectually worketh also in you that believe. When that manna came down, it was God feeding them supernaturally with the bread that He gave them. When God gave you that Bible, once you made your exodus, God gave you the supernatural bread from God that is going to sustain you through your wilderness journey. Some of you guys and gals out there that are out in the far country right now today, you think that is not true. You think that you can drink your booze, smoke what you want to do, do what you want to do, go where you want to do, keep one toe in Christianity and the other full 90 percent of your body in the world. You think that you will sustain yourself that way. This is where the devil deceives you. It may work for the short term, but in the long term, you lose your marriage, you lose your kids. They will not come to church anymore. They want nothing to do with the Bible, nothing to do with the Gospel. You are sitting there with a big frog smile on your face saying, "I wonder what happened?" You have been deceived. It would be a lot easier if people would just listen to what preachers say, but why would we ever do that?

2. The manna came directly to the common people. You find this in Exodus 16:13-14. Not only was it a supernatural gift from God, but the manna came right to where the people were, the common people. He did not send them to the priest. He did not send them to the scribes. That manna came right to where the common, ordinary people were. It did not go to the Gnostics. It did not go to the Bible scholars. It went right to where the common people were. They did not have to search for it. Are you not glad that you did not have to rely on some dead, unsaved linguist to find the Bible in some Vatican's dusty manuscript closet someplace? Are you not glad that the real God was not bound up in Codex Sinaiticus monastery out there in a Sinai desert for 450 some years? Are you not glad that it was not that way? Are you not glad

when the Dead Sea Scrolls were found in 1947, and the scholastic world said, "Wow, what new light will we have on the Bible?" That Bible had been around for 1,900 years. I know that because He brought the manna right to where the people were. Right to the people. All they had to do was pick it up. It was supernaturally brought to them. There were no mistakes in it. No scribal errors. Exactly as God would have it to us.

3. The manna was initially misunderstood, requiring guidance. Exodus 16:15 says when they got it, they did not understand what it was or why it was there. That goes to show that when you first get saved, the Word of God is a mystery to you to some degree. I have been in it for over 40 some years, and it is still incomprehensible to me in many areas. I still do not understand about it. But it is just like anything else. I look at another great example in the Bible, and this is what our job is. In Acts chapter 8, you have the story of that Ethiopian eunuch. I have always marveled at that story. I have always thought that is one of the greatest stories in the Bible. You have this little Ethiopian eunuch that is out of Africa, and he is in a chariot, and he is going to Jerusalem. He is at a way station someplace. I do not know what he is doing, but he is sitting there. God looks over here and sees that Ethiopian eunuch has a copy of Isaiah 53. He watches that old boy read that thing on the back of that chariot. God looks around and He says, "I need somebody to go be a missionary to him." He looks down and He sees Philip. I think there is a great principle in why He picked Philip. Philip was in the midst of a revival of thousands of people. God lifted up Philip and took him over to that one man. I know evangelists that will not come to a church to preach unless you can guarantee him a crowd of 5,000 people because he thinks his ministry is too valuable. Your ministry is never that valuable. God did not need Philip then. Philip did not even argue with God. He did not say, "Well, Lord, I have something going over here," like we would do. "I just had 2,800 people saved last night. I need to get all their names down. I need to get their tithing records." He never said a word. He went right where God wanted him to go. When he comes to that chariot, the greatest line in the Bible, as far as I am concerned, of what our ministry really is, he sees that Ethiopian eunuch sitting back there, reading Isaiah 53. Isaiah 53, by the way, is the crucifixion of Christ and the cross of atonement. Philip walks up and says, with a great opening line, "Understandest thou what thou readest?" And that Ethiopian eunuch looked up at him and said the greatest words that heaven ever heard, "How can I, except some man should guide me?" People do not understand the Bible. The natural man cannot see the things of the Spirit of God. Your job and my job, once you understand that it is giving of yourself first, that it is your attitude of heart and the willingness to minister, your job really is first and foremost simply this: to find the guy sitting on the backs of chariots and then ask the question, "Do you understand what you are reading?" And they say, "How can I, except some man should guide me?" And then you guide him. He won that man to Christ. Incredible. Your job and my job is to guide people because the Word of God is hard for them to grasp. Your job and my job, of us who understand it a little better, is to guide those that do not. It is going to be a rough year for some of you. I am sorry. We are no longer waiting for you. The bus is leaving. Those of you who have been on mission trips with me know exactly what that means, because I have left them before.
4. The manna was hated by the mixed multitude. We are going to turn back to Numbers 11 for this one. The fourth thing I want you to see is that not everybody was happy with the manna.

