

Proverbs 3:1-4

October 29, 2023

If you have your Bibles today, I want to invite you to turn back to the book of Proverbs. Last week, we started Proverbs chapter 3, and as I told you last week, it is probably one of the most practical messages that you are ever going to get out of the book of Proverbs on the aspect of how to have the victory in your life as a Christian. The victorious Christian life is something that eludes so many of God's people today. They just exist. God's people ought to be the happiest, most joyful people on the planet, and yet, in most cases, they are the most miserable and struggle with the most things in life.

The Bible says in 1 John 2:13 that it talks about overcoming the devil. In the Bible, overcoming simply means that when you get saved, you now have the ability to overcome the things in this world. That is what we were talking about last week. I actually showed you the process, just a very simple way. We make things so much harder than they really are, and we do that as human beings. We take something like God's simple plan of salvation and we make it the most complicated thing in the world. When God wrote the Bible, He gave it in sixth-grade English that anybody could understand it, yet we take that blessed book and make it so complicated that nobody can ever understand it. We do the same thing with the Christian life. The actual process of getting through the issues in your life that we all have—there is nobody here today, certainly myself included, that does not go through the struggles of life and all the things that you have to deal with. The overcoming in the Bible is the ability to get past those things and live the victorious Christian life.

You remember I showed you a couple of very important things that always need to be kept in your mind about the problems that we have. I started to show you the process of how a man or a woman turns around their life. We know this as repentance in the Bible. Repentance always requires that if you turn from something, then you have to turn to something. Of course, that is very important when you start to turn your life around.

The first thing I talked about, just as a brief, so you can put today's message in context with last week, is that when a man or a woman starts to take responsibility for the issues in our life caused by the actions that we have done. We have caused these issues by our own bad choices. It is unfortunate that we go through long in our life before we learn the great truth that life is about choices. Many times, when we make so many choices, it gets really complicated.

Then I showed you how that once a person tries to move that direction, they must do the work. God is the one who works. God supplies the tools, but you have to do the work. I spoke down at the Turnaround here last month, and I talked to them about life-changing things in my own life that just tried to relate that their life is no different than mine. I told them, "Here, God has provided a turnaround program for you. You have people here that are not doing this job because they are getting rich. They are doing this job because they want to see you succeed in life and want to try to help you through the mistakes that you have and you have caused in those areas." But I said, "At the end of the day, you are only going to get out of this program what you are going to be willing to put into it."

That is true of church. It is true of the Bible. It is true of everything in Christianity. Everybody wants the victorious Christian life, but nobody is willing to make the investment. I will tell you this, this is such a true statement: the longer I am in the ministry, the longer I look at things and have a chance to compare things, I will tell you, every problem that people have in churches, or every problem pastors have in churches, and the people that cause problems in churches, you watch every time. It is always people who make no investment in the church. They are always on that peripheral crowd out there, and they do not do anything. They are not involved in anything, and yet they are the most critical. The reason for that is because when you make an investment in something, you make it because you want to see it succeed, and you learn by your investment that we do not make things succeed by tearing them down. You make things succeed by solving problems and making things work the way that they should, by making the investment.

I. The Four Essentials and God's Seven Responses

The chapter showed us the four basic essentials that we have to start with, and we studied them last week. He said, "My son, forget not my law." Then the second one was, "In your heart keep his commandments." Then the third and the fourth one is what we are going to focus on today when he said, "Let not mercy," and then he said, "Let not truth, forsake thee." Then we saw that when we do these four things, when we do it first, when we step out toward God, when we pick up this thing and say, "Lord, I am going to do the work," then God responds to that with seven things that He provides for you. That is an incredible thing about God.

I showed you last week, and if you did not get anything out of last week's message, I would hope that you would get that one concept: that God always gives—when we start to do what is right, God always gives back to us more than He requires of us. He does that to encourage us. He does that because He knows the road is hard. He knows that because we have made bad—I mean, the Bible says that we have a high priest that can be touched with our infirmities. He knows what we have gone through and what we are struggling with. So when He sees His child step out—and you do the same thing as parents—you see your child do something that is right. You see him tell the truth when it was easy to tell a lie. You see him do something that is a good act or a good work or something like that. You want to encourage him in that. You want to take that and develop that. You want that to be something that they learn from, and you encourage them. Well, God does the same thing, and He does that by always giving us more back than He requires of us to give Him.

We talked about it last week:

1. Length of days. That is the joy of life, a long life. That is the fulfillment of your life.
2. Favor in the sight of man, how people will seek you out because they actually see God in your life.
3. A good understanding in the sight of man, understanding human nature, being able to see why people have the issues that they have in life.
4. Favor in the sight of God, God's hand in your life, that you have the blessings of God in your life.

5. A good understanding in the sight of God, knowing God and knowing about God. Know when God is in a circumstance or when God is not in a circumstance.
6. Peace in your life.

I showed you the difference between the peace of God and the peace with God. All of those things we talked about last week.

II. The Compounding Effect

The last thing I talked about last week, which I think is where we are going to pick it up today, is the two compounding effects in people's lives. You have heard me talk about it all the time, how that when somebody does not do what is right and they start making bad choices, and those bad choices lead to other bad choices, it would be one thing if all those choices were separate unto themselves, but they are not. They all connect to each other, and they all compound on each other.

For instance, what starts out smoking cigarettes when you are 14 or 15 winds up to doing crack cocaine when you are 20 and 30. It compounds. What starts out with just a little bit of drinking here and there with a guy, it winds up you being an alcoholic. It compounds. One lie over here has to compound to another lie over here. It is the way it builds, and it is the way it compounds. That is why so many people have so many struggles in their life that they simply cannot get past the things that they have to struggle with in their life. It is compounded now; it is so great.

But there is another side to that compounding effect, and that is the good side. That is when God takes the things that you do for Him and He compounds the good things in your life, just like the world compounds the bad things in your life. You start making good choices. You start making the right choices. You start getting into church, getting into the Bible, let somebody work with you, get into Bible study on Thursday night, get the help that you need. Start making those right choices, and you will see that same compounding effect, only for a good thing in your life. It will accelerate your spiritual growth.

I have told you many, many times that the people in this church who are maybe farther along than some of the other people in the church who have been here relatively at the same time, or the ones who come over and have questions and want to learn this, they take every class they can, they get everything that they can get their hands on, and they start to digest it. The reason why some people get farther along and God uses them when compared to somebody else that maybe came in at the same time but they are still where they were when they came in is that compounding effect. God will take those things, and He makes you better, stronger in everything that you do.

