

## I. Introduction to the Attack on the Church

Today, we will finish up 2 Corinthians 11, and while we finish this chapter, we are really going to set down the intro to chapter 12, which is our next chapter. We only have two chapters to go, but I told you we were going to take a little mini-camp on leadership, and then we are going to jump right smack, both feet, into the book of Proverbs. Hopefully, we will be there until the Lord comes back, and that will be a good deal.

Now, for the last three weeks, we have been examining this chapter. We have seen how the attack on the church is to be carried out. We brought you through all the aspects of the church age and showed you how we are living in the last period, which is called the Laodicean church period. It should be crystal clear now what we are up against as we make our way through the Laodicean church period. The thing I gave you in Colossians last week is a vital piece of information, showing you how it lines up to that period of church history.

Last week, I built the message around three vital aspects of ministry and really also the Christian life. When the devil makes his attack, this is where he attacks. When he wants to get you and I off course, when he wants to get us fouled up and entangled in the things of the world, he goes after three things. We talked about it: he goes after your focus, he goes after your perception and/or perspective, and then he goes after your purpose. I told you that when the attack comes to the church, it will aim at these three areas, and the church is made up of people, so we know now how it works.

I told you, this is another great thing that I always marvel at about the Bible, how Laodicea was only 11 miles south of Colossae. The key word in dealing with the devil, as we have seen in Paul's fear for the attack on the church, was his subtleness. It says in Genesis 3 that the serpent was more subtle than any beast of the field. Then Paul said that he was afraid that the devil would corrupt the church through his subtlety. Of course, the subtlety lies in the fact that Laodicea is just south of that great city, and it is so easy to cross over and not know where you have crossed over. When that happens, then those three areas of your life are pretty well done with.

## II. The Personal Attack on Paul

This week, we are going to look at the attack of the devil on Paul in a more specific, personal way. I have shown you everything you need to know; it should be crystal clear to you where all this is at now. I want to show you today how the devil came after Paul personally. Just as last week, I told you that through all the things that we look at and all the things that we deal with, many times when I talk about it on Sunday, I know every one of you has been through things in life that you can look back and see the association and how it all goes together. Well, today won't be any different. I am sure many of you older Christians, especially, will see yourself in some of this because you have been through some things in your Christian life. It is hard not to go

through things and have any kind of mindset about what is going on in the Bible and not see the parallels sometimes.

It is hard for us today to imagine the impact that Paul had on the early New Testament churches. We get so caught up in all the other things in the Bible, or really not getting any depth on anything in the Bible. I cannot tell you how important the Apostle Paul is in the New Testament. Not only does he write three-quarters of the New Testament, and you have heard me say it many, many times, you have got to be careful with the Bible. All the Bible was written for you, but not all the Bible was written directly to you. You have heard me say it many, many times, and there are places where you have got to be careful applying it to yourself in the Bible. We know that Matthew, Acts, and Hebrews are two great books in the Bible, but boy, you want to get all of the heresy that is in the church today and confuse people? It is because they go to those books and they try to apply those books directly to themselves. You have got to know how to rightly divide the word of truth. But when it comes to what Paul writes, hey, we are on safe ground.

Paul was the apostle to the church. Paul's mandate from God was to start churches, and he did so. Paul was not a pastor; Paul was an evangelist. An evangelist in a New Testament Bible sense is a man who does not go around and just preach to churches like they do today and call them evangelists. I do not have a problem with that, but you need to understand what a true biblical evangelist is. An evangelist in a New Testament sense is a man like Paul who went and started churches, stayed there for a period of time, trained somebody up to take that church, and then went on and started another church. He put into action the plan of God to begin churches to begin to grow, develop, split off, and do other churches, grow and develop, and that is where the whole thing came from.

The impact of Paul on the world is quite incredible. It is hard for us to imagine the impact that he had on those early churches. The life of Paul is one of the greatest studies that you will ever take in the Bible. I would say that at some point in your life, it is absolutely essential to spend the time to go through his life. There is some great material out on it. Paul was probably the most preached about guy in the New Testament. I mean, he is an incredible, incredible, incredible guy. The Bible tells us in Acts chapter 9 and Acts chapter 10 that he was the apostle specifically to the Gentiles. Because of that, everything he writes, he writes to churches.

If you notice your Bible, you have Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John. Those are Jewish apostles at the first coming of Christ, but they are not part of the church. Then you have Acts. Acts is a short name for Acts of the Apostles. There we see what the apostles are doing in that intermediate period of time, and a lot of things happen in Acts. But then when Paul gets saved, Acts chapter 9, he immediately begins to go out and do what God has called him to do. Most people do not even know that all of Paul's books are written during the book of Acts, that latter part when he is on his missionary trips. All his books are written to churches, except for three that are written to Christian young men. So those books form for us a foundation of incredible material that no matter where you are at in your Christian life, when you read something that Paul says, you know you can apply it to yourself. You are safe there; it is safe ground.

But he is an incredible guy. God called him to start off the establishment of the church age. We get to see just seven of the churches. I am telling you, he got a glimpse of seven churches that he started, that he wrote letters to, that became part of our New Testament. But he started many, many other churches. You have three men in the Bible that he directly wrote books to that he won to Christ. But you know as well as I do, man, there were thousands of people that he influenced for the cause of Christ. It is an incredible, incredible life. His personal history is quite incredible. He holds the record for at least two records that I know of. Before he was saved, he holds the record of being the greatest enemy of Christianity. After he got saved, he holds the record for probably being the greatest Christian that ever lived. It shows you the power of God, what God can do in your life.