In fact, the mixed multitude hated the manna. We know now the manna is a type of the Word of God. Numbers 11:4

And the mixed multitude that was among them fell a lusting: and the children of Israel also wept again, and said, Who shall give us flesh to eat? Numbers 11:5

We remember the fish, which we did eat in Egypt freely; the cucumbers, and the melons, and the leeks, and the onions, and the garlic: Numbers 11:6

But now our soul is dried away: there is nothing at all, beside this manna, before our eyes. That is what the mixed multitude always focuses on. You see that, do you not? You want to mark that word, "flesh." The mixed multitude is always concerned about their flesh. "We remember the fish, which we did eat in Egypt freely." That is an always interesting statement to me, "freely." They beat your back with whips. They kicked you. They beat you. They ran over you with bricks. They did everything in the world. Your grandfather died in it. Your father died in it. Your grandmother died by being crushed. They worked you 20 hours a day and gave you four hours off and then put you back to work again. They starved you to death. They did not give you a squat to eat. And you look back at the world and think how free it was. That is the mixed multitude. That is why you still drink your booze. That is why you still have one foot in the world. That is why you do not see the things of God as important. You have the mixed multitude in your life. Then when something tragic happens in your life, you say, "I wonder what happened to me with that." You need a brain transplant. You do not need a heart transplant. You are so stupid you cannot even figure it out. Mixed multitude will screw you up every time, every place, everywhere. "We remember the fish, which we did in Egypt, the cucumbers, the melons, and the leeks, and the onions, and the garlic." I will tell you what, the mixed multitude, when you eat what you eat, you get a great and grand case of gas. That is all they bring to the party. Look at their attitude toward the Book: "But now our soul is dried away, and there is nothing at all beside this manna before our eyes." All you have is the Bible. What a terrible thing to go through life with. That is the mixed multitude. They did not stand for it. They did not like it. They always were a problem for the nation of Israel. I have told you many, many times, when you get Exodus, you exodus your old friends. I do not care what church you are in. I do not care where it is at. You are going to have mixed multitude people in every church on this planet. My advice to you is to mark them, find out who they are, and stay away from them.

5. The manna was gathered daily. Exodus 16:4

Then said the LORD unto Moses, Behold, I will rain bread from heaven for you; and the people shall go out and gather a certain rate every day, that I may prove them, whether they will walk in my law, or no. You need to spend time in the Book every day. I guarantee you, we feed our face three times a day, probably more than that for some of us. We do not miss our meal when we want to feed the flesh, do we? We like what we like. We do not like this restaurant, but we like this one. We like this type of food, not this. Nothing wrong with that. We make sure we do not miss any meals when it comes to this old flesh, but we can go weeks, days, months without ever eating the spiritual food that God provided for you. Then you wonder why you have problems.

6. The manna was gathered in the morning. Exodus 16:4

Then said the LORD unto Moses, Behold, I will rain bread from heaven for you; and

the people shall go out and gather a certain rate every day, that I may prove them, whether they will walk in my law, or no. The first thing they did when they got up was get into that Book, get that manna to get their daily strength for all they had to do. I do not know if you know it or not, but the most important meal you have in your life is breakfast. Breakfast is the most important meal of your day. The reason for that, on a biblical plane, is because if you know your Bible, you know that while men sleep, the Bible says that God creates, and you go back to Job 33, you find how God structures your night while you sleep for the next day. You do not eat during the night. You really should not eat a lot before you go to bed. I know we all do, but you should try not to. That time is so important in your Bible that God does some things with us while we sleep at night. It is a time that your body gets as close to dying. It is a picture of you going to bed; it is a picture of dying. The Bible says you sleep, you go to sleep over here and you wake up in the morning, a picture of the Second Coming, all that stuff. But the bottom line is this: you go for eight or nine hours and you do not eat. Then when you get up, you have been in a fast all night. Now your body is getting up and ready to go to work. So what you have to do is get some strength physically. What you do is you have breakfast, or in other words, you break the fast. You ought to do the same thing spiritually. I am not saying you have to read the whole Bible through in the morning before you go to work, but you ought to have some kind of spiritual indigestion of food inside of you that you take in in the morning because it is the most important meal not only physically, but it is the most important meal that you have spiritually to break that fast physically and spiritually.

