

2 Corinthians 12

Sunday 6/9/2013

If you have your Bibles this morning, I want to invite you to turn back to 2 Corinthians chapter 12. Last week, we started chapter 12 with an introduction to this great chapter. I like to do that, as I told you, with each chapter. I think it helps put everything into context for you, so that as I build through the chapter, you pretty much already know where I am going, and it helps you get it all together.

Personally, I think chapter 12 is probably the greatest key chapter in the Bible on why God's people give God their life and why some do not. I think it is an incredible chapter. It was a chapter that many years ago in my life I detailed out and really took some time with. The fallacy today is giving God your soul but hanging on to your own life, and that is so prevalent today. But I think in this great chapter, you see what really makes the difference.

I began to show you the key areas in Paul's life that made him the man for God that he was. We looked at a lot of background stuff on Paul, and I told you how important it was for us as God's people to understand the life of Paul. The Bible is very clear on it when it talks about the men and women in the Bible, the circumstances, the situation, and even the children many times are great pictures for us. I think you will understand that a little better after today than maybe you already do.

We see Paul as the greatest Christian, as I told you last week, that ever lived. Yet, I guarantee you if he were alive today, we would find that many of God's people who love to read his books and pastors who preach on his life would have problems with Paul. I am sure that he would be criticized by God's people today.

We talk about the Lord Jesus Christ and how much He means to us. Every church service today that we have is built around Christ and what they preach about Christ and all of those things that go along with it. But it is a dying truth that if Christ showed up today and started His earthly ministry the second time, I guarantee you that most of the churches would have a problem with Him very quickly. You would find out that most churches, when they teach what they teach and believe what they believe, are so contrary to what Christ and the Bible teach that very quickly we would have a problem. That is one of the reasons why He is not coming back the second time like He did the first time. I do not know if you have ever analyzed it or not, but if Christ came back the second time like He came back the first time, He would have the same problems, just in the modern-day setting.

The Charismatics could not stand Him because Jesus never spoke in tongues. The Jehovah's Witnesses would not have anything to do with Him. The Mormons could not have anything to do with Him. You just go down the list; not many people would have anything to do with Him. I guarantee you if Christ showed up the second time like He did the first time, they would crucify Him probably, and very quickly. So, He is not coming back the second time like He did the first time. Anytime He comes, He is going to take charge, and when He takes charge, everybody will understand who He is and what He is.

But Paul is the same way. There were people that would be against him. They would say that Paul was too radical. They would say that he thinks he knows everything. There would be people that would accuse him of not being tolerant of other people's beliefs. Some would say he was loud, rude, obnoxious. Real Christians always have driven phony Christians up the wall; it is just the way it is. Paul was certainly the legitimate, real Christian, and it would not take long to separate the real deal from the phony deal if he showed up today or if somebody really just studies the books that he wrote and shows you exactly what we have.

I. Key Aspects of Paul's Life

Last week, I told you that we need to see what made Paul what and who he was. I want you to understand what gave him the courage that he had to face all of his opposition, and boy, he had some. I want you to see and understand what gave him his ability to stay the course through all of his adversity that he faced.

You remember I gave you a couple of really important aspects in his life that are really good for your own personal study.

1. The first one we talked about was that greatest study I think that I ever took in the Bible for my own life personally, and that is the seven people in the Bible that God changed their name, Paul being one of them. I showed you last week how that is a monumental, major thing to look at and study in the Bible: the day God changed these men's names. I showed you that five of them had their names changed in a great way that showed a different level and a closer relationship and a point in their life where they never looked back. Then two of them were where God changed their name in a very negative aspect. It is one of the greatest studies that I ever took, and I guarantee you if you get into it and lay it out, the thing you want to watch and the thing you want to look for (and I did this) is at what point in each one of these five guys who did good (and ladies too) where were they at, what they had gone through, and then at that moment in time, what brought them to the next level, and God said, "I want to change your name." It is an incredible study.
2. Then I showed you the five characteristics that at some point we need to have in our lives. We see them in Paul's life, and we see them almost in everybody's life that really did anything for God. I talked about how I understand that spiritual growth is a process. It is not something that you are going to get right after you get saved. You may struggle with some things; it may take some people quicker or longer than others, but at the end of the day, this is where you want to get: the five concepts of a life with God in the Bible that will simply change your life. Remember I told you about hearing the inaudible, hearing things that other people cannot hear from God. Seeing the invisible, seeing circumstances the way God sees them. Touching the intangible. Believing the infallible. Then I rounded it all off with simply all those things bring you to the place in your life where you do the impossible.