Now let us pick it up here in chapter 3, and let us read our text today as it was last week, Proverbs 3:1-4. Then we will start to come down through this.

Proverbs 3:1-4

1 My son, forget not my law; but let thine heart keep my commandments:

2 For length of days, and long life, and peace, shall they add to thee.

3 Let not mercy and truth forsake thee: bind them about thy neck; write them upon the table of thine heart:

4 So shalt thou find favour and good understanding in the sight of God and man.

Now Father, we thank You and praise You for the Lord Jesus. We ask You today to take our hearts and our lives and open them up, Lord, and just pour in what we need to hear and what we need to see and understand. Help some of these people, Lord, realize that they are only going to get out of Christianity what they put into it, and they have to put into it the way that God designed it to operate. Let this message be the second part, Lord, of understanding how to get the victory in our lives, and we will thank You now and praise in Jesus' name for the sake we ask it. Amen.

III. The Neck and Heart: Will and Attitude

Today, we are going to focus on verse 3 in light of what we talked about last week. We know the four things that we ought to do first. We know now that they have to do with the inside of man, the inner man, your spirit, and your new nature. Now verse 3 gives us a closer look at how exactly you do that, and I look at this will be the second part of that practical message last week. This will be another practical part of it that will finish out this whole verse.

Now look at verse 3. It says, "Let not mercy and truth forsake thee: bind them about thy neck; write them upon the table of thine heart." The reason you take the things that he is talking about here, truth and mercy, and you hang them around your neck and your heart. The Bible is always specific in what it talks about. That is not just some kind of "I love you with all my heart." It is more specific than that. The neck and the heart are very practical teaching aspects in your life and my life. For a Christian, they are the two areas that we need to keep close to God. It is our neck and our heart.

The neck will always represent our will with God. So he is talking about that you want to take these things that God has given you and you want to bind them around your neck like a necklace, like something that you wear. You are going to find throughout the Bible, like Deuteronomy 31:27, this was Israel's problem. Over and over again, they are told that they were a stiff-necked people. A stiff-necked people is someone that, as you carry it all through the Bible, it has to do with our will. It is the fact that we want to exercise our will over God's will. We want what we want, not necessarily what God wants. The Bible talks about a proud look. Along with a stiff neck comes stubbornness, a person who is unyielding to God.

You find great examples of it in the Bible. Again, this is why I love the Bible and I love to study the Bible. Back in Exodus 13:13 and Exodus 34:20, it talks about the firstlings of an ass. In the Bible, an ass is a picture of an unashamed man. It is a thing where he tells you back there in those two passages that when the firstlings of that ass comes from its mother, it needs to be redeemed with a lamb. Why does he do those things back in the Old Testament? It certainly did nothing for the ass. He is just as much an ass before than he was afterwards. It does not really

change the process of what he is, but it is a picture of something. That ass represents an unashamed man. That ass represents the fact that the firstlings of it are to be redeemed by a lamb. It is a picture of you and me as an unashamed person having to be redeemed by a lamb. That is the picture of it back there, and that is what it is an example of. When a person does not do that, you know what they are supposed to do with that ass? Break its neck. The neck is always a picture of your will. It always is.

There are two yolks in the Bible. A yoke is what you wear around your neck. An ox would wear it around its neck and pull the plow. In the Bible, there are two types of yolks. One is the bondage of this world, as you wear around your neck, that puts you in bondage and enslaves you. The other one is the yoke that Jesus talked about in the Gospels when He says, "Take My yoke upon you," because it is easy. That is the ministry. That is bearing the cause of Christ around, but it is around your neck because your neck will always be connected to your will. When a person does not want to yield to God, they get stiff-necked, and they get proud, and they get arrogant, and they get stubborn. That is what it is dealing with. You see it all the way back in a time in our country when they still believed the Bible and the Word of God was still the Word of God, and you had a guy that would not obey the law, a guy that went against the law, a guy that was stubborn in his will over the laws of society. When he violated a certain law that required capital punishment, how did they kill him back then? They hung him. They broke his neck. It is a picture of back then. They understood these things. Whether they saw the connection to the Bible or not, it shows you how that we as a nation, when the Word of God is profound in it and declared in it, that we do things by it without even necessarily understanding it.

The second thing he says here is a heart. The heart will always represent our attitude toward God. We have all seen people who are hard-hearted, cold-hearted, indifferent heart. At any time a person starts down those five steps that we talked about a couple weeks ago with the evil man that leads to his destruction, it will be the fact that he put his will over God's will and got the wrong attitude of heart toward God. Those two, the attitude of those two, will always go together, the will and the attitude of heart, wherever you find them. They will always go together. You remember, my will is all about me. God's will is all about Him. When I yield my will to God, then I do what God wants me to do. God's will is never about anything that you do. God's will is about who you really are and submitting yourself and putting these spiritual things in your life. But the two always go together wherever you find them.

In 2 Chronicles 36:13, the nation of Israel goes into the captivity, the southern tribes. Zedekiah is the king. It is a familiar story. Babylon had come down, and they let Zedekiah be a puppet king, but he really did not have any power. Then right before the captivity, Zedekiah tries to lead a revolt against Nebuchadnezzar. It is severely crushed. One of the reasons why it got crushed is because Zedekiah, even though he wanted to throw off Babylon, he did not want anything to do with God. One of the greatest verses that shows the two of them together is found in 2 Chronicles 36:13, where it says Zedekiah, "he stiffened his neck and he hardened his heart." The two are always used together wherever you go in the Bible. Of course, Zedekiah's end is the famous study of them coming down and taking all of his sons and daughters and killing them and putting his eyes out and then putting him in chains and carrying him off to Babylon. I have seen

that story, read that story a thousand times, and I never fail to see the practical application. That is exactly what happens with so many of God's people. They get to the place where Zedekiah got so far out in left field, he hardened his heart. It was his will against, over God's will. God sent down the man who was going to chastise him, but he would not; he tried to revolt against him in his own power and stayed against God. You know what happened to him? He wound up losing his family, and he wound up losing his eyes. What does that mean? It means he could not see spiritual truth anymore, got sucked up and carried right into Babylon. It is an incredible story.