7. The manna required labor to gather. It was supernatural from God. God brought it right to where they were. It laid all around the ground in the morning, but it did not fall in their mouth. They had to labor to get it. 2 Timothy 2:15 says: 2 Timothy 2:15

Study to shew thyself approved unto God, a workman that needeth not to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth. You have to work to get that Book. I did New Year's Eve. I laid that whole thing out. I spent three and a half, almost four hours going through it. I have the stuff on DVD for you. I have the charts printed out for you. I have everything you need, but I am not coming over and doing it for you. You have to labor to get it. That is a problem with 21st-century Christians. That is a problem. I see it all the time in Christians. There is a great story back there in 2 Kings chapter 4, about a poor lady who did not have anything. She was a widow lady. Her bills were due. She had all kinds of people wanting money from her. She had nothing. She meets up with Elisha, and Elisha sees her plight and her son, and he says, "I will tell you what. Listen to me. Go and get some buckets. Get as many buckets as you can." In fact, the verse says, "borrow not a few." In other words, if you do not have enough, borrow some. When she came back with all those buckets, he started pouring out of his bucket oil into these buckets, and as long as she put a bucket down, that bucket never ran out of oil. She wound up, it does not tell you, I do not think how many, she probably wound up with 200 gallons of oil. But the bottom line was this: if she would have brought 100,000 buckets, she would have got 100,000 buckets of oil. I am telling you, when it comes to God, there is no shut-off spigot. I am going to tell you what your problem is. You are not going to like it, but I am going to tell you what your problem is. You come to church on Sunday morning, and you get 100,000 gallons, and you bring a pint bucket. I wonder why you have

problems. She could have as much as she wanted, and that oil is a type of the Holy Spirit of God. You could have as much of God as you want, as you can believe Him for, as you are willing to bring in the buckets. If that had been me, there would not have been a bucket within 50 miles of that place. God will bring it to you. I will lay it out for you. You have to labor to get it. It is not going to just fall into your mouth. I feel bad about some of this sometimes because I think I have a tough time with the balance of giving you what I think is probably more than I should, because you just trample it and do not do anything with it. The Bible says, "Cast not your pearls before swine." Very frankly, when it comes to the Word of God, some of you are swine. I cast the pearls of a great Word of God. What do you do? You blow it off like it is nothing. It is going to be a rough year, is it not? But then I look at it on the other side. If only four or five of you, if two or three of you, shoot, if only one of you really gets it and does something, that is what my job is. My job is to put it out, not worry about who does what with anything. God will take care of that. In the process, sometimes I am pleasantly surprised. God's people do more with it than you expect them to do sometimes. But then some things also never change. I can give all the Bible you want. I can give you all the Bible you can stand. I can spend, some of you say, "I really like coming over to spend." I can sit down with you an hour every day for the next 45 years. But I cannot make it work for you. I can dispense it. I can give it to you as God gave it to me. I can break down things that took me a lot longer to figure out so you do not have to spend the time and make it work for you. But I cannot do it for you. You just cannot. You are going to learn when you start to help people, working in the people ministry. You are going to learn some things. I think it is going to be a good education for many of you. You are going to learn how that you can have all the answers because many times when I see a scenario or a problem, I know what the answer is. I know how easy it is to fix the problem. People get the idea, "Well, it is an easy way to fix it." I do not know. There is never really, when I say easy, easy compared to the way it is probably going to go. But you cannot undo something faster than you did it. It just takes some time. People are always looking for the fast track. You say, "Well, come to our church because you really get it." That may be true, and I want you to come to this church, but there have been people coming to this church since we started, and they have not grown one bit spiritually. So is it something wrong with me or the church, or is it you? When people leave, it is always us. "I am not going to that church anymore. I am mad at him. I am mad at this. I am mad at that." They wind up not going to any church. So the problem was not me or the church or the Bible. The problem is they did not really want to hear what they wanted to hear. So now they finally just used that as an excuse. People do it all the time. I told you last week, all my life I have had parents come up to me and say, "Well, my kid, I am having problems with him. I am having some good people and put some people around him," or, "My kids, they get around some good couples." I understand that concept, and I have done that many, many times, but I will tell you something: you have to have something to work with before it works. The fact that I could take anybody and put a hundred people around them, but if that person does not want to do what is right, it is wasting everybody's time. It is not going to work. I have never learned how to change your heart. God has to do that. I can feed it and give you what you need after it gets changed, but I do not have the ability or capacity, nor do I want it, to be able

to change your heart. That is what God has to do with you. If you do not have that, you do not have anything.