Paul did the impossible. Every one of these five people that you look at that God changed their name, when God changed their name, He called them to do the impossible, and it is an incredible, incredible study. Paul's life can be summed up in these five areas, and in time, this

should be our goal too. But it takes getting through the entanglements of this whole world that hold us up.

II. Paul's Vision and Revelation

Today, I want to show you the event that happened in Paul's life that was the final phase of him leaving this whole world in the dust. If you ever get down what I am going to talk about today (and I know some of you will not, and I know some of you probably will), but if you will get this down and see this and get a handle on it in your own life, because something transpired in his life after he was saved that changed his life completely and in every way.

I want to begin reading here in 2 Corinthians chapter 12. I want to read the first six verses here, and then we will pray, and then we will begin to go down through this. Here is what he says:

2 Corinthians 12:1-6

It is not expedient for me doubtless to glory. I will come to visions and revelations of the Lord.

I knew a man in Christ above fourteen years ago, (whether in the body, I cannot tell; or whether out of the body, I cannot tell: God knoweth;) such an one caught up to the third heaven.

And I knew such a man, (whether in the body, or out of the body, I cannot tell: God knoweth;)

How that he was caught up into paradise, and heard unspeakable words, which it is not lawful for a man to utter.

Of such an one will I glory: yet of myself I will not glory, but in mine infirmities.

For though I would desire to glory, I shall not be a fool; for I will say the truth: but now I forbear, lest any man should think of me above that which he seeth me to be, or that he heareth of me.

Now Father, Lord, there is so much in this great chapter that I want my people to see and understand. There is so much here that I think that will change all of us and help us be better. But Lord, I do not have the ability to lay it all out. I do not have the wherewithal to be able to pour it into people's hearts and their minds. Holy Spirit of God, I ask You today to be able to take the Word of God and take this message and to do what only You can do, and that is to touch the hearts and the lives of these Your people. Lord, we will be careful, and we will give You the honor and the glory and the praise in Jesus' name, for His sake we ask it. Amen.

I have been giving you a chapter heading on every chapter in the book of 2 Corinthians and 1 Corinthians. In this particular chapter, we see the humility of the minister of staying humble in the ministry and doing the things that God calls you to do. We will see that develop as we come on down through here.

In this chapter, Paul begins to tell us what happened to him at one point in his life. This was the game changer for him. This is the thing that really did it all. This is the event that solidified his

purpose, his focus, and his perspective. Remember, I talked about those three things all through our last couple of messages.

Verse 2 tells us this event took place about 14 years ago. If you go through the chronology in the Bible, that would put it back around Acts chapter 13 and Acts chapter 14. People who really know the Bible put this event in his life (just for your note in your Bible) probably when he was dragged out of the city of Lystra and they stoned him with stones and left him for dead. This is where most people put it, even though for sure you cannot know that. It is probably true and probably where it happened.

You will also notice in verse 2 that he says, "I knew a man in Christ about 14 years ago." This passage has been a little confusing for people because they wonder who this man he is talking about. He is talking about himself, and the thing you have to remember here is that this event that he is going to tell us about was a life-changing event. I would say that everything that was in Paul's life and everything that happened to Paul from this point on would go back to here. This is an incredible time in his life, and it was such a revelation from the Lord and such a great thing in his life that honestly, he was the only guy on planet Earth up to this point that this had happened to. If he wanted to, he could have gotten a big bus and put a banner on the side and toured all around the world, and people would have paid to hear him say it. He could have gloried in the fact that, "I am the only one that this happened to, and God spoke directly to me," but that is not Paul. So, what he uses here when he says, "I knew a man in Christ about 14 years ago," he is using what we call in English grammar "third person singular." He is talking about himself, but he is putting it in a way that he is not taking the glory for himself. You want to put that note in there.

Verse 6 says:

2 Corinthians 12:6

For though I would desire to glory, I shall not be a fool; for I will say the truth: but now I forbear, lest any man should think of me above that which he seeth me to be, or that he heareth of me.

His humility begins to come out here. He is very, very, very careful all through his life never to take the glory for what God is doing in his life, and that in itself is a great lesson.

Verse 3 says, "whether in the body, I cannot tell; or whether out of the body, I cannot tell." What he is saying here is, "I do not know if I actually died and went up to heaven, or I was just unconscious and God brought the vision down here to me." He was not sure; it does not really matter. But he is saying, "whether in the body or out of the body." "In the body" would be still alive and God bringing it to him. "Out of the body" would be he is dead and God took him up and then God brought him back. He says, "I really do not know what state I was in when God gave this to me."