When God saved him on the road to Damascus in Acts chapter 9, you know where he was going? He was on his way to persecute Christians. There on the road to Damascus, God met him face to face, and God saved him that day, and God gave him the commission to go start churches. From that point in his life, he became unequaled, I believe. I believe he is the greatest Christian that ever walked the planet, and it shows what God will do with you because he is just an ordinary man like you and me. He really is. But it all starts with him. Then those churches that he starts, they develop, they grow, and like melted butter, they spread all over Asia Minor and in time, all over the world. It is in Acts chapter 11 with that early church in Antioch that Paul was responsible for, where they were first called Christians, and everything pretty much developed itself. If you are any kind of Bible believer, know anything about the Bible at all, you know that you can trace your roots right back to Acts chapter 11. I mean, there is a true biblical line that brings you right back to that.

I love Paul. I love everything about him. I love the way, because you see in him, I love the way he worries and prays over those churches. He writes epistles to them when they are struggling. He comes to them, and many times he has to rebuke them. All of the times that he meets with them is not always warm and fuzzy; sometimes he has to deal with them. But there is never a time in all of the things that he does and how he tries to help them solve their problems that you do not see how much he loves them. He is very protective of them, as he should be. You see in the book of Galatians where some people are coming in, and they are trying to disrupt that church. Some people come in; they are called the Judaizers. What they were trying to do is bridge the Old Testament with the New Testament and say, "Yeah, you have got to believe in Jesus, but you have got to keep the Old Testament law." That did not go over very well with Paul. He took them to task. He took the people in the church to task and said, "You should know better." We saw it in 1 Corinthians, didn't we? Boy, he did not cut them any slack there. I mean, he really, really, really held them accountable, but in every sense, in a loving, fatherly way, because he was responsible for them. They were his children. They were his churches. It was his mandate.

I look at him many, many times, and I think what he must have went through. I feel the same thing about my church, but I only have one. He had them all over Asia Minor. I even see it when he takes his three missionary trips, which take place toward the middle and the end of the Book of Acts. He takes three missionary trips, and if you have maps in the back of your Bible, they

usually show the missionary trips where he went. He understood the absolute function and importance of the concept of a New Testament local church. If you look at those missionary trips that he takes, he is always doing them around going back to check on these churches. He is always going back to make sure that they are doing okay. There was not a time when they did not have an issue that he did not step up to try to help them. At the same time, you cannot help but see that Paul created a lot of enemies in his life. I mean, he had a lot of people that did not appreciate what he was doing. I think as you grow through this and you look through it, in your own personal way, all of this is very important to who we really are as Christians.

### III. The Price of Standing for God

Now, our text today I want to read is 2 Corinthians chapter 11, and we are going to pick it up in verse 21 through 33. From this passage, I want you to kind of see two things. First of all, I want you to see that there is a personal attack on Paul from the devil to stop him. We will talk about that as we come on down through it. The second thing I want you to see, and I think this is probably really the most important thing, is I want you to see that if you are ever going to do anything for God, if you are ever going to, like we talked about last week, make your stand and take a stand for God, if you are ever going to do that, the second thing you want to know is there is a price that you are going to have to pay to do that. It is not going to come free. It is not going to come cheap. It did not in Paul's life. It did not in Paul's ministry, and it will not in mine, and it will not in yours.

The message last week, "We Hold the Line," was simply a beginning of the realization that it takes a special kind of man and woman to do the work of God today. I told you that last week. Paul is that kind of special individual. Paul is that kind of special man, and there is a reason why. We will not get to the reason why today, but this is the introduction to the reason why next week. It is an incredible thing. Paul was special, and the reason why we need to understand that is because there is a price to pay, and it takes a unique child of God today to stand and to pay it.

Now, let us read the passage, and we will begin to lay it out here. It is here we see the real ministry and what it takes to get it done.

*2 Corinthians 11:21-33*

*I speak as concerning reproach, as though we had been weak. Howbeit whereinsoever any is bold, (I speak foolishly,) I am bold also.*

*Are they Hebrews? so am I. Are they Israelites? so am I. Are they the seed of Abraham? so am I.*

*Are they ministers of Christ? (I speak as a fool) I am more; in labours more abundant, in stripes above measure, in prisons more frequent, in deaths oft.*

*Of the Jews five times received I forty stripes save one.*

*Thrice was I beaten with rods, once was I stoned, thrice I suffered shipwreck, a night and a day I have been in the deep;*

*In journeyings often, in perils of waters, in perils of robbers, in perils by mine own countrymen, in perils by the heathen, in perils in the city, in perils in the wilderness, in perils in the sea, in perils among false brethren;*

*In weariness and painfulness, in watchings often, in hunger and thirst, in fastings often, in cold and nakedness.*

*Beside those things that are without, that which cometh upon me daily, the care of all the churches.*

*Who is weak, and I am not weak? who is offended, and I burn not?*

*If I must needs glory, I will glory of the things which concern mine infirmities.*

*The God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, which is blessed for evermore, knoweth that I lie not.*

*In Damascus the governor under Aretas the king kept the city of the Damascenes with a garrison, desirous to apprehend me:*

*And through a window in a basket was I let down by the wall, and escaped his hands.*

Now, Father, help us today to see the content of this great passage. These are good people today. For the majority of them, I believe they really love You and want to do what is right and want to serve You. Lord, I thank You for the fact that we today can come to Your Word and that we can look within here and find those things that we need. We trust You today, Lord. We ask You to show us, mold us, make us, give us what we need. We will thank You and praise You in Jesus' name. For Your sake, we ask it. Amen.

#### IV. The Nature of True Ministry

I think that Paul was probably the greatest apostle of all the apostles. I mean, I know the other 12 went out and did all kinds of great things, but you know how limited they were. Their ministry got shut down with the death of Christ. Paul's ministry goes on to this day. You find, most people do not even know this, you find 12 apostles that were there at the first coming of Christ in Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John. We know who they are. Most people do not know that when the church came in with Paul, there are seven apostles to the church. Obviously, it lines up to the seven church periods. I mean, they do not go all the way down, but they were the early apostles in the church. He had apostles for the nation of Israel and for the early part of Acts and on through there until they died off. He had apostles to the church, and Paul was one of them. But I think he is the greatest of all of them. I think he is the greatest minister the world has ever seen. I think, my own personal opinion, I think Paul was the greatest Christian who ever lived. Paul is the very early human example of what we should be as Christians.