IV. Gentile Nature and Outward Adornment

Verse 3 says, "hanging truth and mercy around your neck and over your heart." As human beings, particularly as Gentiles, we all do some of the same habits and form the same thing. I love to watch people. When you know the Bible and you have a good handle on the Word of God, you really understand why people do the things that they do. I do not ever say a lot because I do it too. We are all guilty of it, but I love it because Romans 1, 2, and 3, and we talked about this when we studied Romans. Romans 1, 2, and 3, I think, are the great three defining chapters of the Gentiles and the Jews. I have told you before that Romans 1 completely defines you and I as Gentiles. Why we do the things we do, why we do them the way we do them, it is incredible. Romans 2 shows us why the nation of Israel does what they need to do. You are going to find that this is the fundamental reason why God told the nation of Israel, "Stay away from the Gentiles." The nation of Israel did nothing that the Gentiles did, and every time they got messed up with the Gentiles, they always got into trouble.

You know why? Because Romans 1 tells you what you and I are like as Gentiles. Romans 1:23 says that Gentiles have changed the glory of an uncorruptible God into the image made like corruptible man and to birds and to evil beasts and to creeping things. All of those things, four-footed beasts and all of those things, that is what Gentiles do. Gentiles have an affinity for taking things that are always associated with animals. That is why back in the Old Testament they were worshipping the animals instead of God. You go back into the Egyptians, you go back into the Hindus, they are all worshipping animals in some form. That is what Gentiles do. We see it today; we just do not make the same thing. If you went over to Israel and looked at their sports teams, I do not know what they call their sports team, but I guarantee you it would not be connected with animals. They probably call them the Uzis and the Galils, I do not know. But you come to America, Gentiles, it is the Bears, it is the Dolphins, it is the Eagles, it is the Seahawks, it is the Jayhawks, it is the Mules, it is the Downing Pitts. Some of these in Canada are the Gorillas. Where is that at? Pitt Meadows, Canada, they are the Gorillas. I bet there are some big ball players down there anyway. You have the Tigers, you have the Panthers. That is what Gentiles do. That is the pattern that we set down. We all do it. You see it in everything.

One of the things that we love to do, we all do it, is we wear clothes, jewelry, shoes, hats that have a message on it. We all do it. You never see that in the nation of Israel in any way, shape, or form in the Old Testament. I mean, they may do it now because they are in apostasy, but not back then. They got that from Gentiles. We are Gentiles. Now I am not preaching against it today. I am really not. I want you to, I have a point I want to make here in a minute, but I want you to, this is

just the way it is. I am stating a fact. I mean, you see it on T-shirts, the logos, the schools, the sports teams, guys' favorite beer, Budweiser, Miller Lite, Heineken. You see slogans about God. You see slogans against God. I was at the gym, you will love this one. I was at the gym the other day, and a certain individual had a T-shirt on that said, "Jesus is a bodybuilder." Now this kid is a bodybuilder. He had a T-shirt on, and I said, "Jesus is a bodybuilder." I did not say anything, but I am sitting there building my body very slowly. I am sitting there, and I am thinking to myself, "Now that is it right there. That is exactly what Gentiles do." He wants to be a bodybuilder, spend eight hours a day in a gym, look at himself in a mirror, watching his muscles bulge, so to justify it, Jesus has to be a bodybuilder. I said to myself, "Jesus was never a bodybuilder. Jesus is a character builder." But you could not do that if you put Jesus as the character builder. But that is what we do.

I think it was Bubba one time. Remember about me? I think it was you, four or five years ago. I found, Bubba, I am a pitcher on a softball team. Great demand at draft time. Anyway, I found the neatest, remember the hat I found, Bubba? The neatest pitcher hat I ever found. It was blue and white, and it had mesh across the back to keep your head cool when you are really out there in the field tearing it up. It had a slogan on the front. It says, "Number One Pitcher." Well, I am thinking that is me. So I bought that hat for two seasons, and Bubba pulled me aside. I think it was Bubba pulled me aside one day, and he said, "That is a nice hat." And I said, "Yeah, Number One Pitcher." I did not see the motif behind it, but it was "Number One Pitcher of Beer." I could not wear that hat anymore.

You see it on sweatshirts. My favorite sweatshirt I saw one time is that a guy and a gal, I guess they were husband and wife, and they both had black sweatshirts on, and she, he was over here, she was walking over here, and it had a slogan with a sign or an arrow pointed toward him, and it says, "I am with stupid." I thought that was a good one. We get messages out, things like that. We like it. You see it on hoodies, all the slogans. You see it in designer jeans. Designer jeans are designed because when you wear designer jeans, it puts out a message. You see it all the time. You will see Wrangler jeans, or I do not remember what they are. Wranglers, or what do they do? You watch them on TV, and what do you see there? You see Dale Earnhardt Jr. and Brett Favre, and they are wearing relaxed jeans, and they are throwing the ball, and all that thing. You know what you do? You go out and buy yourself some Wrangler jeans. You walk, you know why you do that? Because you want to be like, who does not want to be like Brett Favre or Dale Earnhardt Jr.? That is what you do. Calvin Klein. Who does not want to be like Calvin Klein? When his style comes in, it is Calvin Klein. You get those. When it is Gucci, you get those. I have never seen you guys wearing Gucci jeans. I want to talk to you. But that is what we do. It expresses who we are. You go in there, and now you can get boot cut. You can get straight. I do not think guys wear those. You can get straight. You can get relaxed fit. Sir, ma'am, you will have to put those back.

You see it in the cars we buy. None of you guys go deer hunting in a Volkswagen van with love and peace signs all over it. You get a man truck. It is a Jeep thing. Four-wheel drive. It says something about us. We want to associate with it. That is what Gentiles do. That is what they have always done. You see it in jackets. KU, MU, Nebraska, Kansas City Chiefs, the Royals,

race car drivers, Jimmy, like I said, Jimmie Johnson, all those guys. I was at the veteran thing a couple of weeks ago. You see it on hats. Everybody there, I had an Army one, Air Force, Army, Marine Corps, Navy. People like to associate. So they buy things because that is what Gentiles do. We express ourselves. You see it in shoes. You can buy Nikes. You can buy New Balance. You can buy Air Jordan. Some of you guys buy Air Jordan because you know white men can't jump. So you buy them. Now you think you can jump like Michael Jordan. It is incredible.