Verse 2 says he was taken up to the third heaven. That is a great thing, and a lot of people have a tough time with that. Years ago, when I used to do a lot of preaching around, I would get into churches where they did not know much about the Bible, and I would always use little things to

try to perk their attention and get them to think. I would talk about the fact that the Bible says there are three heavens, and then I would look at them and ask them, "If you are saved, which one do you go to when you die?" You would see some of the most blank, terrified stares you ever saw in your life.

Truth of the matter is, the word "heaven" we know in the Bible is defined as an expansive space. When it talks about three heavens, it is not talking about three levels of heaven; it is not talking about when you get to heaven, you have three stories on it. It is talking about an expanse. The first heaven is our atmosphere. The second heaven is outer space. The third heaven is where God's throne is, and that is where Paul was taken up to. You find that all detailed out for you if you want to get into it or ask it on Thursday night at some point, but the key passage is Psalms 148.

Another interesting thing here is in verse 4, and you want to mark this: he says he was caught up to the third heaven to paradise. That is very important because that shows you that, as the book of Ephesians says, when Christ went down into the center of the earth while the three days He was dead, the Bible says He led captivity captive. Those people were in paradise. Paradise is another name for Abraham's bosom. Remember the thief on the cross when he was getting ready to die over there in Luke 23:43, and he said, "Lord, remember me when thou comest into thy kingdom." What did Jesus say? He says, "To day shalt thou be with me in paradise." See, where was he going? The center of the earth. Now that verse shows you that paradise is no longer down there. That is the great thing about the Bible; it shows you every aspect of truth about itself. Where over here in Luke, we read it, paradise is in the center of the earth. Now after the resurrection, when Paul is caught up there, he clearly tells us paradise is up there in the third heaven. That kind of stuff is invaluable in putting it into your Bible, and just knowing how the mechanics of the Bible work.

We will say that Paul was taken by God up to the third heaven, and he was shown the plan and the majesty of God. This is what happened to his life; this is exactly what happened. He saw and experienced and heard what nobody else had ever done up to this point in time. He saw; he was shown things unspeakable. The Bible says he heard things that were not lawful for a man to hear or utter or talk about. He says, yet God took Paul and showed him these things that no other man had ever seen or heard. Verse 1 says, and it is a great verse, "I will come to visions and revelations of the Lord." That is what changed him.

III. Paul's Role in God's Plan

Now I want to talk about that for just a moment before we move on through here. He saw the glory of God's throne. He saw the power of God's majesty. God revealed to him what He had revealed to no man up to this point in time, and Paul called it a vision of the revelation of the Lord. Now we would ask ourselves, "What did God show him?" Well, keep in mind, I want you to first understand how this thing works and what God showed him, because it is going to come back to you and me here in just a moment.

What did God show him? What did God reveal to him? We know that Paul is the apostle to the church. We also know that up to this point, the Bible says in Romans 16:25 that the concept of the church had never been revealed to man. In fact, Romans 16 says that it was a secret that God kept and the mystery that God kept from the beginning of the world. He had never told anybody about the concept of the church. It was not until the book of Ephesians is written that we are told that the church was a mystery. Ephesians 5:32 says, "This is a great mystery: but I speak concerning Christ and the church." It was not until Paul wrote that book that he actually revealed what the church really was. So what you have here is you have to begin to see what God revealed to him was the aspect of the church. What God gave him was the piece of the puzzle that nobody had: the body of Christ.

At the same time, you have to remember this: Paul was a doctor of the law. Paul knew the Old Testament better than anybody knew the Old Testament. This is one of the reasons why God picked him. He was trained in Acts 22 by one of the greatest legal scholars of his day. When I say legal, I mean in the law of the Old Testament. He knew it backwards and forwards; he knew everything about it. He had to have that because he had to deal with the Jews. So God picked the man who had a historical background, a very important historical background in his own nation, who understood the religion of his nation, the law. Then God took a man who had impeccable credentials, who understood every jot and tittle and everything about the law, and then He took that guy and chose that guy to be the Gentile, to be the apostle to the Gentile, and gave him the mystery of the church.

You know what God did? God picked a man, Paul, who had all of the Old Testament better than anybody, and then He took him and He gave him on the complete scale with the Bible, because up to this point, all they had was the Old Testament and what God was doing with Israel. Nobody knew a thing about the church. What God did is took him up and chose him to reveal the church to the Gentile world. What God did up there by giving the revelations and the glory of God and showing him the majesty, God gave him the biggest piece of the puzzle that was ever in the history of the world: the church, the body of Christ, the bride of Christ, now revealed to the world through one man. Boy, it is no wonder, once you understand that, why the devil wanted to stop it. It is no wonder why the devil put the adversity.