As you read this passage, you really, whether you know it or not, you are reading the qualifications of what I believe it takes to be the minister for the Lord Jesus Christ today. That concept is completely lost today. Young men and young ladies too, but especially young men, they look at a guy who gets up and preaches all the time or teaches Bibles. I know I did it when I

was young. I used to watch those guys come to the Canton Baptist Temple and get up there and preach, and 2,000 people out there, and they would preach the Word of God, and everybody, "Yeah, amen!" The choir would sing great songs. Everybody was up in a fever pitch. I used to think that that was the most glorious thing, to get into the ministry and see all of that. But I want to tell you the truth: when you really get into the ministry, it only takes about 30 seconds to find that that is not the way it is.

I often relate it to the Civil War. The Civil War started in 1860 and went to 1865. When the Civil War started, you know that people, young men, were thronging down there to join because they thought the war was going to be a fun thing. They got new uniforms, and they mustered down there, and there were parades and ice cream socials as everybody celebrated and waved, and all the girls fell in love with you because you were going off to war, and it was a great thing. They were all saying, "This war will be over for you. We will be back in two weeks, man." It looked like they were going to summer camp. By the time they got to the little place around Shiloh Meeting House two years later, 50,000 boys dead, 100,000, 200,000 maimed and wounded. It was not glorious anymore. They still had three more years of bloody fighting. When they got to Gettysburg and Antietam, it was a bad deal. Those boys had their whole illusion that war and going to war was a fun time like going to a summer camp. It did not take long to find out that there is no glory in war. It did not take long to find out there is no glory in the ministry. You do not get the glory down here; you get it on the other side.

I showed you early as we started 1 Corinthians chapter 1 and 2 Corinthians chapter 1 and 2 that the ministry is suffering. That is really what the ministry is. He lists all of it in the first chapter. I told you that the real ministry is you going through what you go through for Christ. You letting the world, the Christian world, your friend, your family, whatever, you let whatever comes your way come your way. Then as you grow through that suffering, you are able to comfort somebody else in their suffering by the suffering that you have went through. The real Christian ministry is not big churches, though we think it is today. The real Christian ministry today is not buses or 10,000 in Sunday school. But the real ministry is found in one man, one Bible, one man in the New Testament in the Bible, and the life of Paul. It is what he goes through. A life of being not only a reproach to the world but also to other Christians who refuse to do the real work and play the game and resent you for doing it.

Years ago, there was a guy, he is dead now, most of you older people would know him. His name was Leo Humphrey. Leo Humphrey was one of the greatest Christians that I ever met in my life. I got to spend quite a bit of time with him. Leo Humphrey had such a burden to win people to Christ, and his whole ministry was going into impoverished countries and just preaching the gospel. He is probably responsible for starting more churches in Central America than any other single guy. Nobody even knows who he is today. But back then, I was just a young pastor under a lot of other, with all other pastors, and every time Leo Humphrey would come to preach in the church, I would always watch. The head pastor would get up, and he would tell the people about three weeks out that Leo Humphrey was coming, and he would say something like this, because Leo was just where it was. He did not wear a suit and tie. He got up there, and he just dropped the bomb wherever he wanted to drop it. He was crude, he was rough, but he was effective. He

felt no qualms about stepping on all the high people's toes who pretended they were doing things but were not. He would just come in there, and he would tear the place up. I mean, you would meet him, and all the deacons and all the highfalutin' people in the church never wanted to really shake hands with him because he would look you right in the eye and ask you when the last time you won somebody to Christ. That can be quite embarrassing when you have not done it for the last 45,000 years. Leo was the real deal.

I would get so disgusted because the pastor would get up for a couple of weeks before, and he would try to prepare the crowd for Leo Humphrey. He would try to tell the crowd, "Now, this guy is going to be something else. Now, you have got to just take it with a grain of salt. He is great, he is a great guy, but he is a little rough, he is crude," you know, preparing them. One time, I just, I had it. I got up to preach one time, and I just told them, I said, "You know what? I am sick and tired of everybody apologizing for Leo Humphrey. You know what Leo Humphrey is? Leo Humphrey is what all we should be. When you have got to apologize to your congregation because a real Christian is preaching, you are in trouble. You are in trouble." I mean, I am just telling you, you are in trouble.

One of the things that gave me the burden for places like Restart. I had a guy say a while back, "Well, you know, Restart is never going to go anywhere." You know what? I do not really care if Restart ever goes anywhere. You know why I am down at Restart? Because if Jesus would come back tomorrow, you know where He would be on Sunday afternoon? He would be at Restart. They asked Him one time, "What are You doing with all the halt and lame and all these poor people?" He said, "Hey, the whole need no physician." But we get our priorities out of whack, don't we? Because you lose your focus, you lose your perspective, and you lose your purpose. I am telling you, the reason why I do those things is because, honest to goodness, if Jesus came down right now back to this planet, that would be the first place He would head. Now, you might think it would be to your home with your nice comfortable living room and your sun porch. You might think it might be to your country club church. But I guarantee you, the first place He would head back down is the same place He went when He came down there in the New Testament. He went down to the downtrodden, the ones that needed Him.

Paul is a great example of that. Paul is a great example of the more you do for God, the more you are going to get clobbered. That is why it is so hard to find real Christians today. You see real Christians today, they do not want to take a stand for anything. They want a Christianity of ease. They want a lifestyle of ease. They want a Christianity with no trials, no discouragement, or no trouble. They want a Christianity that is always in a comfort level zone, see? They do not want to be bumped outside that comfort zone. They want to go through life as a Christian with nothing. That is why they pick churches where they go, and when you leave, everybody gets a nice warm, fuzzy feeling. That is what they want today. They do not want to hear preaching today. They do not want to be reminded of what Paul was. They do not want to be reminded what the real ministry is. They want to just go, and nobody to discomfort them, nobody to rock the boat, nobody to say anything that is controversial, nobody to cause any ruffles or any waves.