8. The manna was only good for today. Exodus 16:19-20 tells you that they were to gather it in the morning, but they were only to gather enough for that particular day. He tells them in Exodus 16:19, "Don't leave any of it till the morning." Some of them did not listen, just like God's people never listen, and they kept it till the morning, and the Bible says it bred worms and it stank. A great principle there is what you get out of the Word of God is just good for today. I know we have promises to get us through tomorrow, but in spite of that, the Bible says, "Boast not thyself of tomorrow." You are not promised tomorrow. When you get that Book in the morning, you get what is going to get you through today. A lot of God's people's problems are that they try to solve next week's problem with the grace that God gives them today. You do not have to worry about next week. If God will take care of you today, He will take care of you when next week comes. What happens is we get worried about next week, and we lose our focus on today, and that is a sign of immaturity. A mature child of God will recognize that you have something coming down the road or something big over here, but you do not worry about it. You do not stay awake at night thinking about it. You realize that the same God that got you through yesterday and the last big problem is the same God going to get you through the other one as long as you are where you need to be with God. That is a great concept: try to solve next week's problems with today's grace.
9. The manna was given to prove them. Exodus 16:4

Then said the LORD unto Moses, Behold, I will rain bread from heaven for you; and the people shall go out and gather a certain rate every day, that I may prove them, whether they will walk in my law, or no. This is really one of the multiple reasons why God gave us the Bible. I could list off the reasons why God gave you the Bible, but in the text here, it is one particular thing, and you will see it even though there are many, many facets to it. They were to gather a certain rate every day. He tells them that the getting of the Word of God and the gathering of the Word of God, and the reason why God gave us the Bible, is to prove them. God proves you more who you are by what you do with your Bible. Years ago, I was thinking about this today, years ago I had a guy come and preach for me. It was not here. He was a good preacher, by the way, and he did not pull it. It was all a hundred miles an hour, the hair on the fire with this guy. He was a good preacher. He was preaching on loving the Book and staying away from people that did not love the Book and how they will mess you up. He said, "Right now, look at that person you are sitting next to him, and look at their Bible. If they do not have as many or more notes than you have in your Bible, you get up and move." Nobody moved, thankfully. But that is pretty good advice because the Bible proves you. It shows you what you have. I have a sneaking suspicion, I am probably dead wrong on this, what if at the Judgment Seat of Christ, we talk about a lot, you get up there, and you are ready to stand there and give the Lord your spiel and everything. You are going to look at everything, and God just comes down there and says, and you are ready to go, He walks over and says, "Let me see your Bible." "On your way, bub." One time years ago, this is funny too, this is how stupid I was when I was younger, not much smarter than I am now. We were having a Bible study, and I had just got my first wide-margin Bible. God got me for my birthday. I still have it. I was so proud of it. I was not probably into this thing more than a

couple of months. Mel came to Bible study on Thursday night. I was always hanging out with Mel. Mel says, "Man, I forgot my Bible. It has all of those notes in it like mine does." He said, "I forgot my Bible." Here I am, little Bob Alexander. I said, "Here, Mel, you can use mine if you want." He took it. He took it and went. It will not work. Most people would have got brokenhearted or got downtrodden or thinking that they, no, no, no, I did not get my feelings hurt at all. It registered with me. It was not going to help him any because I had no notes in my Bible. The Judgment Seat of Christ is going to be interesting.

10. The manna was gathered for the whole family. Exodus 16:16

This is the thing which the LORD hath commanded, Gather of it every man according to his eating, an omer for every man, according to the number of your persons; take ye every man for them which are in his tents. You do not just gather enough for yourself. You have to gather enough for your family. You have kids. You have to make sure they get fed. The greatest example anywhere in the Bible, and I do not have time to get into this morning, is Proverbs chapter 31. I go back and think about little Gavin up here last week when he did his little letter in school to God. Everybody is feeding him right. Feed that age and have that concept of God. I guess somebody else was telling me that he was laying out the eternal security to somebody. You see how smart they are when they are that age? That is what you have to do. My grandkids just drive me nuts. They get on their computers and they do. I cannot figure the thing out. I have to have four or five people to help me. They are zipping those things up and down. It is just not my world. They are smarter than you think they are. They were getting ready to go to Ohio, and they got a guinea pig now. Moka is his name. I had to babysit Moka while they were gone. Little Macy last week, just how smart they are. She said, "Now, Grandpa," she says, "are you going to take care of Moka?" I was playing with her. I said, "You know what I am going to do? I am going to have Moka for dinner one night on the grill." She says, "Oh, Grandpa, you cannot do that." I said, "Why not?" She says, "He has too many carbs in it." But you do not just gather enough for yourself. You have to gather enough for your family.