But I want to say that is the mechanics of it. God, and I told you when we came through on New Year's Eve, remember the two people groups that God has, how He enacts His plan through the two people groups? In the Old Testament, He enacts it through the nation of Israel. In the New Testament, He brings it about through the body of Christ. Well, the Old Testament now is about to end. Israel is in apostasy and in captivity. God is getting ready to turn His attention to the Gentiles and bring the Gospel to them. You saw glimpses of this in the Gospels if you were paying attention. So now God needs a man to be able to do that, but He needs a special man. He needs a man who understands both passages. He needs a man who understands what God is doing with an Old Testament nation of Israel, and a man then who can understand what God is doing with a church. They can put both of them together, and that man was Paul.

Now, do you see the importance of you and me to ever really know the Bible and what God is doing, to have both of those down? Do you better understand now why I did what I did on New

Year's Eve to bring you through that and to show you that so you could grasp that? Because that is what Paul had to have. But that alone was not what changed him. Though that would have changed a lot of people personally, I think that was great, and I think that that was an incredible thing, and I think that that in itself would just put somebody over the top. But I do not really believe that that alone was what changed him, and I say that based on my own life and my own testimony when God changed my name. I know what I am about to say will go right over some of your heads; some of you, I know it will, but I hope some of you will catch it.

It was not just God giving him God's piece of the puzzle for the plan to put it all together. I believe it was also the fact that God showed him his personal part in this plan. I do not think it was just God showing him, "This is what I am going to do." That would have been overwhelming and amazing. But then God stopped and looked at him and said, "Paul, this is how you are going to fulfill it and fit in for Me." I think that was the final, final thing. He saw himself in that plan, and his life was never the same. It would have been one thing if God just said, "Here is what I am going to do," but He did not stop there. He said, "No, here is what I am going to do, and here is what I want you to do in it."

Do you realize that is what God wants to do with you? Do you realize that a thing that will change your life, and the thing that did change my life, was not just seeing the overall (though I was overwhelmed with the Bible, I was overwhelmed with the majesty of what that book was)? I mean, I remember reading it and seeing it and all the different types and all the different pictures and all this and all that, and how it fit into history, and it overwhelmed me. But I will be honest with you, it was not until I saw that God put me in that plan that changed my life. I am telling you, I believe that is what it was with Paul.

He now lived his life setting his affections on things above and not on the things of this world. He now lived the life not entangling himself with the affairs of this life. Do you realize, do you stop and realize (you have to, I know you, because nobody in here is this dumb, you are all smart), do you realize the stupid, little, petty, absolutely worthless things that knock us off the course? If it was your house burning down, your dog being shot, your car blowing up, you know, that would be one thing. But we allow the absolute most ridiculous, petty, worthless things to get into our world, and you know why that is? Because we do not understand where we are at in this plan that God has enacted. That is why.

Now he lives his life by saying things like, "For me to live is Christ, and to die is gain." He is now like Moses that I talked about last week, who lived his life after God changed all the things in his life. It did not change his name, but boy, he changed everything in his life. Moses got to the point where he had these five things in his life, and Moses lived his life as the Bible says, "enduring as seeing him who was invisible." Now Paul comes to be like Abraham, like I told you last week, that had the ability (God did change his name and his wife) and now he has the ability to call those things that are not as though they were. That is an incredible thing. From this point on, he has one goal, Paul does. He has one purpose. He has one focus, and he has one perspective, and that is to fulfill God's plan and purpose for his life.

IV. The Heartbeat and Mind of God: John and Paul

I want to show you something today. I want this to be a very rewarding time for you today. I want you to leave here today with your cup full. Not that I do not try to fill it up, but this will be so easy today. I hope you brought a big bucket because there is a lot for you to fill up today. In the Bible, in the New Testament anyhow, there are two men who show us this great concept for our lives. There are two men that I have talked about before, never one and the other together like I am today. But there are two men in the Bible; both of these men do something that no one else in all the Bible ever accomplished, and it is what makes them such a great study together, and they set the standard for us. Both are an exceptional type of and a picture of what we should be as Christians in the Bible.