Yet, when you come to pastors and churches today, I am telling you what. By the way they live, the way they dress, and by the personal attendance of the personal people that help them and do

all the ministry for them and their personal assistants and all the other pastors, all they do is sit in an ivory office someplace on a throne and step out once a week just to give you little scribbles of the Word of God. Does that line up with the greatest Christian of the Bible? It certainly does not. You see, when we lose our focus, when we lose our perspective, when we lose our purpose, then we get deluded into thinking that Christianity is something that never has any trials or tribulations with it. That is simply not true.

A couple of nights ago, somebody asked a question. A kid called in or emailed in on the website, and he wanted to know about the lost books of the Bible. Well, forget about the lost books of the Bible; let me give you some of the lost verses of the Bible for Christians today.

*Hebrews 13:13*

*Let us go forth therefore unto him without the camp, bearing his reproach.*

That is Christianity today. Years ago, I heard a man say in a Bible conference, he was an old preacher, boy, he was good. I heard him get up there, and he was preaching, and he was talking about the ministry, and he says, "When it comes to true Christians, you measure the success of a man's ministry not by how many people love him, but how many people hate him, and he keeps on going." You know that is hard for people to grasp today. When you say that, it is hard for Christians today to understand that. The reason why it is, because honestly, and I love you to death, but some of you God's people have never took a stand for anything. You have never had to. When the opposition comes, or some problem comes up, or some issue that is not right and not biblical, where are the men and women today who take a stand for what truth is and what the Bible says?

I mean, I understand it. It is hard today, and I have got to tell you, it probably took me 30 years to understand what he meant by that statement. I am not telling you by any stretch of the imagination the moment he said it, I got it. It probably took me 30 years to figure out what he said was true. But I can say after 45 plus years in the ministry, it is true. It is true.

I think of old Novatian. Old Novatian was back there in the first and second century. When everybody wanted to go one way and try to amalgamate into a big mess, he said, "Absolutely not." They ridiculed him, and they called his followers Novatians. You know what they said to him? They said, "You are just following a man." So they called him Novatians. I think of Mani, who started the Manichaeism movement. Again, he would not follow and go into the norm of where everything was going, and they called his people Manichaeans. I think of the Waldensians and the Albigensians, two of the most precious groups down through history that were hated by everybody.

I think of Martin Luther. Martin Luther, probably out of the Reformation, was the most hated man in New Testament Christianity. They came to him one time and said, "Martin, don't you know the whole world is against you?" You know what he said? He said, "Well, then I am against the whole world." You do not find them like that anymore. Not at all. I think of John Knox. They named John Knox Village after him, but that is where it ends with a name. He stood before Bloody Mary. Bloody Mary had killed more Christians and more preachers than any woman 100

years before or 200 years after. Old John Knox preached in her face and lived to tell about it. A fearless guy. He took a stand. He took a stand.

I think of Billy Sunday. Billy Sunday single-handedly brought in prohibition by preaching the Word of God. They hated him so much, an old drunken guy by the name of Elmer, by Sinclair Lewis, made a movie called \*Elmer Gantry\*. The movie with Burt Lancaster in it was a slam on Billy Sunday. It was nothing more than a man who hated him so much. How would you like someone that hated your guts so much? They put a movie out back then that still plays today. You know how much gets lost in that over the years? You know how many people do not even know that that is about Billy Sunday anymore? But it does. It paints all evangelists like Elmer Gantry because he hated the preaching of the Word of God. That is why. Oh, it is incredible. It is incredible.

I think of J. Frank Norris. This place is down in Texas, if you go. You better not mention J. Frank Norris's name, or they will kill you down there. Yet he was the single one guy that is why you have the right Bible today. He is the single guy that took the stand, fearless. There was a guy one time called him up on the phone after he preached and says, "I am going to come over there and blow your blankety-blank head off." J. Frank Norris says, "I will be here till 1:30." Guy walked in the office, pulled a gun. J. Frank outdrew him and shot him right in his office. No, I am not condoning that. What would you do? He would find you hidden in the closet someplace.

There was a guy that threatened to kill him one time, and it was a guy that because he was preaching on booze and liquor, and it was a big fat cat in the city one time that was out to get him and said, "I will kill J. Frank Norris, and he is a blankety-blank," and just hated his guts. He was driving down the road one Saturday night with two or three girls on his arm. He got in a car, the car exploded, and it blew up everywhere. He hit something, I do not know. J. Frank Norris went to the scene, and there was a piece of his brain over there on the sidewalk, and J. Frank Norris went over and picked up a piece of his cranium and put it in the jar, put it on the pulpit, and preached Sunday morning. I am not sure I would do that. It would be kind of tough today preaching on Christians because those of them do not have any brain today. You would have to put another piece up there or something.

## V. The Contrast: Paul vs. Modern Christianity

Now, I want you to see some things today. The things he lists in 2 Corinthians 11:22-28 would put us all under the table. The modern 20th and 21st century Laodicean child of God wants no part of these things, you see. I will be honest, most of God's people's trials and afflictions today in the areas that knock us out really have nothing to do with the attack of the devil like he did Paul. The devil has no need to attack us because God's people today, we attack ourselves. We, by our bad choices of life, cancel out any real ministry. You see it in everything. We are our own worst enemy. You see it with the choices people make in who they marry. They come to the place where one bad choice, and that is why I try to have you do everything by the book and use the Bible principles in doing what you do. You choose the wrong mate in life, and you are done, man, you are done. You are done.

