

## 2 Corinthians 10

Sunday 4/21/2013

I appreciate the great job that Bob Greg did last week in filling in for me. I appreciate all the guys that can step up and take this pulpit. He did an exceptional job, and I want to thank him for that, and for everything that everybody did in making last Sunday go well when the whole family was not here.

The last time we were together, we had talked about the great perspective of seeing things the way they really are, not how they appear. We have been building steadily in 2 Corinthians 10, which you should know now that each chapter of 2 Corinthians talks about a different aspect of you and I as ministers of the Gospel. Though not all of you may be pastors, all of you are ministers, and our job is to minister the Word of God. A pastor is an office, but every child of God that is saved needs to be a minister and minister the Word of God.

We have been talking about why people think the way that they think, why people say the things that they say, and why people do the things that they do. That is one of the most profound concepts that you will ever grasp: why things are the way they are. I showed you the last time we were together, and we have been building on this in a progression, talking about different aspects to kind of bring a whole picture into view here. Last time we talked about why things are the way they are today in Christianity. I told you simply that based on where I have come from and what I know Christianity to be compared to what it is today, I think you better understand now why I say what I say when I think that many Christians who claim to be saved have really never been saved.

We know now the great study of the tale of two churches: the Laodicean Church and the Philadelphian Church. The Philadelphian Church, as I said last time we were together, was the church of the open door. It was a church where three-quarters of the world had come to a saving knowledge of Jesus Christ. There was nothing more than the King James Bible going around the world four or five times. Yet, as we entered into the 20th century, we moved into, as we see in our chart and have talked about it many times, the Laodicean Church period. Laodicea means "rights of the people." It is a time where God has no rights and Christians have all the rights. It is a time where, as Philadelphia was the church of the open door, Laodicea is the church of the closed door.

I have always thought it was interesting that in the book of Colossians, Colossians is a book where he really lays out in the New Testament every aspect of the Laodicean Church. It is an incredible little book. Most people do not know this, but Colossia was a city, and 11 miles south of that city was Laodicea. It was just 11 miles south of that great city that the book of Colossians is written about. I have often thought that was such a great book to pick to talk about and describe Laodicea because we all live, I live in Raytown, our church is in Independence, but the problem we have here is we always do not know whether you are in Independence or Kansas City. I think, if somebody can correct me on this, I know this church is in Independence, but I think right down the road you are in Kansas City. I know that when you go from Raytown, you can go down any road on the edge and you can be in and out of Kansas City and back in Raytown and not even know where you are at.

I have always thought that it was interesting that he chose the book of Colossians to define the book of Laodicea, which was a city 11 miles south. I think the value in that for all of us today is just as you cannot tell, unless you have a sign that says "Leaving Raytown" and "Entering Kansas City" or "Leaving Independence" and "Entering Kansas City" or whatever, you can move into those city districts and not even know you have crossed over the line. Laodicea being so close to the book of Colossians shows me very carefully that we as Christians can move out of the mainstream of what God wants us to be into Laodicea very easily, unless you follow the signs. Of course, the signs are the Word of God.

We have talked about the appearance of things versus the way things appear in Christianity. That is true of churches. It is also true of Christians. Christians appear to be one thing by their statements, but then they are actually something else by their actions. We now know, as we talked about that Sunday, that we have basically for the last hundred some years fabricated and brought about a Christianity that we saw last time we were together never really existed in the Bible. The thing that I struggle with is I do not see Christians in the New Testament like I see running around today. They made a choice and their life was different. I am not saying they did not struggle with things, but you do not see this: "I am saved, but I go out and do the things that I did before I was saved on a continual lifestyle basis."

I told you Thursday night, somebody asked a question. I even forget what it was now, but it kind of dialed into what we are talking about. I said that today in Christianity, it is just like it was in the nation of Israel right before the captivity came down. They had a form of godliness. The Bible says they had the temples, they had the priesthood, they had everything that they were supposed to have, except God. They had themselves fabricated out of Baal worship and all the other nations that came in that God told them to stay away from. They had now fabricated in 606 BC a complete religion that on the outside looked like it was everything that it was supposed to be, but on the inside, Jesus said it himself in the book of Matthew, did He not? He said on the outside, "You look like a white sepulchre, but on the inside is dead men's bones." That was Israel, and that is Christianity today.

This is where we are at, and this is why it is so important to understand. This is the situation we find ourselves in today. I said that last time we were together, living in a Christian world where values and doctrines continually change, but holding on to the book that never changes. Somebody sent me a photo of a large church in Kansas City. I will not bring up what church it was, but they had sent me on my phone a picture of an auditorium of a church that at one point probably really preached. It really preached the Gospel. It came out of J. Frank Norris back in the old days. It was a solid, solid Bible-preaching church for many, many years. They sent me a picture of the auditorium, which now has completely been remodeled. No more place for the choir, not that you need one, but everything is taken out, and now you have flickering lights. The camera is in a little cubicle all by itself with the singers and the banjo player, the guitar players, and the praise people. The lights, the TV camera lights coming down, it is absolutely just like the world.

There is a reason why this pulpit is in the center. I do not know if you even know it or not. For years and years and years in Baptist churches, the pulpit is always in the center. You go to an

Episcopalian church, or you go to a Lutheran church, or you go to a Presbyterian church. If you watched the news this week when Obama went up to Boston, he spoke in that church. Did you notice how the pulpit was over to the side? That is typical of Protestant churches. But Baptist churches always put the pulpit in the middle. They do that out of the book of Nehemiah where Nehemiah built a pulpit of wood and he stood upon it and he opened the Word of God and all the people stood up and he preached to the people. So for time and eternity, Bible-believing Baptists have always had the pulpit in the center. You know why? Because they want you to know that the center of that church was the preaching of the Word of God. At Nehemiah, they do not even have the pulpit today. They sit on stools now with cardigan sweaters and they talk to you and teach you. I am going to leave the stool joke alone here and just move on with the sermon this morning.