The first man I want to talk about is the Apostle John, and one of the greatest types of the child of God in the New Testament Christian world that you are ever going to find in the Bible. John and Paul are the two most unique people in the Bible. When God reached down and got Paul, He got him with a basis of understanding the Old Testament and showed him the biggest piece of the puzzle to put it all together. But when God used John, you have to remember John did not write his books of the Bible until the end, around 85-90 AD. John is the only man in the Bible, he even trumps Paul on this, John is the only man in the Bible that when he sits down to write, he has the complete Bible in front of him. He has everything. He is the last author of the Bible. He writes the Gospel of John, First, Second, Third John, and the book of Revelation, all after 80 AD. Everything else is written at that point. When he sits down at the table and God tells him to write, he has everything in front of him, Old Testament and New Testament. That is quite impressive; that is why his writings are so impressive.

Remember I showed you a couple of weeks ago that there were seven churches in the book of Revelation, and then I showed you that there were seven churches that Paul wrote to, and I showed you how the seven churches in Revelation line up to the seven churches that Paul wrote to. Well, watch this. In the Old Testament, there are five wisdom books: Psalms, Job, Proverbs, Ecclesiastes, and the Song of Solomon. In the New Testament, the two prevalent writers of the New Testament are John and Paul. Paul writes 13 books (14 if you count Hebrews). John writes five. We know him in our New Testament as the Gospel of John, First John, Second John, Third John, and the book of Revelation.

Now, I am telling you something: in the New Testament, the five books that John writes will match up to the five wisdom books in the Old Testament. It is as sure as I am standing here. These five books that John writes form the wisdom books of the New Testament. The Gospel of John will match up to Psalms. When you start to look at Psalms and match it up to the Gospel of John, you know what the theme is of the Gospel of John? It is the deity of Christ. It is who Christ is. That is the wisdom that you and I have. Remember a couple of weeks ago, I showed you the Laodicean church, and I took you to Colossians and I said the first chapter is redefining who Christ is. Why? Because the Laodicean church has lost who Christ is. So the first book of wisdom in your New Testament by John is who Christ is, the Son of God, the Gospel of John. That is incredible, absolutely incredible. When you come to First John, you will find that that matches up to the Song of Solomon. Most people that teach the epistle of First John will tell you the theme of First John is love. How many times I have heard that over the years! When a man

starts to talk like that, I know two things about him: one, he has not read the book, he is reading somebody else's material; and two, he does not know very much about the Bible. You see, the first thing I know is that First John lines up to the Song of Solomon, and I know about Song of Solomon is about my intimate relationship with the Lord. We know that; we did a study on it one New Year's. So when I come to the book of First John, I do not find the theme "love." I find five little chapters in that book, 26 times he says "to know," "to know," "to know," "to know the Lord," "to know this." Now we know, you should know, 26 times he is talking about it. You know what that does for me? It shows me that the theme of that book is not love. The theme of that book is knowing. We have a bunch of Christians today who claim they love God, but they do not know God. We have a bunch of Christians say, "Well, I love Jesus," but you do not know Him. We fall in love with people and fall out of love with people so quickly today, and God's people do the same thing with Christ. That is why people come to church, they get saved, you never see them again. They fell in on Sunday morning, and they fell out by Sunday night. To know Him is to love Him. We are famous as American Christians for loving things we do not know. We are famous for Christians, you have heard me rant on it many, many times, we love inanimate objects. We love things that cannot love us back. "I love my car." Give it a big old kiss, kiss on the hood. Wait until the motor cools down so you do not burn your lips. "I love this house. I love this dress. I love this suit. I love this. I love this ring. I love this hat. I love this everything." We spend so much time loving things that cannot love us back, and we carry that right into our Christianity. So you have First John is to know Him; there is your relationship with Song of Solomon. Second John and Third John will both deal with the nation of Israel. Second John will line up with Ecclesiastes. Third John will line up to the book of Proverbs. In Second John, you have the elect lady, that is Israel. In Third John, you have a wise man and a foolish man, that is the book of Proverbs. Then Revelation is the book of Job, the capstone of the Bible. What does it deal with? Both books deal with the same thing: the suffering of Israel.

See that thing? John is a type of the New Testament Christian. I want you to get that. He writes five books that are our wisdom books as New Testament Christians. As a New Testament Christian, these five books make up the wisdom that we need to have. We need to know who Christ is. We need to know that relationship is based on loving Him, is based on knowing Him. We need to know God's relationship still with the nation of Israel, and then we need to know the whole picture of the capstone of the Bible and the suffering of the nation of Israel. That is what we need to know, and these five books form the New Testament wisdom books.