We have seen it in the choices of how people raise their children. I mean, you can get along so long sweeping your kids under the rug when they are little, but when they turn 16, 17, 18, and all of their ungodliness goes public, it is kind of hard for you to justify it anymore. I was at a birthday party a while back, and a little kid came in, and I was sitting there, and a kid came in bringing some presents, and he is about nine or ten years old. He brought some presents in for the thing, and he put it up there, and I was just being cute. I was just being my nice self, and I said, "Hey, where is my present?" He looked at me and said, "Isn't it a pit of hell?" Now, if you have a kid that is nine and ten and talks to an adult that way, what do you think he is going to talk to you when he is 16 or 17 or 18? If you have in your house one of those big glass frame things that is painted red with a hatchet in it, and it says, "In case of emergency, break glass," now would be the time to break it. Crazy, man.

I see it in the decisions that you, you know, it only takes one or two bad choices in life, and you are done, man. Poor choices. Then our pride gets in, our self-righteousness gets in, our arrogance gets in, and you know what we built? We built a little stronghold. These things become in time in our lives our worst nightmare, and all the stress and the issues weigh us down long before the barren reproach of Christ can ever get into it. We cancel ourselves out just because of our own stupidity. It is like I said Thursday night, if they ever make a remake of the movie \*Dumb and Dumber\*, most of us could play both roles. We spend more time defending ourselves than we do the cause of Christ. We never get past bearing our own reproach, and the devil uses those bad choices.

Now, I have got to be honest with you, many of you are great stories of how you have overcome those things. Our church is filled with people that would just like what I talk about, and yet you made a difference in your life because you wanted to make a difference in your life, but it does not always happen that way. Paul understood a great truth that I believe is missing today, not only in the ministry but in Christianity. It is the truth that reproach and affliction for Christ is a good thing. Now, we have got the idea that it is a bad thing. You see, we need that in our lives to keep us honest.

Paul said in 2 Corinthians 12:10, we have not gotten there yet, but he says in that chapter, he says, "When I am at my weakest, then that is when I am at my strongest." The strongest we will ever be for God is when we are at the weakest point in our life to ourselves, but people do not get that today. I understand why. Hey, I am just like you. Nobody wants to, nobody wants that because at the end of the day, let us be honest, we are all control freaks. We all are. We all are. We want to manipulate every circumstance that comes into our life the way we want it and then say, "Oh, look what God did for me." We want to control everything that happens. We want to be in charge of every aspect of our life and then foolishly give God the credit for it when God wants nothing to do with it. I understand it. We want to fix it ourselves when it is unfixable that way. We want to make it happen when God does not want it to happen. We want to manipulate the circumstances and the situation so we can get what we want and then simply say, "God just did a great thing in my life." God did nothing in your life. But we have all been there. We all understand that. We all realize that that is what we do.

I mean, you see it in dealing with people. People come in with problems, and they have heartache, and they have issues, and you lay out a clear Bible plan for them that will bring them out of the darkness into the light and give them everything they want. They last about three or four weeks, and suddenly their plan is better than yours. Well, if your plan was better than mine, why did you ever come to me in the first place? Manipulation. We do not want to give up control. We do not because the mark of our church age today is we are in control. We do everything. We want to be in charge of everything, and that cannot work. When you are at your strongest is when you will be at your weakest.

## VI. Paul's Sufferings and Ministry

Now, look at this. Paul says in 2 Corinthians 11:24 that he was beaten five times by the Jews, 40 stripes save one. That is 39 stripes. Five times that adds up to 195 lashes. That man was scarred from head to toe. 2 Corinthians 11:25 says in addition to the whipping, he was beaten three more times with rods. That is like bamboo poles or something the size of a broomstick. 2 Corinthians 11:25 says he was stoned. That is not the one you are thinking of. Most Christians get stoned today, but not in the biblical sense. He was stoned. That is probably a reference to Acts 14:19 when he was there at Lystra, and they left him for dead. They thought he beat him up so bad they thought he was dead. They hauled him out and threw him outside the city for dead, but he was not. 2 Corinthians 11:25 says he was shipwrecked three times. Carnival cruise probably. He was shipwrecked three times. One of the times he was in the water 24 hours, he says, "a day and a night."

2 Corinthians 11:26 says that he traveled to all of his churches. That is the three missionary journeys. He was constantly in danger. He was in danger wherever he went, whether he traveled by land or he traveled by sea. 2 Corinthians 11:26 says he is in perils of water, perils of robbers, perils of mine own countrymen, perils by the heathen, perils in the city, perils in the wilderness, perils in the sea, perils by false brethren. He was hounded by all three people groups. I have told you before the Bible is written to three people groups. He is hounded and plagued by all three of them. He is hounded by the Jews because they hate him because he once was their boy, and he is now a turncoat because he became a Christian, and now he became a Christian, they are against him, and they want to kill him because he has turned from their belief and turned from their faith. He is hated by the Gentiles because the Roman government, the Gentile nation now is the Roman government. They hate Christianity. They disdain it, and they want to wipe out every Christian, and they called him a ringleader and a leader of a religious sect, and they want to kill him. That was not bad enough. God's people want to kill him. Other Christians want to kill him. Do not ever get in your mind, brother, just because we are all saved that we are all going to get along, and when you start to do something God has called you to do, people are not going to get jealous of the fact, get bitter about it, and then come after you. It comes with the territory. They hated him and persecuted him because he was the man God was using.

You can see it all through here. You can see it all through church history. When a guy comes to you and says, "Well, what church do you go to? I go to Bible Alexander's church. Well, you are just following a man." You know why they say that? Because nobody will follow them. That is

why. It is just part of where it happens. You have got to understand it. Danger seemed to follow him wherever he went. The devil attacked him personally to kill him or at least to get him discouraged to quit. Paul was a prime target. He and his personal ministry that God had given him that was going to change the world. Yet, I have got to tell you. When you talk about Paul, we get this idea that he was a superhuman man. I am telling you, kids, he was not. He was just like me and you. He was just like me and you. He is just a man who got saved and then takes it seriously, and then God gives him something to do, and he does it. He is willing to pay the price.