## I. The Danger of Comparing Ourselves to Other Christians

Today we are going to look at another passage and see yet another great aspect of the mind of the minister. I think this sermon today is going to be so helpful for so many of you. I have been wanting to free you. I have had this sermon ready for two weeks. I could not preach it last week. But I think this sermon will help so many of you today. These are one of these sermons that you really want to get it down. This will benefit everybody. This is not a ranting, raving sermon that I can do so well. This is more of a thing where you are going to get something today. You get something every week, but I mean, you are going to, this is going to be good for many of you today. I think you are going to get what you need out of this.

Let me begin reading here in 2 Corinthians 10:12.

2 Corinthians 10:12-18

*For we dare not make ourselves of the number, or compare ourselves with some that commend themselves: but they measuring themselves by themselves, and comparing themselves among themselves, are not wise.*

*But we will not boast of things without our measure, but according to the measure of the rule which God hath distributed to us, a measure to reach even unto you.*

*For we stretch not ourselves beyond our measure, as though we reached not unto you: for we are come as far as to you also in preaching the gospel of Christ:*

*Not boasting of things without our measure, that is, of other men's labours; but having hope, when your faith is increased, that we shall be enlarged by you according to our rule abundantly,*

*To preach the gospel in the regions beyond you, and not to boast in another man's line of things made ready to our hand.*

*But he that glorieth, let him glory in the Lord.*

*For not he that commendeth himself is approved, but whom the Lord commendeth.*

Now, Father, help us today to glean from this what You have for us. These are Your people here today. They are good people. They really love You. They have come today to get something from the Word of God, and I certainly have nothing to give them. So Lord, I pray that You will intervene here, that Your Spirit will take the text, take the message, and take me, Lord, and give them out of my mouth what You would want them to hear. We will be careful to give You the honor and the glory and the praise in Jesus' name, for His sake we ask it. Amen.

I want to talk today about something that almost everybody does here. You young Christians do it. You older Christians do it also. I have to be honest with you, I have never fallen into this. I have fallen into a lot of things as a young Christian that got me off track, but I never fell into this. But I see this in so many of you, especially you younger Christians, and I want to talk to you about making comparisons today. I want to talk about comparing yourself with other Christians. I think that, as I said, this will be a great help to many of you today.

Verse 12 says, if you look at it again for a moment, that measuring our spiritual life by comparing it to other Christians is not a wise thing to do. That is so true. Yet, I will tell you, I see people do that all the time, all the time. Now, let me explain. There is absolutely nothing wrong with following good Christian leadership or good Christian examples. I am not talking about that. On Easter Sunday, I preached you a message on patterns and what the pattern was for a really good Christian. We talked about a pattern of good works and a pattern of sound speech. Nothing wrong with following those examples. In fact, Paul said in 1 Corinthians 11:1, he told the Corinthians:

1 Corinthians 11:1

*Be ye followers of me, even as I also am of Christ.*

It is never wrong to learn from other people. You learn what they do well, and you apply it to your life, but you also learn what they do not do well and apply it to your life. But my point is this: you will never get the true value of who you really are as a Christian as long as you compare yourself to other people. Follow their examples. When you see good things in their life, emulate them, incorporate that in your life, but you never come to the point where you ever, ever compare yourself to them.

Many Christians, especially young Christians, have a tough time with this. I have to say, in most cases, it is a legitimate problem. Legitimate from the standpoint that you see somebody that you really admire, and they really do a good job, and maybe they are farther on down the line than you are, saved a longer time, and you see some Christian who you think is what you want to be like, and then a comparison just happens. In every case, when you do that, you are going to wind up defeating yourself. When you pick another Christian to compare yourself with, or anybody to compare yourself with, you will find out in time that they have the same issues that you have. When you put all your trust in that and put all your value in that, you are going to be defeated because you need to set your sights higher than that. You just really do.

I would tell you this anytime, day or night, if any of you look to me as an example, I would urge you to follow a couple of basic rules, or anybody. There are some great models in this church of

parenting. There are some great models in this church of what a marriage should be. There are some great models in this church of what a Christian walk should be. But I am telling you right now, whether it is me and you look at my life, or you look at somebody else's life, simply follow a couple of rules.

1. Know that I am the same man. The things that I do that are good things for the Lord, then follow them and use them as an example to help you.
2. At the same time, know that I am human and I have the same old nature as you have. So the things that I do not do well, the things that I do not do right, the things in my life where I fail, you learn from them too. You learn not to do those things.

But do not ever try to compare yourself to me or anybody because simply you are not me, and you are simply not the other person. I see parents make this mistake all through my years of dealing with parents. I have seen them make this mistake. They will have three or four kids, and they will have one kid that really excels and does well, and maybe have a couple others that do not do quite as well. They will use that child who excels to compare the rest of the kids to. You will hear things like, "Why can't you be like your brother? Why can't you be like your sister?"