Did you ever see this? John had a special relationship with Christ. Did you ever lay it out in the Bible? I have laid it out a few times for you on Thursday night. First of all, you had 12 apostles picked by God to do the work of God. Right out of the chute, one of them was a phony, was it not? Judas. Then what was left? You find when you study it out, out of the rest that was left, out of the rest of the 11, three men had a greater experience with Christ than the rest of them, and their names are Peter, James, and John. They pop up all the time: Mount Transfiguration, Peter, James, and John; when it was raising Lazarus' daughter, Peter, James, and John. Peter, James, and John experienced greater things with the Lord than the rest of the apostles. I tell you right now, and I have a great message on it (well, I think it is great, you probably would not), I have a message on it that basically talks about that those 12 apostles are a picture of Christianity. Do

you think everybody here this morning is saved? Do you think you get a group of Christians together and they are all saved? You are always going to have a phony in a bunch. Just like that, the rest of you who are saved this morning, how come some of the other ones have more power with God and God does more things with them than He does with you? See that thing? Peter, James, and John.

But then we take it all the way down to the end. When push comes to shove and the crucifixion took place, they all forsook Him. Peter denies Him around the fire. James is gone. The only one that goes all the way to the end is the Apostle John. One out of 12. The rest of them, you cannot find them anywhere. But John is right at the feet of Jesus at the cross. He goes all the way. I do not know if you ever caught this or not, at the crucifixion in John 19, when John is standing down here at His feet, Jesus looked down and sees His mother Mary. He sees His mother. She is the type of the nation of Israel. He looks at John, type of the church, and He gives His mother to John. That is a picture of the New Testament, us being the caretakers of the nation of Israel. Oh, I am telling you, he is a great study.

Did you ever notice in John 13:23, John is the only apostle of all the 12 that Jesus says He loved? Now, I know He loved them all, but it would be safe to say that Jesus had a special love for John. I think it would be safe to say that Jesus has a special love for some of you over some of your other ones. You say, "Now, I do not know about that. Why? How can you say that Jesus had a special love for John?" It is simple: because John had a special love for Jesus. You do not think that you can just throw God under the bus the way we do sometimes, and then He just hangs on like the doting girlfriend who wants to follow you wherever, and you can do whatever you want to do to her. I guarantee you that God has special relationships. It is not that He does not want to; it is not that it is not on Him. It is the fact that you do not want it.

At the Last Supper, John 13, I have studied this guy out probably more, him and Paul, more than any other people in the Bible, because I saw at a glance (I mean, we are talking years ago) how important this was. Here in John 13, when they are having the Last Supper and Jesus says to the crowd, the 12 apostles are there, He says to them, "One of you tonight is going to betray Me." You look for yourself, every one of them, every one of those guys look at Him and say, "Lord, is it me? Lord, is it me? Lord, is it me?" John looks around the corner and says, "Lord, who is it?" He did not know who it was, but he knew it was not going to be him. That is a special relationship; it really is. John has a special love and relationship with Christ, just as many of you do.

John never quit. He never let adversity keep him back. John's crowning moment, his crowning moment, John does something, and here is the key, that no other man in the Bible does, and it is an incredible picture of what we should be and what we should be doing. In John 13:23, the Bible tells us that John leans over and lays his head on the breast of Jesus, and he actually hears the heartbeat of God. He actually hears God manifested in the flesh. Now, the heartbeat of God, getting God's heart of the child of God, we study the book of Song of Solomon. Now I am telling you, the parallels, it is incredible. We go back to the book of Song of Solomon in chapter 2. It is probably the most intimate chapter in the Song of Solomon about our relationship with the Lord. What do you find down in Song of Solomon 2:6? When Jesus is talking about the bride, us, and

we are talking back and forth about Him, and it is a great picture on the rapture of the church, what does He say in Song of Solomon 2:6? He says, "His left hand is under my head, and his right hand doth embrace me." That is a picture of somebody leaning over and listening to the heartbeat of God. That is a picture of John. That is where we ought to be.

This was the reason John was taken up to the second coming and shown all the church age, what was past, what was present, and what was future. In Revelation 1:10 and Revelation 1:19, God revealed all that He had done and what He was going to do and what He would do in eternity, and He wants to reveal it to you and to me just like He revealed it to John. I thought it was interesting, Paul said, "I have come to the revelation of Jesus Christ." John said, "I am going to write the revelation of Jesus Christ." See that thing? John had the greatest privilege of anybody in the Bible. He got to write the capstone of the Word of God that covered everything that God had done, where God was at, and where God was going. Now he knows and now he understands the order of events that will come to pass based on what has already happened, the cycle of history. We ought to have that. We ought to know that. We ought to be in the exact same place John was. We ought to have the heartbeat of God in our life, that we understand where God has been, where God is at, where God is going. That is our first guy.