2 Corinthians 11:27 says he was dog tired. He was in constant pain, I am sure, from the beatings. He lost sleep. He was hungry and thirsty. He not only went without food because he had none, but he fasted through his trials to the Lord. The Bible says he lacked clothing, proper clothing for cold and summer. In the New Testament, Paul was the greatest example of a Christian who served God through ministry. I think he is the benchmark. That is why so many of the old guys that really knew, I knew my father in the Lord, this is true, and I knew many of them. If you would ask them who their favorite character was in the Bible, every one of them would say the Apostle Paul. I understand that. I do. The difference between Paul and the Laodicean Christian and pastors is like the difference between night and day. As I said the last two or three weeks as we have been coming through this, the Laodicean church period has produced the worst bunch of Christians you have ever seen.

He told the church in Galatians 6:9, what a great verse:

*Galatians 6:9*

*And let us not be weary in well doing: for in due season we shall reap, if we faint not.*

He understood that. He could speak with authority. So you understand that. You can speak it with authority. He told Timothy in 2 Timothy 3:12:

*2 Timothy 3:12*

*Yea, and all that will live godly in Christ Jesus shall suffer persecution.*

He could speak that by authority. At the end of your life, maybe you will be able to speak that by authority. Paul, our example and ensample of the true ministry of God, he took a stand. The problem is today is God's people cannot take a stand for anything. They just cannot.

## VII. Moses: An Old Testament Example of Ministry

Along with that, there is this, and I think every man in the ministry, whether you are a pastor or deacon or worker or an elder or whatever, should in the Old Testament study the counterpart of Paul as a minister. God has got a great one in the New Testament, and He has got one, a great one, in the Old Testament, and they compliment each other. In the Old Testament, it is the life of Moses. To me as a pastor, I know Paul was not a pastor, he was an evangelist, and I learned a lot from him because he ministered, and ministry knows no title. But to me as a pastor, which I am, Moses is really my model and my example. To me, Moses is the greatest pastor in all of the

Bible. Most people do not even think of him that way. Paul was an evangelist, but no, no, Moses was a pastor.

I mean, I do not know if you never looked at it or not, he ran two million plus in Sunday school. I do not know if you ever looked at it or not, he pulled out two million plus right out of the devil's backyard. He pastored that same congregation for 40 years. Yet you see in his ministry the same issues that I face, any pastor faces, except you have got to multiply his problems by two million plus. I cannot even get there. I cannot even imagine it. I mean, he deals with opposition in everything God calls him to do, and so will you. The first one was Pharaoh. Pharaoh is the type of the world. He has some real issues dealing with Pharaoh, but God brought him through it. The second thing that he had to deal with when he got out was the people that God sent him. They murmured about everything. If you ever want to see the ministry and the people that you have them pastor to, just go back and look at Moses. Those people murmured about everything. They were never happy. One day they had no water. They wanted to kill Moses. They wanted to go back to Egypt. God came down and did a great miracle, and then they were upset about it two weeks later. They forgot what God had done. "We have got no water. We have got no food. We have got this. Let us go back to Egypt. Oh, it was wonderful back there."

I preached a message one time on our three infirmities that we all have to deal with. I told you Romans 6:19 that the first infirmity you and I have is our flesh. I told you Romans 8:26 the second infirmity we have to deal with is we do not know how to pray. I told you the third infirmity we have in Psalms 77:10 that we always are forgetting what God just did for us. Moses' people back there that he pastored for 40 years, they are just like any congregation you find. They always wanted to ask Moses, "Do not tell me what you did for me yesterday. Just tell me what you are going to do for me today." Oh, that is where he is at. Great study. Great study. Great study. Moses in the Old Testament is a great example of a pastor and what he will have to face. It really is. Incredible.

Moses got tired in the ministry, but he also got tired of the ministry. I cannot blame him. Now, I get tired in the ministry, but I have got to tell you, I have never got tired of the ministry, but I only have one group to work with. He had two million of them, man. He did. If you ever want to see how tired he got, I will show you. Turn over to Numbers 11. Oh, I love this one, man. I go here more. If you look at my Bible, this has probably got more thumbprints on it than any other passage in the Bible. Numbers 11. He not only got tired in the ministry, he got tired of the ministry, and who would not with what he had to put up with. Boy, that is great stuff. Better lose this glory aspect of, "Oh, I am going to be in ministry, man. I am going to get me a three-piece suit, and I am going to get me a hat, and I am going to go to town." You will get run out of town.

Now, you want to see how tired he got? Look at this. Look at Numbers 11:10-15:

*Numbers 11:10-15*

*Then Moses heard the people weep throughout their families, every man in the door of his tent: and the anger of the LORD was kindled greatly; Moses also was displeased.*

*And Moses said unto the LORD, Wherefore hast thou afflicted thy servant? and wherefore have I not found favour in thy sight, that thou layest the burden of all this people upon me?*

*Have I conceived all this people? have I begotten them, that thou shouldest say unto me, Carry them in thy bosom, as a nursing father beareth the sucking child, unto the land which thou swarest unto their fathers?*

*Whence should I have flesh to give unto all this people? for they weep unto me, saying, Give us flesh, that we may eat.*

*I am not able to bear all this people alone, because it is too heavy for me.*

*And if thou deal thus with me, kill me, I pray thee, out of hand, if I have found favour in thy sight; and let me not see my wretchedness.*

That is sarcasm, man. That is him looking at God and saying, "Hey, You are people. You brought them out. You are the one that did all these great miracles, and now look what I am supposed to carry them around for 40 years like a bunch of little babies, changing their diapers, making sure their formula is warm, pat them on the back, pat them on the head." He says, "Hey, You are people. Why can't You do something with them?" Oh, he is tired, man. He is tired. He is tired. He is saying, "Hey, look, You are the one with all the book of promises. You are the one that said You do great and mighty things. Can we have a few of them now? Why is it me who has got to feed two million plus people when they are not my people?" Oh, he is struggling. He says, "Why don't You kick in a little bit, God? Why don't You give me a hand here? Why don't You bring me down with two million plus deadbeats, leave me out here in the desert with them? At least You are going to send me to Hawaii." He is tired, man. He had been put up with it for so long, and he had been going through it so much, and he had been listening to the whining and the complaining and all the deceit and all the stuff that goes on. They had been in golden calves, they had done this, they had done that. They wanted to stone him one time, they did not like him, and then he goes back and he goes forth and right. He is like a father with a little baby carrying around in his bosom, doing everything for him, and he says, "You know what, Lord, I am tired of it. Just do me a favor. I love You. You know I love You. Do me the biggest favor You can do today. Just come down and kill me out of hand."