My sister was a genius, still is. She graduated from high school when she was a junior. That is how smart she was. She is a brilliant woman. She really is. Me on the other hand, I was the dumbest stump. She got straight A's all the time, and I got D's all the time. My crowning day, I got a C in something. I never forget all my life, I have heard whenever I dreaded report card day. Back then, you took it. It was a big thing. You could not hide it. All the parents knew it was report card day. Why? Because we all got quiet about two weeks before. Everybody knew it. Back then, they actually put the grade, A, B, C, D, E, F. F was always in red. So even if your parents did not see well, the red stood out from the block. I got F's. In fact, I had to go to summer school when I was in the seventh grade or eighth grade going into being a freshman. I flunked math. I was terrible in math. I still am. That is why I do not do anything with math. I do not need to. My car tells me how much gas I have before I run out, how many miles I have. I do not have to figure anything anymore. I feel sorry for all you dopes who went and struggled taking algebra and geometry and Gibraltar and all that other stuff that you took. Have you ever used it since you got out? No. You are none of you rocket scientists. None of you come to the place where you have to do formal equations on this or that. No, you do not do it any more than I do. Besides that, right after I got out of school, they made calculators.

I tell you what, that ticked me off. I heard all of my life, "Why can't you be like your sister? Why can't you be like your sister on report card day? She gets straight A's." I have to say, I love my sister. We get along great. But back then we did not get along quite as well. She would rub my nose in the fact that she got all A's, and I would tell her what A's stood for. But parents do that all the time. That is always going to cause you issues. Every child you have is different than the other child. Trying to hold an expectation for the other kids by the one who excels and the other one does not, your kid is going to turn out like me. Do not take away from them who they are. You just cannot.

I have seen pastors and their sons make the same mistake. You will see a pastor who was a great pastor or a great preacher, and his son comes along and he wants to get into the ministry. But he is nowhere near what his dad was. Everybody expects that young kid to be what his dad was. I have seen young men after young men after young men crash and burn in the ministry because everybody was holding him to the expectation of his daddy. He was not his dad. He had to be who he was. I never compare you younger Christians with older Christians. Being different is not bad. I never look at somebody and say, "I wish you were like that." I wish you were like other Christians who do the job here with me. I have learned to let people define themselves as who they are. You are all different. You all have different personalities. You all grew up in different environments with different backgrounds. That allows all of you to see things differently. Being different is not bad in the right scenario. Each one of you is unique in your own way. That makes each of you valuable to God and to me in a different way. It just makes you special.

I never look at somebody who really can preach well and look at somebody who maybe struggles and says, "I wish that that person was like this person." I know many of you do that. Many of you look at guys that can preach or guys that do well and you get defeated because you want to do that too. I am not saying that someday you cannot or will not, but I am saying if you never get there, I promise you God has something just as special for you as it does for anybody you want to compare yourself to. Every one of you have special abilities. Not everybody has the same ability, but who you are and what you can do will blend into our work here to get the job done. I never allow myself to wish you were like so-and-so. I always see you as God made you and help you develop who you are to be exactly what God wants you to be. I never fall into that trap.

I use it in everything in my life. I have three of the sweetest grandkids on the whole planet. I have Macy, I have Maddie, and I have Kinsey. How do you? I mean, you look at all three of them, and somebody asked me one time, "Which one is your favorite?" That is a legitimate question, but that question makes me mad a little bit. Not mad at the person, but mad because I have to think that way. I do not want to think that way. So I worked my way around it. Somebody says, "Which one is your favorite?" And I say, "Well, Maddie is my favorite oldest one. Kinsey is my favorite middle one, and Macy is my favorite younger one." See, I separated them out. I can love each one of them and make each one of them my favorite without ever violating anything. I do that with my two daughters. People ask me, "Which one do you love the most?" And I say, "Well, I love Kelly because she, I love Kelly as my oldest daughter the most, and Jamie because she is my youngest daughter the most." It eliminates anything that goes in there.

I had three labs one time, all three colors. Tinker was black, Buddy was brown, and Daisy was yellow. They were the sweetest three dogs in the world. People would ask me all the time, "Which one of them is your favorite?" I get mad when people ask me, not because you asked me, but because I have it now, you put me in a position to choose. So I figured it out too. "Which one is your favorite?" "Well, Tinker is my favorite black lab, Buddy is my favorite brown lab, and Daisy is my favorite yellow lab." See, I violated nothing. I am happy. I have my favorites because each one of them were different. Both of my girls are different. All three of my

grandkids are different. All three of my dogs were different. I did not include Otis in it because he is a rat with a genetic defect. I am not even sure he is a dog.

You are all special. Everybody brings something to the party. Who you are, your individuality, is who God made you to be. You do not ever want to compare that with anybody else. Be you, be satisfied with being you. Job 37:7 says:

Job 37:7

*He sealeth up the hand of every man; that all men may know his work.*

I know that that is how a guy by the name of, I cannot remember the last name, did it in the twenties, the guy that developed the fingerprints, all being different. He got it out of that verse right there. The Bible says He sealed up the hand of every man. From that, that is Job 37:7. From that he realized that everybody's fingerprints were different, and he came up with the code for fingerprints that were all different. Everybody's fingerprints are different, just like there are no two snowflakes alike. The guy who made the snowflakes is the same guy who made your finger. But I will take it one step further. In the Bible, hands are what you do the ministry with. Not only is it true that your fingerprints are different, but when He says He sealed up the hand of every man, He is also telling you, you are all different in what you do for Him. He sealed Gary's hands different than He did Bob's or He did Norbert's. Every man's hand is different. He sealed them up. He has got something He wants you to do, and it is never going to all be the same. All of you have some very special things God has given you. Do not settle. Do not settle for less. If you do not see them, come and ask me. I will tell you what they are. I probably do see them.