I had a guy one time that was upset with us at a church a couple of years, four or five years ago. Because we had our kids prayed up in a Halloween costume that he thought Halloween was of the devil and all those things. He says, "Well, you are teaching your kids to worship the devil and bringing all that stuff in. It is all false gods, and it is all not true. You are allowing your kids to do that." I looked down, and he had a pair of Nikes on, with the thing on it. I said, "I like your shoes." He says, "Yeah." He said, "Thank you." "What about the Halloween?" I said, "What about your shoes?" I said, "What do you mean?" I said, "They are Nikes, aren't they?" "Yeah." I said, "You know Nike was the God of victory in Greece?" I mean, how dare you criticize me for Halloween, but you will wear a pair. You see, there is the God of victory on your feet. I said, "What day is it?" He says, "It is Thursday." I said, "That is a, I said, you know every day of the week was named after a Roman God. You know, tomorrow is Friday, that is Frigg, that is the fish God. That is why Catholics eat fish on it. Saturday is Saturn, named after Saturn. Sunday is the Sunday for the sun God." I said, "When you throw all those out, then you come and talk to me about Halloween. And then we will get into Christmas and Thanksgiving." You know why they do not sell, you know what? We are the only ones in America to celebrate Thanksgiving with a bird. You know why? Because he says Gentiles take the glory of God and make it into a creeping thing, a bird. Then we make it into a man, Santa Claus. That is what Gentiles do. That did not start with the Jews. I am not preaching against it. Ho, ho, ho, Merry Christmas. Size 34 waist, 15 and a half shirt. I will bring 17 and a half shirt. Bring me a gift. I am all for it. I like North Face stuff. I like Columbia. You work for Eddie Bauer. You love Eddie Bauer stuff. You know why I like North Face? Because you walk in there, and there is this guy dressed up as an expedition on top of a mountain. I want to be that guy. So I buy me a North Face jacket. I walk around, people think, "He is a mountain climber." North Face. We all do it. Do not be laughing at me. We all do it. Sports teams, you have the Chiefs, you have the Royals, you have the Wizards, you have the MUs, you have the KUs, everybody has it. Now these companies make billions and billions of dollars every year because they put somebody out there that is famous, we want to be like them. Notice I did not say you. We want to be like them. So we go buy it, and then we wear it around, and then people see it, and they say, "I want to be like you," because you want to be like him, and you want to be like him, and everybody buys it. That is what makes the economy go.

Preachers do the same thing. You have the Roman Catholics that the priest, he wears a special suit of clothes with a white collar, and we criticize them all the time, but Baptists do the same thing. I know Baptist churches today that if you do not wear a suit and tie on Sunday morning, and he would never think of getting in a pulpit and preaching without a suit and tie on. That is his badge of his godliness. I knew a pastor one time, he is a good friend of mine, I love him to death, but we laughed about it. He was so messed up on the fact that he would, I think he sleeps in a three-piece suit. I do know this, and I asked him because I heard the rumor, and I was with him

one time in a Bible conference, and we were driving back and forth together, and we were just talking, and I said, "I said, brother, I have to ask you something. I said, tell me the truth. We are buddies. I said, I do not care. I just have to know. I said, somebody told me that you were on a ski trip out in Colorado with a bunch of pastors, and under your ski suit you wore a three-piece suit." I said, "Tell me that it is true." Dead silence. It is always a bad sign when you ask somebody a question in the dead silence. After about 10 seconds, he looked at me and says, "Bob, I am as boring as puke." He said, "Yeah, it is true." These guys associate it, but that is what we do. They associate with wearing a suit that that is your badge of God. Hey, you are not any holier than what is on the inside of you today. I mean, you can put a tuxedo on a pig, and it is still a pig, but that is where we come from today. We are Gentiles. I love it. I mean, that is just the way we are. It is just the way it is. I mean, I am cool about it. You are cool about it. Hey, be cool. I am cool. You be cool about it. I am not preaching on anything.

Now I tell you something else, go to the next step. You want to see that. This is why people get tattooed. Now I am not preaching on tattoos. I am not. It is none of my business. I do not care. But I want you to know that that started with the Gentiles with the nation of Israel, Leviticus 19. There were four things that you were told to do to be separated from the world. They had to be circumcised outwardly. That is a picture of our inward circumcision. Then it was their hair had to be cut a certain way. Their beard had to be cut a certain way. They had to have a certain diet. That set them apart from the rest of the world. It is a picture of you and me. He tells them in Leviticus 19 that they are going to make no cuttings on their body or no marks on their bodies like the Gentiles were doing. It comes from the Gentiles. Now I do not care if you have one. My father had two of the greatest tattoos on his arms when he was on the arm as you ever saw. I am not preaching against it. I want you to understand my point here. But we do that, and we do that because we want to get a message out. I know it is a personal preference. It is none of my business. I mean, you watch some guy play football, and he wears his hair in those, what are they called? Dreadlocks. I have my hair in dreadlocks this morning. They are just so small you cannot see them. So what does everybody do? You walk down to the plaza. Everybody is there. They are dreadlocks. I mean, they are hanging down. It looks like that Predator guy in the movie Predator, he had them. We do things that way because we want to associate with something. We are all guilty of it in one way or the other. I mean, we have all seen ball players do this or wear this or do that. It is cool. So we do it. When I was in the army, our whole company wanted to get a specific tattoo on our arms. So we would all be cool. We never did because none of them were ever sober enough to ever get it done. But we wanted to understand it. I am not fighting it. But let me just digress here. I do not care if you get one. I just want to understand where it comes from. You are free to do whatever you want. But I give you a little fatherly advice this morning. They are permanent. You wear an "I love Jesus" shirt, and you grow up, you can take the shirt off pretty quick. But you are stuck with a tattoo. I mean, if you are going to do it, I would say think it through.

I remember we were down in Ohio, we went down to Sugarcreek, which is Amish country, and there are little antique places down there. We always eat breakfast at this Amish place. Amish are very straight-laced people. If you are a Mennonite or you are Amish, most of them ride buggies. There is a group of them who are allowed to have cars. I stayed with a family when I preached in

Pennsylvania years ago, which is big of that country. I was running every morning, and I got to see them and talk with them, nice people, a little inconsistent, but they are nice people. I was talking to a guy one time, and he, I said, I thought you guys were allowed to have cars. And he says, "Well, there is a certain sect that can, but we have to take it into the pastor, and he has to de-world it. Got to take all the chrome off of it." He told me all the stuff they had to do so it did not look like the world. I am thinking to myself, "This is the stupidest thing. You take all the chrome off so it does not look like the world because you do not want to be worldly. It has an \$8,000 computer system on the inside running a car." They have no phones in their house. I say, "You have no phones in your house." I looked up, and I saw phone lines going into the barn. Some cows are making some long-distance phone calls. I want to tell you, you see, that is how you get around it. "I cannot have a phone in the house, but it does not say I cannot have one in the barn." That is how we do it. I love it. I do it. You do it. Be cool. I am cool. We are all cool. That is where it works.