11. The manna was to be eaten and ingested. Exodus 16:31 says the manna that they gathered was to be eaten. It was not just to carry around under your arm or to put on your living room coffee table. It was not for show. It was food that God supernaturally had given for our strength through the wilderness of Sin. But before it could be used for strength, it had to be ingested in the body and taken in. I have another message I preach on Christian survival, how that the Bible is a complete balanced diet. The Bible is like the apples. The Bible is like the milk. The Bible is like the meat. The Bible is like the honey. The Bible is like the water. The Bible is like the vegetables. The Bible is like the bread. I have always wondered at Wonder Bread if somebody someplace that designed that was not a Christian. Because their logo is, "It will build strong bodies 12 ways." The real Wonder Bread is not the loaf you get there. The real Wonder Bread is the bread from heaven. It does build strong bodies 12 ways because there are 12 tribes of Israel, and salvation is of the Jew. But you have to eat it.

12. The manna was preserved for future generations. Exodus 16:33-34. I do not know if you know it or not, but that Ark of the Covenant had three things inside it. It had the manna, which at the end of this chapter, they put in there and kept it up for a future generation. It has the Old Testament law that represents the nation of Israel. Then there is one other item that is

in there, and that is Aaron's rod that budded. Aaron's rod is a picture of the church. So in that Ark of the Covenant, which is a type of Christ, you have three things that are eternal: you have the manna, the Word of God, Israel, and you have the church. Those three things were put into that Ark and preserved. Do not you tell me the Word of God is not preserved by God. Do not you tell me that the Bible I have in my hand is not without error. That Bible I have was preserved by God. It was inspired by God and preserved by God. It was down through the line for me. It is the Book. I know how it is preserved of God because it was written for another reason: to preserve you. I know how it is preserved of God to me perfectly because not only was it written to preserve you, but it preserved your marriage and your family. I know how it is not only preserved perfectly for me, but it was preserved for me to preserve me, but for your kids to preserve them. That Book is eternal.

13. The accessibility of the manna demanded a decision. Exodus 16:12, 14. The manna, when it did come supernaturally, it came while they slept. The Bible says it rained down, I guess like snow, and covered the ground, the camp all around them. When I look at that, I always thought, the fact that it was supernaturally made of God, and the fact that it was brought to them by God right to where they were, and the fact that while they slept it all came down around them, the accessibility of the Word of God, just like you have it in your lap today, brought upon a decision. Because the Word of God is to prove us. In the morning when they got up and they pulled back that tent flap, they looked out there, and the manna, the Word of God, was all around them. They had two choices: they could either pick it up, labor, and get what God had for them, or tramp it under their feet and go the way they want to go. That is exactly what we do with the Word of God. The fact that God has given you the Book, provided you that supernatural food, given you everything that He has given you, the accessibility of the Word of God, puts you and me between a rock and a hard place. Tomorrow morning when you get up, you will do one or two things: you will take the manna God has provided for you, or you will walk through your day and tramp it under your feet. It is as simple as that.

14. The manna was gathered according to desire. This is where our principle that Paul is coming through and he is quoting, and I saved it for last, but I want to set the whole theme of this thing so you could get it. In 2 Corinthians 8:15, now found in Exodus 16:16-17, here is what he says, and this is what Paul is quoting: Exodus 16:16

This is the thing which the LORD hath commanded, Gather of it every man according to his eating, an omer for every man, according to the number of your persons; take ye every man for them which are in his tents. Exodus 16:17

And the children of Israel did so, and gathered, some more, some less. The great truth behind the principle that Paul is teaching the church at the core is their attitude of giving of themselves first. It is real simple. It makes the point for everything that he said. When it comes to the things of God, which we have talked about, when it comes to you learning the Bible, which we have talked much about, when it comes to doing the ministry, which we talk about all the time, when it comes to having the ability to work with people and help them through their issues, when it comes to building a relationship with God that works for you and everything you do in life, God puts no limitations on it. You can have as much as you want. Not your circumstances, not your marriage, not your husband, not your wife, not this,

not your job, it is your choice. Some gathered more, some less. It simply comes down to your decision based on your free will of choosing and an attitude of heart in giving of yourself based on His giving to you, based on you knowing the grace that God has given us, what He gave up for you and for me, and in the truth He provides for you in your journey through our own wilderness. Coming to that place in our lives where we give complete control of our will over to God's will.