Our second guy is the guy who is the subject of our sermon today: the Apostle Paul. Where John gets the heartbeat of God, you need to see this, Paul gets the mind of God. See that? And those are the exact two things we have to have. John represents a child of God who hears the heartbeat of God and is never the same again. Paul represents the child of God who gets the other side of it, who gets the mind of God, and he is never the same again. My dear friend, when you get God's heart, typified by John, and you get God's mind, typified by what happened to Paul, nothing will ever stop you the rest of your life, and God will change your name in the process.

V. The Transformative Power of God's Word

Paul not only sees God's master plan, he not only gets the mind of God, but he sees himself within that plan. I have to ask you, when you do that, how do you walk away from that? How do you walk away from that?

I heard on the news this week, what was it, that you about fell over when a big lottery number came out? Almost \$400 million. Remember, you ran in the bedroom and checked all your lottery tickets. \$600 million? How much? \$600 million. Well, you could buy Steve some bones with that \$600 million. Now, would I be presumptuous saying that if any one of you won that \$600 million, would it not change your life? Yes, your tithes would change our lives. In fact, this would be a time for you to live by faith, and you live off 10% and give the rest to God. My son, \$600 million. What is that after taxes, Chris? Approximately \$385 million. Would that change your life? Change your life? Yours? We will have an invitation here in a moment for all liars whose pants are on fire this morning. It changed my life. You know what, Chris, you know what, Kevin, you may not ever spend a dime of it, and you may give it all away, but even in doing all that, it changed your whole life. The moment you came home with \$385 million, you would have more friends than you ever had in your life. Now my favorite phrase would come into play: "I have more friends than I can afford." You would find out aunts and uncles and cousins that you

never knew existed. Your life would change. Your life would change just writing a tax check for it. Your life would change the moment you come back and you say, "I want to put it in the bank," and you have to. Now, who would put \$385 million in one bank? Now you have to have, if you put a million dollars in each bank, it needs 385 banks. Then you know what is going to come to you? Every investor on the planet is going to find who you are. That is going to change your life, not before you spend a dime of it. Not before you spend a dime. Then you know what you are going to say? "Well, I do not need anything." And then you will be amazed how much stuff you find you need.

I make my point by saying this: \$385 million would change everybody's life. How come God gave us a book that per page is worth a hundred billion dollars in gold bullion, and it does not change anybody's life? Now, see how I set you up for that? That is good preaching. I have a book that each page is a hundred billion dollars of gold. You have it in your lap. It does not do a thing for us. You see, when John heard the heartbeat of God, he cashed in. When God took Paul up and showed him the abundance of the revelation of God, and he saw not just the plan of God, not just that he got the biggest piece of the puzzle, but he saw, "God has me in this plan." Oh boy, count me in! That is the book God gave you. That is the book God gave you, and his life, like John's life, like our life, will never be the same.

Here is the key I want you to get today: only one other person can accomplish these two things. The only other person who can accomplish these two things that John accomplished and Paul accomplished is a New Testament born-again child of God with a complete revelation of God's heart and God's mind: the Word of God. We are the only ones that can do it. That is why there are types and models of what we should be. The day in your life when you come to the vision and revelation of the Lord through that book that God gave you, it will do for you what it did for both John and Paul. It will take you up to the third heaven and show you God's master plan, and it will bring you back down and lay your head on the breast of Jesus to hear where God's heartbeat is today.

You and I, through the Word of God that He has given us, the more sure Word of prophecy, the absolute standard of life and the issues of life, the complete revelation of God, the mind of Christ, and the heartbeat of God. Hey, listen, if the Bible is Christ and God, and it most certainly is (Psalms 40:7 says, "Lo, I come: in the volume of the book it is written of me"), John 1:1 says, "In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God." John 1:14 says, "And the Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us." If that is true, then let me ask you a question, and I understand that many of you are new Christians, and I am not even asking you this question, though you need to find the answer out, but I am not putting you on the spot today. But let me ask you, if that book is Christ and that book is God's heartbeat and that book is God's mind, where would you turn to it today to find God's heart in that book? Do you know? I mean, what is the number one thing on God's heart? Is it salvation? Is it the souls of men? Is it you? Is it the church? Do you even know? I will tell you this: it is none of the above. But there is a specific place in that Bible where you can go, and that heartbeat is pounding, and it shows you exactly where His heart is.