Peter Ruckman has got a video, another one he ought to get, called *\*Wipeouts in the Ministry\**. He goes through the great men in the Bible who got discouraged just like Moses did because the ministry can be discouraging. He goes down there and he talks about Jeremiah, who God had given the word of God to go to the people and nation of Israel, and they hated it. You know what they did to Jeremiah? They put two ropes under his arms, and you ever seen a porta-potty? A porta-potty is a modern version of an outhouse. In the Bible, they are called dunghills, and it is not dung and donuts, it is dunghill. I know some of you thought it was dung and donut, wrong place. It is filled with dung, maybe 10 or 12 feet. They hated Jeremiah so much they put ropes under his arms and let him down into that dung pit, and he is down there up to his head in the most ungodly scenario he can. You talk about the glory of the ministry. All because he preached the truth. He got so mad and bitter he quit. He told God, he says, "All right, I am done with this, man. Smell me. I am done. I am done with this. I come down here to preach the word of God,"

and God just stood there. He says, "I am finished. I am never going to preach again." God says, "Okay, good deal. Okay, Lord, all right with You. All right with me. You want to quit?" "Yes, sir, I want to quit." "You can quit." "Thank You. I am quitting." "Only one thing, what is that? You can't ever speak in My name again because that is only My prophet, and if you do not want to be My prophet, you can't speak in My name." He says, "Good enough for me." He goes about a week thinking, "Man, I am glad I am out of that ministry." Some people, "I am just one of them now. I can just go out there and hang out with them." About that time, he saw this gay marriage parade coming down the road, Gay Pride Week, and he got the temple started to throb, and he got to that thing, and he is just watching that thing, and they are coming down with signs and "love everybody" and "we love you" and rainbow shirts on and all that stuff, and they are coming down, and he is just getting so mad, and finally he just burst out. He just lets them have it. God said, "Hey, hey, hey, can't do that anymore. You quit, remember? You quit the ministry, remember? You quit. You gave it up. Can't speak in My name anymore." You know what old Jeremiah said? He says, "Lord, I want to quit." He said, "But Your word, oh, Your word is like a burning fire within me." That is a real Christian. A real Christian cannot quit. You are truly saved, and the Word of God is really down inside you. It burns like a fire. I can no more quit than any real Christian could quit than those guys could quit. You know why? Because that book, when it gets in you, it consumes you. Oh, yeah, wipeouts in the ministry. Moses got discouraged, boy. He got hurt, and he is hurt, man. He is hurting. When those times come in Moses' life, as in my life and as in your life, you can read the rest of the story. God always comes alongside and encourages him. God helps get his perspective back. God helped get his purpose back, gets his focus back on track. Moses, just like many of you, gets up one more time, gives it one more shot. See? Ah, it is great. If anybody understands dealing with people and human nature, it is old Moses.

One of the things I want you to learn in the people ministry, you think because you learn some principles that everybody is just going to follow in line. It may take you months. It may take you years to develop some kind of relationship with somebody. There is no fast track to doing everything that God wants you to do. But Moses and Paul, boy, they are two great examples.

## VIII. Paul's Enduring Faithfulness

Going back to Paul there in 2 Corinthians 11:28, if you would, he says this:

*2 Corinthians 11:28*

*Beside those things that are without, that which cometh upon me daily, the care of all the churches.*

I cannot imagine that. He says, "Not only do I have my own issues, I have myself to deal with, I have my wife to deal with, I have my family to deal with, I have the people that You have given me to deal with, not all that, but" he says, "I have got all the other churches that You gave me." You say Paul was not married. Yeah, are you sure about that? I am sure just like in many cases, his spouse did not want to follow in ministry, and that was just one more issue he had to deal with. For somebody who was never married, he sure got great insight on marriage in 1

Corinthians chapter 7. Why in this very chapter, he has to get let down from a wall in a basket because somebody is trying to kill him. Not only did he have to deal with all of that, but he has to deal with all the churches to do it too. I cannot even imagine it. Why all his ministry trips, everything he has done, he has planned around checking on the churches. I have one to look after, and he had at least seven and probably hundreds more. As a good minister, he worried over them. He was afraid the devil would mess them up. He prayed over them. He raised money for them when they were hurting and in jail and had problems like the Church of Jerusalem.

Yet Paul is just like you and me. He is no superman. He would not stand out in any crowd. He is not tall and charismatic. He is bent over and hunched back from all the beatings and the whippings that he had, probably walked with a bad limp. He is not a great speaker, not unlike Moses. Moses was not either. Acts 4:13, 2 Corinthians 10:10, people talk about him being rude in speech and unlearned. 2 Corinthians 10:6 says that he is rude in speech but not in knowledge. He had a mind that was like a steel trap. He was trained by one of the greatest Old Testament scholars of his day in Acts 22:3. He is just like any other Christian. He has his own frailties. I am sure Paul got his feelings hurt. I am sure he got his emotions involved. I am sure he got offended and hurt. I am sure he is tempted and tried just like you and I are. You say, "Well, what is the difference then that makes him so great?" It was the Holy Spirit of God and the power of God in his life. It was the fact that he was willing to be weak so God could use him to be strong.