We were down there to eat, and this waitress was working around there, and she was a lady probably in her 40s, a nice lady, good waitress. I am checking, eating there, and she walks by, and she had a big bandage on her leg right about here. I am thinking she is hurt, and I was going to ask her what happened to her leg. You know, just being, you know, call you back, put her on the prayer list. I do not know. But then I looked down, and she had a tattoo on her leg. The Mennonites would not let her work there with her tattoo showing. So she had to go to work every day putting a big Ace patch on her leg so nobody would see the tattoo. That is stupid. Dumbest thing in the world. You have it. Wear it. But you have to be thinking through. I mean, before you go out, maybe you ought to get the ones you put on with water. Most of them are okay. I know some of you get the little things. I think some of them are cool. I will be honest with you. My wife will not let me get one. But if I could, I have seen some of the ones I like. Those barbed wire things around your arm. I think that is real cool. My problem is every time I scratch my head, I break the wire. I am for it. But I would say be a little careful if you are 19 years old and you get a big heart and it says, "My heart belonged to Jane," because 20 years later you may wind up marrying Janet. Then what do you do? Leave enough room so you can put one, two, three, four, and five and scratch the top ones out. I guess. I do not know. Only date people that the names can be changed from what it was to what the next one will be. Make an A and do an I or whatever you have to do. I mean, I do not want to tell you, but that is what Gentiles do. We just do it. "I love Mom" is pretty safe. But you know, a guy gets married four or five times. What is he going to do? It can come back and bite you. Every time your wife wants to get mad at you, she is not going to look you in the eye. She is going to look you in the tattoo. Whoever Jane was way back when you are 19 is going to haunt you for the rest of your life. Think about it.

I would never have Bible verses put on my body. I never would. I mean, you are hung yourself at that point. I knew a guy one time. I cannot remember what it was now, but across his back, he had John 16 or Romans, whatever it was. I thought to myself, that is the stupidest thing in the world. This guy was the biggest drug addict, the biggest fornicator you ever saw on the planet. Wow. What a testimony that would be to the cause of Christ. I mean, if you wear a shirt, you can take it off if you mess your life up. But that is what we do. When the Bible says truth and mercy around your neck and over your heart, he is not talking about that. But we all do it. When you see

a Christian wants to portray it out, you know what he does? He hangs a crucifix around his neck. They will get the little fish pins that you will always see. Those little six stars, little six star of David, they will wear those. They walk around and say, "I am a Christian." I get it. I am not fighting. I am not preaching on it. You see a little dove pin, type of the Holy Spirit of God, wear it on a chain around your neck, wear a little crucifix around your neck. It is human nature. I am not going to try to change it. I understand it. I do not care what you do. I understand it. I am not saying there is anything wrong with it. It is between you and what you want to do. But you need to be careful with some things and understand that it is not adorning your flesh with anything that makes you spiritual. That is human nature. I got it. But that is not what Proverbs 3:1-4 was talking about or Proverbs 1:8-9, where it talks about the instructions of the father and the law of the mother, that they are worn as an ornament and a chain around your neck, something different.

I was one time with a pastor and his wife, and she had a little star of David around her neck, telling her she wanted to be associated with Christianity. I did not really think anything about it. She is looking at me, and she is saying, we are in fact, we are in a train car riding some plane. Her husband was sitting here, and a couple of other people were sitting there. She said, we are having a conversation. It was her birthday a couple of days before. I said, "Well, I said, happy birthday." And I said, "Did you have a nice birthday?" She said, "Yes. My husband bought me this Christian star of David." I did not even think about it. I just do not think in terms like that. I said, "That is not the star of David. That is the star in Acts 7:43, the star of Remphan, the god of Israel, when they got out of fellowship." I thought she was going to have a heart attack. She did not talk to me the rest of the trip. She wanted to believe that there is a star of David in the Bible, and she wanted to believe that that six-point star is what represents in Israel. She is a spiritual Israelite. So she wears that. It never occurred to her that that was never in the Bible. It comes out of Israel in their captivity. Acts 7:43 talked about the star of their god, Remphan. That is the star. I do not care if she wears it.

You see those little fishes, and people have them on the back of their car. They want you to know they are a Christian. We think they put them on because they are going fishing. They want you to know, "I am a Christian." The story is back in the early days of Christianity, that when the Christians who were severely persecuted wanted to have a meeting, that is what they did. They put the sign of a fish along the wall, and everybody knew that that is where the Christians were going to meet that night. Oh, it is wonderful. That fish comes in in Constantine in 313-325 A.D. It is Dagon, the half-man, half-fish from 1 Samuel 5. I do not care. You want to wear it? Wear it. You want to wear the dove pin? Great. You want to wear a crucifix? That is a Roman form of capital punishment. The Bible says in Galatians that whoever is crucified on a tree is cursed. I just thank God for your sake, He was not electrocuted. It would be tough wearing an electric chair around your neck on a chain or shot with a rifle. I do not care. I know why people do it.

V. The True Adorning: Inside, Not Outside

This hanging of mercy and truth around your neck is different than what the Gentiles do. We Gentiles take Christianity. We want to make it into a symbol. We want to make it into something, and we want to wear it on the outside so everybody will see it. I am not fighting it. I am not

telling you throw your this away or throw that away. I am just telling you that real spiritual-led Holy Ghost relationship with God has nothing to do with what you wear on the outside.

Turn over to 1 Peter 3:1-4.

1 Peter 3:1-4

1 Likewise, ye wives, be in subjection to your own husbands; that, if any obey not the word, they also may without the word be won by the conversation of the wives;

2 While they behold your chaste conversation coupled with fear.

3 Whose adorning let it not be that outward adorning of plaiting the hair, and of wearing of gold, or of putting on of apparel;

4 But let it be the hidden man of the heart, in that which is not corruptible, even the ornament of a meek and quiet spirit, which is in the sight of God of great price.

It says, "Whose adorning, let it be," here it comes, "Let it not be that outward adorning of the plaiting of the hair, and the wearing of the gold or putting on of apparel," outside, you see. "But let it be the hidden man of the heart, in that which is not corruptible, even the ornament." There is what you wear, "of a meek and quiet spirit which in the sight of God is of great price." It is inside. The things that we wear, these ornaments, these truth and mercy we wear around our neck. These ornaments that are like chains around your neck over your heart. It is on the inside, not the outside. The mercy and truth of your heart is not a literal thing. It is a spiritual application to your will and your attitude of the principles of God in your life.