I have heard it all the time, "Well, I am not as pretty as her. I am not as smart as him. I wish I could do what they do. I will never be like that. I wish I could speak like him." Be who God wants you to be. You see it in the four Gospels. In the theological world, we have a problem with the Gospels. It is called the synoptic problem. Synoptic is a big word. It simply means that the Gospels do not match. In fact, you get into higher theologians and scholars, they will tell you that in your Bible, Matthew, Mark, Luke belong, but John does not belong. So they throw John out and say that is not a legitimate Gospel. You know why they do that? Because of the synoptic problem. Those first three kind of match, but John does not match. But when you study it even farther, none of them really match. You will find it in some books. One of them will tell the story, and there will be two guys involved in the story. Then the next guy will tell the same story, and there will be one guy involved in it. Then, behold, the next guy tells it, and there are two guys that you had, plus somebody else. When you read Luke, if you read Luke, his long sentences, his grammar is almost perfect textbook Greek grammar. But when you get into John, it is choppy, it is short. It is the difference between a guy who was a trained professional physician and a commercial fisherman. You know what God allowed them? He used them. Holy men of God spoke as they were moved by the Holy Ghost, but the Holy Ghost that moved them allowed them to always be who they were in their personalities. He did not make them all the same. He used them the way they were. He does not want us to all be the same. I do not want you all to be the same. I want you to be who God wants you to be. I want you to let God develop the abilities that God has given you. You remember from our past studies, I have told you before, it is not on the

outside that counts or what you do, but it is what is on the inside that counts. That is where we are all equal, brethren, because we all have the same amount of the Holy Spirit of God in us.

## II. The Perfect Standard: Jesus Christ

Now, I say that, but then I am going to tell you this: we should make comparisons. I want to talk about making the right comparisons. I want to give you four things here that you will want to get down that you do want to compare yourself to, but it will not be the person sitting next to you or behind you or in front of you. In the Old Testament, and I mentioned this a couple of nights ago, in the Old Testament from First Samuel to Second Samuel, you have the Kings of Israel, and you have 19 for Judah and 19 for Israel, 19 for the Southern tribes, 19 for the Northern tribes. I did tell you this a couple of nights ago. I think one of the most remarkable undiscovered studies in the Bible is to study these 19 kings, 19 from the South, 19 from the North, because the Bible gives you enough information about them that I am telling you right now, and I have never had time to tweak it all to get it all out, but I am guaranteed it is there. You have within those guys exactly every kind of Christian you could find in life today, every one of them. You have some who have a perfect heart, but not quite perfect. You have some that have an evil heart. You have some that have a perfect heart, but did not do everything right. It is incredible. I am telling you right now, you have a picture of the heart attitude of every kind of Christian that is going to walk this planet in those kings. Yet, every one of those kings is compared to one king, and that king is David. You will read it over and over again. "He was not perfect in his heart like his father David," or "He loved God along with his heart like his father David." David is the standard for the kings. I am telling you right now that David, if you know your Bible, is a type of the Lord Jesus Christ.

So by that, I am telling you that our standard, number one, to compare ourselves with is the perfect standard, the Lord Jesus Christ. That is your standard, and you can compare yourself to that. You can. David is the type of the Lord Jesus Christ, and that is our true comparison. Our standard by which we should compare ourselves is God's perfect King. That is our comparison. I have seen people all of my life take inferior Christians who struggle with things in their life and then watch them compare themselves to those struggling Christians so they can look better to themselves. That is human nature at its best. By comparison, they look better, you see. So it makes them feel better about themselves. That is never a good position to be in.

Do not kid me. There are some of God's people who all their life go around looking for dirt in somebody's past so they can feel better about their own worthless life. That is what they do. I never could get into that. I have told you before in the Bible that there are seven men in the Bible: Noah, Moses, Abraham, Job, Samuel, David, and Daniel. Those are the seven key men in the Bible that will show you every aspect. There are lots of studies in the Bible that are good, but those seven men are denoted out with special mention that you can learn everything about the Christian life from those seven men if you want to study their lives. You want to learn how to walk with God? Study Noah. You want to learn how to be the friend of God? Study Moses. You want to learn how to wander for God and go where God sends you to go? Study Abraham. You want to study how to suffer for God? Study Job. You want to understand the ministry? Study

Samuel. You want to know how to worship God? Study David. You want to know how to stand for God? Study Daniel.

Those seven men are the key men in the Old Testament that will give you everything about your Christian life. But I am going to tell you right now, you dig deep enough in those guys' lives, you find a murderer, you find hatred, you find adultery, you find disobedience, you find lack of faith, you find self-righteousness, you find drunkenness. Every one of them are sinners just like you and me. You could examine the best Christian man or woman you know, and at the end of the day, you are going to find garbage in their life. You will find garbage because at the end of the day, we are all garbage. People who do that, and I have seen it all my life, wind up being the most wicked, miserable, sorriest Christians you will ever see in your life. We do that to get an alibi to keep our miserable life going the way that we want it to go for ourselves. You can take every character in the Bible, the wisest, holiest, godliest men that you ever found in the Word of God, either great examples. Study the good things about their life, study the bad things about their life, but do not even compare yourself to them because they are just like you. They are just like you.