He reminds me a lot of D.L. Moody. D.L. Moody was a great preacher, and D.L. Moody was going to a church in the United States for like four or five years, having revivals every year, and he had just finished a revival, and hundreds of people had gotten saved. The pastor and the deacons, everybody sat down the next week to discuss it and talk about it and work follow up on it. The pastor said, "Well, while we are all here, why don't we talk about a date that we can have Moody come back next year?" Some of the deacons, you know, were not too happy with Moody. A lot of times leadership in the church is not happy when people get ahead of him, and they said, "Well, why do we have to have Moody back again?" One of them snarled and said, "Has Moody got a corner on the Holy Spirit of God?" One of the old deacons, the other one said, "No, I don't think Moody has got a corner on the Holy Spirit. I think the Holy Spirit has got a corner on Moody. Just have him back."

You say, "What was the difference between Paul and me if we are all the same?" It was the power of God in his life. That was the difference. The fact that no matter what, no matter how hard it got, how long was the journey, he stayed faithful to the end. The fact that all through his life and his struggles and everything that he did, he never lost, he never lost his purpose. You know what purpose is for you and for me? Purpose is understanding, purpose is simply understanding why God saved you. God has something He wants you to do. He wants you to, like we talk about, "Well, life has no purpose." Well, if you get saved, you will get purpose. Purpose is understanding, first of all, that God saved you for a reason. You have a purpose in life. The reason why you are so miserable as a Christian is not because of the person sitting in front of you or behind you or somebody you do not like. The reason why you are so miserable as a Christian is because you have no purpose in life. When you have no purpose in life, you do not understand why God saved you.

The second thing is focus. You see, focus is basically understanding specifically what God saved you for. When you have focus, you know, "Okay, God saved me, I have a purpose, now here is what it is." And you stay focused on that. Focus is identifying what God has called you to do. God not only has a purpose for every one of you, He has something He wants you to focus on. You know, maybe at this time in your life, it may be something that all of you are, but in time, that focus narrows, and God shows you. He never lost his perspective. Perspective is simply purpose is understanding why God saved you. Focus is understanding specifically what God has called you to do. Perspective is understanding how you are going to get it done, okay? How you are going to get it done.

When I started this church, I knew in my mind exactly how to build a church. I knew it would not be easy, I knew it would not be hard, I knew it would take a long time. I knew there were things that have to do, things you have to know, things you have to accomplish. But I understood. I understood. I had perspective. I understand how to get it done. I am not done getting it done yet, but I understand the process. Everything that God calls you to do, there is the right biblical process to do it. You have got to do it that way. That is why he is the greatest example to us today. He never lost his purpose. He never lost his focus. He never lost his perspective.

Next week, I will show you his secret to it all. It is something that honestly every one of you could have if you want it. The question is really, how bad do you want it? You see, the greatest thing about Paul is simply the fact that he is an ordinary guy, just like you and me. If he was some superhero, we would all be in a fix because none of us are superheroes. If he was some great guy with a great vocabulary and a great stature and someone that everybody looked to as a leader, that would put some of us at a disadvantage. But he was not. He probably from a physical standpoint and a physiological standpoint, one of the worst specimens you have ever saw. He was beaten down, hunched over, couldn't speak well. He was rude in what he said. I mean, he would not be the guy you would probably, I would pick to be the leader of the Christian world in the first century. But the incredible thing about him is not what he accomplished in life, and he did a lot of great things. This church, along with any church, it is a Bible-believing church, can trace their roots right back to Paul. Our church today is nothing more than the succession of the line of coming back where it all went back to him. We figure somewhere in that scheme. One of these days when we get home to heaven, we will see it all perfectly. But that is not the incredible thing about him. The thing that made him a great example was not any one thing that he did, but rather the thing that made him my hero was what he did not do. He never quit. He never quit. No matter how hard it got, he never gave up. No matter how tough it became, no matter what the opposition was, no matter how he was tried and tested. Boy, the devil came after him. We read the verses. He never quit. He never lost his focus. He never lost his purpose. He never lost any of those things. He was attacked on every side by everybody to try to stop him. Yet he stayed faithful to the end. We get one little thing in our life that does not go our way. Get our nose bent on a joint. We are gone. See the difference? It takes a special kind of person to stand today. Paul is a special kind of person. That is what it takes. That is what it takes. He stayed faithful to the end.

The answer to all of this is found in chapter 12. That is why I said, not only are we going to talk about Paul being attacked today by the devil personally and see how that fits in, but this lays the foundation for Paul. 2 Corinthians chapter 12. In my mind, as far as ministry, I think 2 Corinthians 12 is probably one of the greatest, if not the greatest chapter in the Bible of the finding. Do you want to be a Paul? Do you want to take a stand and be able to stand? Well, then you have got to understand what got Paul there. Paul was a unique individual, but he was not a unique individual just because he was born that way. He was not a unique individual because his parents were unique individuals. He was not a genetic thing with him. He starts out being the worst enemy of Christianity and winds up being the greatest Christian ever lived. Something happened between point A and point B. If that same thing does not happen in your life, you will go through life in a nominal fashion. Maybe that is what you want. Maybe that is what you want. I have never been nominal anything in my life. I have never been middle of the road in anything. I am either in or I am out. It is a thing where for me when I saw chapter 12, when I understood it, that is where it was. The same thing that got him through the first century AD will get you through the 21st century AD. Next week, as simple as it is, I will show you why some of God's people make it and why some of them do not. There is one determining factor that put all this together because Paul was just like you and me. He was just a common ordinary guy. When the world would look at him, they would never think, "That is my choice to start every church in the world." But he was God's choice. The greatest thing about him is not anything that he did, but it is what he allowed God to do in his life. I am going to show you that next week.

Every head bowed, every eye closed. Father, we do thank You and praise You for the Lord Jesus.