Now the Charismatics always take this verse. They tell women that there are some really radical people out there that believe that women should not wear makeup and that you do not fix your hair, you do not wear any makeup because they take this verse. They never see it. They do not see much out of the Bible, but they, and you see the women fall right into it, and I will tell you, and I do not mean this in a bad way. It is the truth. We are preaching the truth here. I am just telling you about it. If you have ever, I mean the real, the real, the real rank Charismatic people who follow this stuff, no Charismatic women, they are the least people in the world. I do not mean that nasty. It is the truth. They are not allowed to wear any makeup. They cannot fix, you all see them. They all look, they have their hair in big buns, and they have a straight thing. They wear white socks with low flat shoes. They cannot wear any high heels. They cannot put anything in their hair. They cannot put any makeup on. They cannot wear anything. It does not look like a feed sack, and they have to wear everything that way. I will tell you what, that is not what the Bible is talking about.

I had a Charismatic pastor with a friend one time. We were at a preaching place, and I was just listening. I was not preaching, and he brought his wife everywhere they went. Every conference, every this, every that, every thus, every Bible study. She was with him every time, and they were sitting around there, and I was eating, and they were eating, and the men were over here, and the women were over here, and one of the other ladies, pastors, looked over and she said, "I want you to know, I think it is the most wonderful thing in the world that you take your wife

everywhere you go. My husband will not do that. I think it is the sweetest thing, the greatest thing that you ever saw in your life, and I want to commend you for taking your dear wife everywhere you go, and my husband could learn from you." Well, she turned around and ate her food, and the husband, you are looking at the other husband, and he is saying, "I am sorry," and he leaned over and said, "It is all right. The only reason I take her everywhere he goes, he is too ugly to kiss goodbye." I am telling you, man. Now you have to have a balance in the thing. I do not know if he meant that or not, but he said that. You have to have a balance in the thing. I mean, you want to, I follow this. When a woman or a man dresses to please the Lord, whatever they have on will be perfect. I have seen women come to church before to look like they missed the bus to Independence Avenue.

Now my point is this, and I am sure you are wondering if I had one to all of this, but my point is simply this. You can wear a hundred crucifixes around your neck. You can get 500 dove pins and 300 fish pins on necklaces or pins or whatever you want to do it. You can wear as many stars of David on your chest that they think you are the sheriff. You can have your whole body capped with Bible verses if you want. That does not make you spiritual in any way, shape, or form. It just does not. You see, here is the bottom line. You have to understand Gentiles. It is easier for us to wear a cross around our neck than to bear the cross of Jesus on our shoulders. There it is. It is easy for us to put on our religious costume like pastors do. It is easy for us to put on our religious regalia and wear it around so everybody knows we are a Christian than to change your life and let everybody see what is really on the inside because what is really on the inside has to come out. Many times we wear the stuff on the outside to mask stuff on the inside. I mean, that is human nature 101. That is how it works. That is what this book of Proverbs is all about.

VI. Losing God's Mercy and Truth

Now look at verse 3, "Let not mercy and truth forsake thee." How does that happen to a Christian? There are people out there that probably would say, "Well, that cannot happen to a Christian." Well, I do not know what to tell you. The Bible says it could. It said, "Let not mercy and truth forsake thee." How does that happen? Well, it happens two ways. Mercy and truth will leave us as Christians because they are based on your will and your attitude. That is determined by what you do with the book, the truth. For a church, for a Christian, losing God's mercy and truth is never about losing your salvation. There are two aspects to it. It is all like the word faith. The Bible says, and we all know that we are all saved by faith. Are we not? Amen. Do we all walk by faith? No. Does that mean you lost your salvation? No. It means there are two different aspects to faith. There is a faith that saves you. Then there is a faith that you put into your life after you get saved that carries you through every day. A lot of people, anybody who truly gets saved, gets saved by faith. But that does not mean they always live by faith. Truth and mercy is how you get saved. But after you are saved, you are not always in your life, and you can lose that in the aspect of a Christian. We will talk about what that means.

It is about losing God's hand of preservation in your life. God's mercy operates in our lives in a very shallow, narrow corridor of God's truth. It is so narrow that it is called in the Bible a pathway, a path not very wide. That is why the Bible calls it the path of uprightness. Some places

you will find a path of righteousness. In Jeremiah 6:16, Israel was told to get back to the old path. When you get off that path, then you are on your own. Today, what Christians have done, we did not like that narrow path. Remember what the Bible says over there in Matthew 7:13? "It is straight is the gate and what? Narrow is the way." It is a path. We do not like that today. We do not like churches like this because we preach too narrow of a corridor. You do not want God's path of uprightness in your life. No, you do not. You know what you want? You want a turnpike. You want an expressway. You do not want that narrow path of truth that you have to relegate yourself to. You want a four-lane divided highway. You want all the latitude in the world to move around. You cannot move around on a path. A path is narrow. A path is very enclosed. You cannot get off that path without getting into the woods and getting lost. But oh, no, no. Christianity today, preachers today, churches today, they will not tell you about the narrow path. They will tell you about the four-lane highway. Do whatever you want to do. Go wherever you want to go. Be involved in whatever you want to be involved in. Get on that four-lane highway. Get on that expressway. Get on that turnpike. That is where Christians want to live today.

Every morning I get up. When I am getting ready, I never miss my Joel Osteen message on Sunday morning. I watch him every week. Believe it or not, I always pick up two or three things that he has completely got out of whack, but you can clean them up and use them. But I sit there, and I thought to myself, and they panned back, and there must be, what, 30,000, 40,000 people there? It is incredible. I thought to myself, "Give me one sermon there, and I will empty that crowd faster than somebody yelling fire." The path that he, the road that he preaches to be on is so wide that everybody can get on it. He talked today about not looking through the glasses of judgment at people. He talked about how that there are Buddhists here, and there are Catholics here, and there are all these people here. When we all get to heaven, we are going to be how surprised that they are all there. He was talking about God's mercy. He laid out the widest swath of God's mercy. That was nine interstates side by side. It was incredible. There is not one negative thing about anything. There is no heaven. There is no hell. There is no judgment. Nobody sins anymore. It is just get on this big old super highway, and we will just go arm in arm singing "Kumbaya" and go all the way down the road. Boy, you talk about clearing that place out. That would be the highlight of my life, boy. I would take about six sermons and jam them together, and boy, I will tell you what, you exit that place. You know why? People do not want to hear it today. We do not want to really get ourselves to that path. We do not. We want a wide swath when we can do whatever we want to do. We do not want any white lines to keep us between. We do not want any narrow stretch that we have to walk on. We want it wide. We want it paved. We want everything that we could ever want that is laid out, and we have a lot of latitude to go whatever way we want to go and believe whatever we want to believe. That is where we are at today.