That is the wonderful thing I think about the judgment seat of Christ, because in the judgment seat of Christ, it is just you and Him. Somebody said one time, "Well, in the Bible, the day of Christ is the judgment seat of Christ, and then you find a day of Jesus Christ," and those are the two titles in the Bible, and that is true, but I tie it a little different. My title for it is, "The day you cannot blame your problems on somebody else anymore." That is what the judgment seat of Christ is, just you and Him, just you and Him. You will not be able to stand there and say, "Well, I did not do what is right because so-and-so did not." Right now we can blame everything we do on everybody else because we make comparisons with ourselves, but in that day, you know what He is going to do? He is going to put Jesus Christ in His hand and you in His hand. He is going to read your meter. He is going to look down inside your soul, and He is going to bring out, and you are not, in that day, the great thing about that day is it is just going to be me and Him. I will have no alibis. It will not be my circumstances. It will not be my situation. It will not be this. It will not be that. It will not be this person. It will not be that. It will not be, "Well, you do not understand how this person did this to me." It will be none of that. All it will be is what Jesus did for you, and then what you let everything else come in that you did not do for Him. I love that.

Baxter McClellan was a circuit riding preacher back in the 1800s. He was a preacher, and he would get up there and he would preach to his crowd, and he would just put the fear of God in them, and he would say to them, "You know what? If a two-bit tin horn preacher like me can get you people squirming around in your seats like you just sat down on a beehive, what are you going to do in a day when you stand before a holy God and a holy Lord Jesus Christ?" A lot of truth in that. You see, I do one Sunday in a very small way, in a very depraved human way, what is going to happen at the judgment seat of Christ. All week long, you do what you want to do. You justify what you want to do. You get in your mind. You make your comparisons to do this, to do that, to do this, to do that. Then on Sunday morning when you show up, not by purpose, but just by design, you know what the Holy Spirit of God does? He just cubicles you. For an hour,

you just have the spotlight on you, and He takes down everything you tried to set up Monday through Saturday. That is why people quit coming to church.

Before we are done with this, you are going to see the science involved. Yes, science. Science involved. And the whole concept of why people quit coming to churches. You are going to see that they will not come on Sunday morning. They do not like coming on Sunday morning because they want to do their thing all week long, and they just cannot come to a mini judgment seat of Christ in a very small, depraved, human sense that really is going to represent that day. You see, you can decide not to come here today, but you will not decide not to show up at the judgment seat of Christ. That is the day. That is the day that all the alibis are taken away for all of us. That is the day when I am going to stand here before Him. I have already learned to do that. I do not blame my problems on anybody. I figure I get what I deserve in life. You do not hear me whining about what somebody else did to this or that that caused my problems. I do not whine those ways. I know me too well. I know what the judgment seat of Christ is going to be. You do well to try to learn a little bit. So I am already in training for it. Like a guy said the other day, "Do you have a license to kill?" And the guy said, "No, I just got a learner's permit." I do not have the judgment seat of Christ completely figured out, but I have my learner's permit. I am doing right now what I know it is going to be there. I am not blaming anybody else for my issues now. I am not blaming anybody else for my problems now because I am in training for the day I stand before Him that I will not alibi then. I will just take my lumps, and I have some lumps to take, no question about it, but I will take them, and I will not blame somebody else for them. I will not compare myself to somebody else and say, "Lord, I was not as bad as that person." And the Lord will just look back and say, "No, as a matter of fact, you were worse than that person." So I have that figured out. That is going to be a great day, but you want a comparison for you every day to be like, try Jesus Christ, the only perfect standard that we can compare ourselves to. We need a perfect standard. We do. You know why? Because every other standard is not perfect.

I will tell you what we do as human beings. We manipulate the standards. How many times do you see down the South someplace? I forget where it was. One of the schools, half the people are going to prison because they manipulated all the federal schools' scores on their tests because the students are so inept at being able to figure things out. You see it from time to time in West Point or the Naval Academy or the Air Force Academy where these people cheat to a great degree, and it becomes a very elaborate process. Human nature will always sell itself short because that is what human beings do. So when you and I compare ourselves to somebody else, we are always going to come out better than what we compare it to. That is why you need a perfect, perfect source, you see, a perfect standard.

### III. Learning from Good Role Models (Without Comparison)

Do these. In the Bible and church history, if you want some good role models, there are some. Some of you young men want to learn about courage and you want to learn to develop your courage in church history, I studied Martin Luther, probably one of the most courageous men that ever lived. The only other guy that I would put into that category is John Knox. They named John Knox Village for him. Most people do not even know it. He started the Presbyterian

Church. John Knox was fearless. He is the only man who took Bloody Mary on face to face and gave her a good old hellfire damnation preaching and lived to tell about it. Courage, courage. You want to get into the Bible? Look at Joshua and Caleb. They are great role models. Those seven men I gave you earlier are great role models. There are some great role models in the Bible and history.

You ladies, you want to study a great woman in history? Study Susanna Wesley. She had 17 children. All of them turned out into the ministry and to work for God. Now there is a good example for you. Try Mary Slessor, missionary to India, to the leper colonies. You want to get into the Bible? Try Samuel's mom. Try Abigail. Try Noah's wife, Joan of Arc. But never compare yourself to them. Learn from what they do good. Learn from what they do bad. Learn from the right things that they did. Learn from the wrong things that they did. But do not ever compare yourself. No, you need to have a perfect standard.

Early in my life when God began to call me to preach, I had two role models in my life, and I really wanted to be, they formed every aspect of my understanding of ministry. One of them was Mel Sabachan. The other one was Peter S. Ruckman. They were two great influences in my life, but I never, never fell into the trap of comparing myself to them. Never did. I never lost who I was. I looked at the good things that they did, and I emulated them in my own life, and I watched how they did certain things, and I learned from that, but I always realized that they were not me, and I was not them, and I could not become them. That is one of the problems with Dr. Ruckman's school. I would never send a kid to Dr. Ruckman's school. Really no reason to have been here, but every kid that goes down there, not all of them, but many of them come out ruined. You know why? Because they try to go down and be P. Ruckman, and God knows nobody can be P. Ruckman. He is one of a kind, but that is what they do. They lose their identity in those guys. They lose their identity. I see people go to Christian schools or they go to Christian Bible colleges, and they cease who they are, and they become what that school is. Never lose your identity of who you are. I just never made that mistake. I just never did. I realized that I had my own style. I realized that they had some good things to give me, and then I took those things, and I stayed being me.