## VII. Conclusion: The Choice to Receive God's Abundance

*Exodus 16:18*

*And when they did mete it with an omer, he that gathered much had nothing over, and he that gathered little had no lack; they gathered every man according to his eating.*

The great principle is every man had exactly what he needed to survive. God has for you everything you need to make you everything He wants you to be. I hear all the time people talking about, "Well, you understand this," or "You stand out." People are always blaming their problems on somebody else. That is the standard operating procedure that you have in everything that you do. When you get caught in something or your kid gets caught in something, it is, "Well, look what everybody else is doing." "So and so is doing this." Who cares if the whole world is doing whatever? We are to do what the Bible says is right. It is our choice. The way we get around that is by blaming it on our circumstances, blaming it on our situations. "You do not know my situation." Oh, I know it better than you do. I do know it. And I know this: "He that gathered much had nothing over, and he that gathered little had no lack." Every man according to what he needed with his family. Some just took for two, some took for four, some took for eight. But whatever the situation was, they got exactly what they needed to survive through their wilderness journey.

The greatest concept of ministry is our giving. Giving ourselves first through giving to others. We, as God's people, recognizing that God has given us, and then out of the abundance God has given us, to help other Christians. You can have as much of God as you want. You can have as much of that Bible as you want. It is letting God use you by a voluntary basis, based on a sincerity of your love for God, on your free will. It is letting God use you to be a blessing to others. Some of it is just so simple.

Thursday, I closed with this. Thursday I went out to get some lunch, and I went to Panera, and I was at the Crossload Mall out there. I was sitting in there eating, and in fact, Joe called me on the phone; I was talking to Joe for a few minutes. I was sitting there eating, the place was crazy busy, I was not really paying much attention. I felt somebody on my shoulder, and I looked up, and here was a lady that I had not seen for probably 30 years. I do not remember her name. She did not care that I did not know her name. It was not like, sometimes you are in those situations, you are stumbling, they kind of wait for you to see if you know their name. She did not do that. She walked over and she looked at me and she says, "Bob," she says, "I saw you come in, and I saw you eat." She was over with one of her lady friends over there. I said, "You know what, Bob?" She put her hand on my shoulder. She leaned down and she says, "25 years ago, you told me the

Gospel, and I accepted Christ as my own personal Savior." She said, "This is nothing compared to what you gave me, but I went over and bought you a chocolate chip cookie, and I want you to have it today. Thank you for what you did for me." That chocolate chip cookie probably cost her what, a buck and a half? In fact, I think they have a deal if you get one for a buck if you get your food there. It was worth a million dollars to me. I looked at it, did not want to eat it. In fact, when I did finally eat it, I broke it in six pieces so I could enjoy it six times thinking about it.

My point is this: sometimes it does not take much to be a blessing to somebody. Sometimes it really does not take much to mean something to somebody. But the job of you and me is to let God use us to be blessings to other people. A lot of people have marital issues, they have personal problems, they have problems with their children, they have this, some kids have situations. Our job is to be a blessing to those people, to help them. Sometimes you have to deal with it in a hard way, but that is still what we are supposed to do.

So the third and great principle, after everything that he said, comes back to that Book in your lap, on one of the greatest chapters in the Bible, on one of the greatest books in the Bible, to show you every aspect of your Christian life. It simply goes down to this: leave here today knowing without any doubt in your mind, you can have as much of God as you want. You can have as much of that Book as you want. You can know as much about it as you are willing to invest your life and let God show it to you because that Book was given at the end of the day to prove us, prove who does, prove who does not. It is that simple.

Next week when we come here, I think you are going to really enjoy some of the things that we are going to do this next year. It is going to be a great Sunday. So come praying, and we will have your DVDs back there. If you pick up what people want to pick them up, let us have a word of prayer. I will give you about five minutes, and then we will call to restart people up, and we will get everything organized and ready to go. Let us pray.

Father, help us to take this last great principle that he lays out in this passage as he is dealing with this church. Lord, help us to see it today. These are good people that many of them want to do what You want them to do with their life, and they want to give You everything back that You have given them. Lord, help us today. Help us to glean. Help us to grow. Thank You for those that have showed up today, our old friends that made it back today. Lord, we love them very much, and we know that they pray for us as we pray for them. Lord, we just pray that someday, Lord, that we will all be together in heaven and never have to say goodbye again, and we can just fellowship and be joyful around You and Your throne and all that we do. But help us today to be found faithful in what we do. In Jesus' name, for His sake, we ask it. Amen.