Now, when you get off that path, you lose God's mercy, and you lose God's truth. Remember one of the eight verses I gave you the first in the front of my Bible a couple of weeks ago, one of them I want to look at is Hosea 4:1-2. Let us look at it. A great controversy God had with His people, not the world, His people. He says, "Let mercy and truth not forsake thee." You bet it will. You will still be saved, but you bet it will. The first way is you get out from under God's protective hand. Now look at Israel.

Hosea 4:1-2

1 Hear the word of the LORD, ye children of Israel: for the LORD hath a controversy with the inhabitants of the land, because there is no truth, nor mercy, nor knowledge of God in the land.

2 By swearing, and lying, and killing, and stealing, and committing adultery, they break out, and blood toucheth blood.

Now here is the controversy. Same problem we have today. One, because there is no truth. Two, because there is no, you say it, mercy. See that thing? And the third thing, no knowledge of God in the land. Well, that was Israel in 606 BC. That is Christianity today in 2013. That is where we are at. They did not have any truth. They lost their mercy because they lost the knowledge of God. Look what it, look what replaced it. Verse 2, "By swearing and lying and killing and stealing and committing adultery, they break out and blood touches blood." That is what replaced it. In any nation, when they lose the word of God, verse 2 is where it goes. In your life, when you lose the word of God and you lose truth and mercy, that is where your life goes.

I cannot believe today how almost a week does not go by that some nine-year-old, 10-year-old, 11-year-old kid does not kill his teacher. That he gets a gun and takes it to school or a knife and takes it to school, shoots his teacher, shoots other kids, stabs them, or somebody else goes in and kills a bunch of them. We sit here, and we talk about how terrible and it is, and we talk about how tragic it is, and it certainly is. But do not you get it? Do not you get it? Do not you understand what he is saying? When you took the word of God out of the public school system, this is what comes in. When you take God out, and you cannot have the nativity scenes anymore, the 10 commandments, or you cannot pray before school starts like when I did, when it is a school, and you cannot have some pastor get up at Easter and talk about Christ's resurrection, when you defy those things and take them out of the school, that is what comes in, the guns and knives and the shootings. Now why cannot you get that? I get it. But that is where it is at today. That is exactly where it is at today.

Leaving God in His truth and then lose the mercy of God in your life, and in the lives of others. Now you do your own thing. You are outside the protection hand of God and His principles. Now you run with the evil man and a strange woman, and there your guide, and remember her house ends at death in chapter 2. Now you ruin your life, your family, your children. Now the preservation factor of God's mercy and truth are now gone. You face His chastisement. That is where we are at today, and you lose everything you have.

Did you ever stop one time and consider the things as a Christian that we can lose when we get off the path? I mean it talks about "let not truth and mercy forsake thee," but did you ever stop and put a pencil to it? The things that you and I as a Christian, once we get off that path and do our own thing, the things that you and I as a Christian can lose without ever losing your salvation?

- You can lose your wife.
- You can lose your husband.
- You can lose your kids.

- You can lose your mind.
- You can lose your health.
- You can lose your ministry, your money.
- You can lose your Bible. When I preached before, when you lose your Bible, there are seven things compounding that you lose when you lose your Bible. I have not even got anything to do with it. I am preaching this morning.
- Now you lose your assurance of your salvation.
- Now you lose your power.
- Now you lose your fellowship.
- Now you lose your ability to make right choices.
- Now you lose your understanding.
- Now you lose your discretion or your discernment.
- Now you lose your witness.
- Now you lose your testimony.
- Now you lost your good friends.
- Now you lost your church.
- Now you have lost your joy.
- Now you have lost your prayer life.

There is a boatload of things that you can lose without ever losing your salvation. It all comes when you get off that path. It all comes when God's truth and mercy forsake you, and you get into the hand of the evil man and the strange woman, and they start being. Hey, either God is going to be the leader in your life or the world is. It is not going to be a mixture of the two. We like to think that. "Well, I am not quite out of fellowship today. I am not quite in." No, you are either in or you are out. "Well, me and God are just kind of at odds." No, no, no. "And who is not with Me is against Me." You are either 100% wrapped up in His arms, or you are as far away as you could ever get. That is what Gentiles do. We play those games in our mind.

Now the second aspect, now you have lost truth, and you have lost your way off the path. Now you lose not only the mercy that God has for you and is protecting you, but now you lose your mercy for others. Now your family goes to hell. Now you do not care. Your mom slips out into eternity without Christ. Your dad slips out into eternity without Christ. Your aunt slips out into eternity without Christ, and you never say a word to them. Now your kids wind up in a lake of fire. Now your neighbors, your friends, your associates die one by one, and you do not think twice about what God saved you for and that you should have witnessed to them. You have lost your mercy. You have lost any trace of what you feel for anything in their life. I realize that there are people in your family and people you are going to work with that you are never going to win to Christ. We talked about it Thursday night. I told you it is not your responsibility to win anybody to Christ, but it is your responsibility to be a witness to them. Every Christian is a witness. Do you hear what I said? Every Christian is a witness. Now if I do not get a good amen, next time I am going to walk down one by one. Every Christian is a witness. Sometimes you should even use words. It is the ornaments on the inside. It is not what you say or I say that people look at. They look past that, and they see, "Does it really work for him? Does it really work in his family? Does it really work in his marriage? Does it really work in that person and

what they say? I hear what they say, but does it really line up?" That is what it is really about as far as your witness is concerned. It is the adorning on the inside, not the outside. That was my point of going through that laborious process that we as Gentiles, we do everything on the outside to get a message out. We actually take it down into Christianity to think that we can do the same thing to get a message out about Christ. No, no. Now it may work for Adidas. It may work for this guy. It may work for Eddie Bauer. It may work for North Face, and it may work for whatever, but it will not work for the Christian life. It has to come from the inside. That adorning has to be what your inner man is dressed like, what he is wearing today.

Now you have lost truth. You lost your way. Truth and mercy have forsaken you. Now here you are. You are cold. You are indifferent. You are self-centered. Life is all about you. You are selfish. You are miserable. You are self-absorbed. You are worthless. Ever see anybody like that, claim to be a Christian? The most miserable people you ever saw in your life. Nothing positive ever comes out of their mouth. Only negative comes out of their mouth because it all comes back that they lost any ability to have truth or mercy in their life. It is gone. They lost it. They have been on that other path for so long. Somebody said one time, and it is so true, where the liberal preacher speaks of love with no truth, the conservative, the fundamentalist speaks of truth but has no love. Boy, that is so true.