Along with that, I studied some other great preachers. In the latter part of the 20th century, the end of the Philadelphia, maybe the remnant or the residue of the Philadelphia. I remember hearing many times, O.R. Lakin, the old Southern evangelist, his great sermon that he was noted for was one of the great sermons I ever heard, influenced my whole life, was called "Pay Day Someday." What a sermon. I preached you a message a couple of years ago on Zacchaeus, and that is my favorite one. Probably my favorite message to preach. It is a fun message to preach. But you know where I heard that? I heard that in 1972 with Roy Thompson, the pastor of Cleveland Baptist Temple, came down to Canton Baptist Temple and preached on a Sunday night, and he preached Zacchaeus. I never forgot it. I still have the tape. I would not dare play it. It is a cassette tape. You do not even know what cassette tapes are. They are right after E-Trox. There is a cassette tape dated 1972. Roy Thompson preaching on Zacchaeus. It was those guys who formed my thinking of preaching.

I remember Harold Seidler. I remember him preaching one time on Baptist distinctives. He preached on "Why Am I a Baptist?" I am telling you what, I never forgot it. It sunk in why I believe what I believe, and old Harold Seidler could put it to you. He could preach the Word of God. All these guys are dead now. I remember hearing Victor Sears, Victor Sears, the brothers, Victor and Howard. But I remember hearing Victor Sears one time that he was preaching there again in Canton, and he was talking about the holiness with God. They had such a unique way of blending what they were preaching with a crowd. I learned those things. Those are the things that I wanted to learn to do because I watched them up there, and I watched the crowd just hang on to every word that they said. I watched the crowd never lose it. If the guy walked back and forth, their eyes would go back and forth. They looked like a volleyball game. It was incredible. He said one time, "You know what?" He said, "I got up early this morning," and he said, "I started to come to church." He said, "I had to get some gasoline in my car." He says, "I pulled into a gas station about 8:30, about 7:30 this morning, and I would get in to get gas, and I was pumping my gas, and there is a little guy there, and he was just dirty from head to toe." He said, "I mean, he looked like he had rolled in mud." He said, "I looked at that little young man, and I said, 'Young man, how did you get so dirty so early in the morning?'" He said, "Look back at me." And he said, "Well," he said, "I will tell you, I just went to bed that way." Then he took that, and he says, "You know what? I bet that is true of a lot of you this morning. You are dirty this morning because you went to bed that way last night." He preached the fire out of you after that. I watched those things. I would listen to the way that they say and the way that they do. I was of the conviction that the more messages you preach, the better you get. No, the more messages you preach without study, good preaching, the more bad messages you just preach.

I remember B.R. Lakin preached on the second coming of Christ. I have a message on the second coming of Christ that just goes down the line, pretty much what he said. I remember in 1972, Truman Dollar came out to Kansas City and preached for a Bible conference, and he preached the message, "Are you a Lot or are you Abraham?" That message, I am telling you what, I still have those notes in my Bible. I preached that message more times than he probably ever did. It was one of the greatest things I ever heard in my life. I heard Oliver B. Greene, Dallas Billington. John put out a little pamphlet back there as he does on some great sermons about "One More Night with the Frogs" by U.P. Kinard. I heard U.P. Kinard preach that message, but I never, I never allowed myself or compared myself to them. You know why? Because every one of those guys, no matter how good they were, how great preachers, you dig deep enough, you are going to find some garbage. I never fell into that trap.

Listening to those guys, I think, made me a better preacher. Iron sharpens iron. In life, you become what you hang out with. It is just that simple. I had an artist friend of mine tell me one time that he does not listen or he does not look at bad paintings very long because he does not want to ruin his style. I understand that. He liked to look at good paintings because they thought it made him a better artist. I totally understand that. If you want to be a good musician, listen to good music and good musicians. I will tell yourself and else, if you want to be a good musician and you want to learn how to be better at what you do, listen to good music. Stay away from bongos, but listen to good music. If you want to be a preacher, listen to good preaching. It will only make you better. The problem today is I cannot think of probably four or five guys that are

worth listening to, but you will have to dig, but you can get them out there. If you want to be a better Christian, hang out with good Christians. But never under any circumstances compare yourself to them. You are you. I like you. God likes you just the way you are. Be Christ-like. Follow the good pattern, but follow their good patterns, but never lose sight of who you are in Christ. Do not lose your identity in their identity. Do not try to be them. Over time, comparing yourself to all of these things, along with the Word of God and the perfect King that God gave you, and set your affections on things above. That is what you need to do.

People are really funny. I love to listen to them talk. People talk without any standard. I always like to play the devil's advocate. I do not always say things, but in my mind I do because I am so ingrained in that standard. I just have to have it for everything. I listen to people all the time. A guy, I listened to two pastors talking, and a guy says, "Well, he is really a good man." And I am asking myself in my mind, "Really? Compared to who? Charles Manson?" "Well, he has built a great church." "Really? Compared to what? First Baptist or Raytown?" A lady told me one time about her wayward son, "Well, he has really got a good heart." I thought to myself, "Really? Compared to who? Al Capone, Pretty Boy Floyd, Alvin Karpis?" What is your standard? "He is really a good preacher." "Really? Compared to who? Robert Schuller?" If you do not have, all that is irrelevant to anything. If you do not have a real standard to make a real comparison by. A lady said to me one time, "Well, I know my boy is not doing right, but he is better than all the other kids I, a lot of other kids I see in his church." And I thought to myself, "There you go." See, that is your standard. You have an absolutely worthless kid, and you will spend half your life looking at some other kids who in your mind you see as more worthless than your worthless kid. Then you set up a worthless standard. So your worthless kid is not as worthless as the other worthless kid. At the end of the day, you are all worthless. Notice my heavy emphasis on the word "worthless." But that is what people do. Take that worthless kid and put him up side alongside Jesus Christ. Let us see how sweet he is. There is your perfect standard. Oh no, no, no, you could not do that. No, no, you will leave the church over it. I do not know. You will put him. You will not do that.

#### IV. Measuring by God's Distributed Grace and Faith

Now, here is the fourth one. Look at verses 13 and 14.

2 Corinthians 10:13-14

*But we will not boast of things without our measure, but according to the measure of the rule which God hath distributed to us, a measure to reach even unto you.*

*For we stretch not ourselves beyond our measure, as though we reached not unto you: for we are come as far as to you also in preaching the gospel of Christ:*

Not boasting of things without our measure, that is, of other men's labors, but having hope when your faith is increased that we shall be enlarged by you according to our rule abundantly. Now here is another one. This measuring, you measure yourself by this. When you got saved, God gave you, Ephesians 4:7, a measure of faith. And Romans 12:3 says a measure of grace. He gave you a measure just enough for you to get saved. Just enough measure of grace that you could

understand and receive salvation, and just enough faith that you could trust Him to do it. That measure of faith is given to you first of all for salvation. Then second of all, you develop through that faith and you develop through that grace. In time you use that grace and faith that you have developed and stretched by the God gave you by measure to do the job that God has called you to do. That is what He is saying in verse 13. He says:

2 Corinthians 10:13

*...according to the measure of the rule which God hath distributed to us, a measure to reach even unto you.*

Verse 15 says when your faith is increased, you enlarge others. The grace and faith God gave me 45 years ago to get saved, God now has stretched it and me to get that same grace and faith to you. At verse 13, "to reach even unto you." Then you can measure yourself and compare where you are at with God by what you are doing or what you are not doing with the salvation that God gave you. This one is a killer. The measure of faith and the measure of grace. You see that? The measure of a man or woman for God will only be determined by you and the comparison of your relationship with Christ and the ministry you do for Him as you grow.

That is why people come to churches, stay, and do not grow, and then leave. There is a science to it. I told you a while back that good people do not leave good churches, bad people leave good churches, good people leave bad churches, but in the New Testament, good people do not leave good churches. There is a science to that. I was not just making that up. There is a science to that all the way through the Bible. It is absolutely incredible when you look at it. That is why people come to any church, a good church, they stay, and when they do not grow or they quit growing, then they leave. That is what you have. What they do is they blame it on somebody else. They can make a comparison with this or with that. They do not like this. They do not like that. They get mad about this. They get mad about that. They never grow to the point where they can deal with the issues of the Christian life. Therefore, because they come to a church where the Bible is taught, the Bible is preached, and then they come to a point where the Holy Spirit of God boxes them in and says, "I am going to allow you to go so far. And then you are going to have to deal with this problem." They do not want to deal with it. So what does human nature do? It is a science to it. Blame it on the church, blame it on the pastor, blame it on you, blame it on this, blame it on that. And they are gone. That is how it works. That is exactly how it works.

That is why people like big churches. Remember what the FBI said just two days ago when they were looking for those two bombers up there in the Boston Marathon? They hoped they had him contained in Watertown, a little town. They had the whole place cordoned off because they said if they get into the big city, you will never find them because they will blend in with everybody, and you cannot find them. It is a lot easier to find who you are looking for in a small city than it is a big city. It is a lot easier for you to hide in a big church than it is in one this size. That is where they go. That is exactly what they do. That is just a science to it. The exposure is too great. I told the people the other night, I take great satisfaction in the fact that in 45, 40 plus years of ministry, nobody ever left my ministry in my churches because something that I taught that was wrong. They left because of something I taught that was right, the truth. I told you when we

started our family ministry, the year of the family, I told you before we ever got there, there would be families who, and see, you can get along with us so far. You can go so far, pretend the game, and then when the spotlight comes down on something that is lacking, well, there has to be something wrong with the church. It could not be wrong with nothing with my children or this or that. It has to be the church. It has to be Bob. It has to be you. That is how it works. It is as scientific as the law of thermodynamics. You just get fooled by it, you see. You just get fooled by it.

I am telling you right now, but the measure of a Christian will always be what he has done with a measure of grace and a measure of faith to do the work of God. That is the context of verses 13, 14, and 15 at the end of the day. The measure of yourself, the measure of myself, now you want to get this down, will only be limited by you. Not your situation, not your circumstances, not your family, not your education, not your job, not your unforeseeable events in your life.

Three things that will limit you:

3. By what you know or what you do not know. Because you quit growing or you never grow. At the judgment seat of Christ, God is not going to hold you accountable for what you know or what you did not know. He is going to hold you accountable for what you could have found out, but you decided not to.
4. By what you do or what you do not do. Ministry. What God saved you for. Taking the measure of grace and the measure of faith and reaching it out and developing it to the measure to others.
5. By your willing heart or your unwilling heart to do it.