People ask me all the time, "What kind of church do you have?" I said, "Well, we are a Baptist church." And they said, "Are you a fundamentalist?" I said, "No, I am not a fundamentalist in the sense that you are thinking of a fundamentalist." He said, "Well, you are not a fundamentalist. Why not? I thought most Baptists are fundamentalists." I said, "No, I am not a fundamentalist. I found a long time ago, fundamentalists stand for three things. Most people who say they are fundamentalists, they have no fun. They preach a lot of damn, and they are all mental. Fun, damn, mentalist. I am not part of that. I am a Bible believer." He says, "Are you an independent Baptist church?" "Absolutely not. I have seen the independent Baptist churches and exactly what they become, independent of everything including God. We are a dependent Baptist church. We trust the book and God for everything we have. We are Bible believers." Proverbs is the balance in our life. It brings us to those places and gives us what we need.

VII. Conclusion: The Path of Uprightness

The Christian life and the victory of an ongoing is an ongoing process, the overcoming of 1 John. It takes work. It takes determination. It takes patience. It takes self-discipline. It takes self-control. It takes self-denial. It takes structure in our life. It takes consistency. It is no wonder that some of God's people cannot get anywhere. It requires a steady diet of spiritual truth and application of that truth in your heart and your mind. If some of God's people ate physically like they do spiritually, they would die in a month. This is why so many people can never get back. They get to that point of no return, and they bury themselves. They get swallowed up to the point that it is just impossible for them. Remember now, repentance is not only turning from something but turning to something. Yet, it is just like everything is so simple.

I do not know how many times I have told somebody this out of a point of frustration. I said, "You know what? If you spent as much time with God as you do with the devil, you would be a

great witness for God." I have told her, "If you drank in the Bible by the same rate of consumption you drink the booze, you would be another Billy Sunday. If you would have bathed your flesh in Bible principles as a mother, you bathed your flesh in the drug world, why you would be something else for God today. If you would have hung out with God's people as much as you hang out with the devil's people, why you would set the world on fire for God." But, you see, they will not because they would not, and now they cannot. There is nothing anybody is going to do about it. You have to do the work. The evil man and the strange woman have got you off that path. You are on a four-lane highway now, and it has destroyed you inside and out.

The message of Proverbs 3:1-4 is real clear. The wise son will not forget the law, and in his heart, he will keep his commandments. He will bind them around his neck, and they hang down over his heart, and that is a picture of the will of man and the heart of man. When he does those four things, and he addresses those and applies those to his attitude, the inner man, then God returns seven things to us, and through those seven principles, God will take our lives and use us but also preserve us and our families in that unbroken chain. It never ceases to amaze me how simple Christianity really is and how complicated the evil man and the strange woman always want to make it. We make life so much harder than it really is by the terrible decisions that we make or we allow in our families, and then that compounding effect of those principles only get worse as time goes on, and we play right into the plan of the evil man and the strange woman. You have to remember God has a plan that He wants to enact in your life to use you, and the devil has a plan that he wants to enact in your life to stop you from being used of God, and it is whatever one you play into. You stay on the path of uprightness, that narrow path, you are good to go. You get off that path, and you are now divided as a great big highway where you can do whatever you want to do, then you have problems.

Let me close by saying this, in any given situation, there is always something that a person can do. I am not saying by anything that I have said in the last couple of weeks that when I say you get to the point of no return, I am not saying that you get to the point where God is not willing to do something for you, but I have told you that for God to do anything for you, you must begin to do it yourself. So you are willing to come to church, I cannot help you. So you will want to put the Bible into your life, I can put a thousand people with you. The devil will undo everything that we try to do. You have to make the choice that you are going to turn your life around, and you are going to get where God's people are, where the word of God is, and get fed, and you are going to have to start digesting the word of God internally just like you would digest all the physical things of this life externally.

An evil man and a strange woman have seduced you, they betrayed you, and they deceived you. The problem becomes that you wait too long. You reach a point where the issues are so many, and your flesh is so out of control that you cannot do what you need to do. You have been deceived, you have been destroyed, you have been seduced. That is why she is likened to a harlot in Proverbs chapter 2. We will see it again in chapter 5 and chapter 7. Now you are stuck, and you cannot get out. My advice to anybody in that situation that I have given a hundred thousand times is right now, get out. Make the break while you still can. Do not play with this thing and pretend you are going to be okay. Do not say to yourself, "I know when to stop." Do not say to

yourself, "Well, I am going to wait till I have a child." Do not say to yourself, "I am going to wait till I get married." Do not say to yourself, "Well, I am going to wait till I get my education." Do not say to yourself, "There will be some time down the road, right now I am enjoying my life too much." Do not go there. The moment you go there, you have been deceived. That two or three years is all the time it takes. When you look at the New Testament, it took three and a half years for God to prepare His people. Three and a half years for Him to prepare His people to be the 12 apostles that would change the world. It does not take the devil much longer than that in your life. You give him that time, and you will never get back. You give him that time, and by that time, your life will be so complicated. You will have a girl pregnant, or you will be pregnant, and you will have this, and you will have this complication, and now you want to break out, but you cannot because the bozo that has your child now is still out here and doing drugs, and your link to a child, it just gets complicated and complicated and complicated. You have your phone filled up with all your drug guys, and you try to get rid of them, and they keep calling you on the phone, it just keeps getting you and getting you. You go here, and you want to stop drinking, but your buddies are all drinking, you hang out with him, and you are afraid if you do not drink with them, they will think you are, so you have one, and it starts all over again. That is how it works. My advice is right now, get out, make the break while you still can, protect your neck and your heart with the promises and the principles of the Word of God. The greatest single tool that God ever gave you was this church, any church that believed the Bible. It is the tool shed. Along these walls, you see all kinds of stuff up, what you cannot see is all the tools hanging up there. We have dump truck drivers here, we have carpenters here, we have pipefitters here, we have plumbers here, we have electricians here, and I am not talking about in a physical sense. I am talking about people who know how to clean out your pipes, wire you up right, get you cleaned out and get you going. Spiritually speaking, but you have to decide, "I want to do that," and until you decide, "I have to change, and I am going to be here," it will be the ongoing shag of your life. You will never finish anything you start, and there are evil men and the strange woman will destroy you in time, and it will come upon your life. There will come a point in your life where you get so down and so out. There will come a point in your life where you lose your family, you lose your friends, you lose this, you lose your job, you lose everything you have, and you will ask yourself the question, "What is life worth living for?" Well, I may answer that honestly, life without God is not worth living for, but the alternative is too tragic because it is dying and going to hell. My advice to you, get out of that lifestyle, get off that four-lane highway, get back on that path, and become and do what God wants you to do. Every head bowed and every eye closed.