That is why Paul said in Galatians 6:4:

Galatians 6:4

*But let every man prove his own work, and then shall he have rejoicing in himself alone, and not in another.*

Prove your own work. You cannot live on my spirituality all your life. You cannot live on the spirituality of the person that is discipling you all your life. At some point, you have to prove your own work, and you do that by measuring yourself to a perfect standard that you cannot manipulate, that holds you accountable, that will show you what is wrong with you, and then it is your attitude of heart if you are going to fix it or not. That is as easy as it gets. A strong Christian does not need approval of others. He knows his Bible. He knows he is doing what God has called him to do. He is proving his own work. He is proving that he has taken the grace and the faith, and he has developed that. He is proving that he understands that when God saved him, He saved him for a purpose. He saved him for a reason. He does not suck his thumb at home, not coming to church or mad or here, because he did not get something the way he wants it. He realizes that he has something to prove, and it is his own work, and it only gets proven by you taking what God gave you when He saved you and developing it and then giving it to others. A strong Christian does not need other Christians to prop him up. He stands alone for God. He is like Christ. He is Christ-like. He does not worry what other people think. He never compares himself

to other Christians around him. He learns from them. He follows good patterns of works and speech, but their walk and their work for God make him better through association, but he follows the Bible format, comparing himself and measuring his growth by the things that we talked about.

## V. Conclusion: Embrace Your Unique Identity and God's Standards

First of all, Christ. Being Christ-like, being like Christ in His image, looking at the six things, the seven stages, looking at all those things that are an absolute standard of measure to go by, like a ruler that sets the standard for 12 inches. He knows that at the judgment seat of Christ he will only answer to God. So in this life, he has already got it figured out that the only one he really needs to answer to is the Lord in his own personal life. He measures his ministry by enlarging others, taking faith and grace and letting God develop them to the place that that little measure of faith and grace that God gave us to be saved, now he develops it unto you. He takes it to other people. You see, it is easy to measure yourself by others. They are as bad as we are. It is something else to measure yourself by a perfect standard of measurement. We can manipulate the results of the first one to get whatever answer that makes us feel good. But the second one leaves no doubt in your mind where you are at. No doubt at all. So we stay away from that. We will continue to make ourselves compare to other people, but we are never bringing into the Bible because we can manipulate everything else that is going along when we use other people. You put down that book. You take those things that I have given you today, and it will hold you accountable. It will show you the measure of man and woman that you really are as a Christian.

So remember now in closing here, you now have a perfect standard to measure yourself by. You will never master it, but that is okay. These standards are much like the 10 Commandments. They were never given to keep, but rather were given to show us how far we fall short of what God really expected. It is having a goal to be better every day. If you have a goal of being better, listen to me now, this is probably the most important thing I am going to tell you today. If you have a goal to be better every day, then you simply will be better every day. That is what you want. Ephesians 4:15 says:

Ephesians 4:15

*But speaking the truth in love, may grow up into him in all things, which is the head, even Christ:*

So your standard of comparison is very simple. It is just four things. Take these four things and start making these your comparisons instead of the people that you look at.

6. Christ.
7. The six marks of spiritual growth that I gave you.
8. The seven stages of spiritual growth. I check those in your life. If you are a young Christian, I check them every two years. If you are an older Christian, I check them every three years.

9. The measure of grace and faith given to us for salvation and to do the work of the ministry. How are you doing with that? Has that measure of grace and faith grown at all? Have you done anything with it?

That is the true measure that he is talking about here. He is talking about us measuring ourselves by what we give to others. Follow that and keep those in your life, and you will be just fine. We as Christians, we are just like your car. We are just like your boat. We are just like your house. Just like everything you own. We have to do maintenance on it. The more mileage you put on something, the more maintenance you have to do. In your car, it is all computerized. They have you fixed because that annoying little check engine light will come on, or that annoying little light will come on that only they can turn off for a small nominal fee. So you are either faced with this annoying light keeping coming on, or in some cases a little bell buzzer going off telling you you have to get your car fixed, and all it is is when the odometer hits a certain number, it is programmed in the computer because of so many miles for that little light to come on. So you will come in and check it. I am not saying you do not have something wrong, but in many cases it is not. I went in and checked that in there, and the guys told me, "Oh, it was just this," or "It was just that," it was nothing, and it was nothing. It was nothing, cost me 75 dollars, but it was nothing. So it is a thing where the more mileage you put on, you get around three or four thousand miles, your oil light comes on. You get around six or seven thousand miles, your check engine light comes on. You get to the place after 10-20,000 miles, you get a low tire, your low tire pressure comes on. Maintenance comes with mileage.

I see the first computer in the Bible long before 4GM or Christ. It was all the way back in the Old Testament with a thing called the Urim and the Thummim. First computer in the Bible where you ask it a question just like you type things in, and it goes through Winnicapie or wherever you find it and gets all the information you want. Back then you just ask it a question, it spelled out the answer, and you know what? That is what it does for you. You stay in the book, you do these things, it will always give you the right maintenance program or the right mileage where you are at. It will keep you abreast of exactly where you are at in your spiritual growth. You will never have to worry about comparing yourself to somebody else. All you will have to do, and if I could just get half of you to do this, all you will have to do is work at being who God wants you to be. Taking the personality that He gave you, the abilities that He gave you, quit worrying about somebody else and what they have and what you do not have, and just realize that you are special to the point that God made you just the way He wanted you to be. Your job is to let God develop it to become everything that He wants you to be. Every head bowed and every eye closed.