You see, when you invest your life in that supernatural book, that book invests its supernatural qualities into your life, and you become supernatural in your relationship with Christ. That in time, through a process, it will bring you to the place in your life where you see the visions and the revelation of the Lord that Paul saw, and you will have God's heartbeat, and you will never be the same again. You will never be the same again.

I heard a tragic story this week, which I am sure you all heard, and trust me, what I am about to say is no disrespect to the tragedy because it is certainly a tragedy. We have had terrible tornadoes and hurricanes just this year. Oklahoma, I am not even sure, is around anymore. It has been terrible. But last week, I got caught up in the story about the three storm chasers that were killed. What a terrible thing that is. They all looked like they were great guys, good guys, and all of those things, and this is nothing derogatory toward them or what they were doing. But I was listening to people talk about that, and it just struck me from my own personal view of things. Somebody was saying that one of the older guys who was killed in the tornado had been a storm chaser, and that is all he did for 30 years. He was a storm chaser for 30 years, and that was his life. I am sorry he died. I am sure he was a good man, and I wished he would have survived. But it struck me personally, just between me and the Lord, God speaking to me, it struck me: I hope I do not have to go to heaven knowing that I wasted my life chasing storms when I had a book that gave me the heartbeat of God and the mind of God to change the world. That is no disrespect to him, but it is just the way I looked at it.

I go to the gym every morning just to keep, and I am not in any way, shape, or form, I am in a state of maintenance. I am not building anything; I am just in a state of maintenance. I am just trying to be like the King James Bible, preserved to some degree. I have a lot of friends up there; I meet them. They know I am a preacher; we talk back and forth, and I have a lot of nice people up there. But you know, you learn from wherever you go, whatever you do. There are a couple of guys up there. In fact, I saw Matt up there the other day. Matt, I walked down the steps, and Matt came out, and I thought, "Matt is coming to the gym. I have a workout buddy." Matt was just there waiting to go pick up his car; he had to ride with somebody. But it was good to see you, Matt. It was good to have you there. But Matt will know what I am talking about here. I watch these guys work out. Why do you have to get so big that you cannot scratch the back of your neck? Is there a reason for that? I am telling you, man, I watch these guys bulk up. They are huge. The funniest thing in the world is a guy with little hips like that and shoulders like that. If I wanted to take you down, I would never hit you in the shoulders; I would just cut you in half at your waist with a little pocket knife in no time. I have never understood it. But I watch these guys, and I get in there and get out. I am there 45 minutes; I have my routine. I know what I need to do. I watch these guys. One guy told me he comes five times to the gym, five times a day. They are over there, and I never, I have to confess some stupid stuff to you I did when I first, I never knew why they put mirrors around that place. How I know, does anybody here get off watching yourself in the mirror and anything? Everything they are doing, they are just, and then it is the leg, and then they are down to going on the track. I mean, I thought it was dance moves they were practicing or something. You know what I thought to myself? If any one of these guys would spend half the time in the Bible and the Word of God that they do making their flesh look good, they would change the world.

You have to wonder, how do people miss that? How do people miss the fact that the book God gave us is the mind of Christ and the heartbeat of God, and it will change everything about us? How do we get so out of whack that we actually think the source of every problem we have is this flesh, pumping it up, pampering it, oiling it, shaving it, getting to the place where you are some golden bronze Genesis 6 son of God? I do not know. I am telling you, when you come to the vision and revelation of that book, and you hear God's heart, God's mind, you get a better perspective. I think Isaiah 6 says it. Isaiah says it is one of the greatest passionate Bible verses. He says, "I saw the Lord lifted up and all of his holy train." He actually saw God on His throne. You know the next words out of his mouth? "Woe is me!" You see, seeing who God really is puts it in perspective of who we really are. That book, God's mind, God's heart, will change who you are, and God will change your name.

It will allow you and me to see God's grand master plan. That is what I did New Year's Eve. New Year's Eve was nothing more than a small glimpse of what God must have showed Paul, and mine was such a ridiculously feeble attempt. But the concept is the same. I took that night, and I have had some of you, as stupid as it was, as mundane as it was, as ungodly as it was, all the things in a physical sense that it could not even approach anything that God could do, some of you still talk about, "Boy, it really turned a light on for me." Well, what must it have done for Paul? You see, that is what God wants to do. But God just does not want to show you the grand, grandiose plan. God wants to allow you to see yourself in that grandiose plan, and when you do, nothing, I mean nothing, will ever stop you. You will learn, just like Paul did and John did, that you will leave this physical world, and you will dwell in the supernatural world by a supernatural book. In your life, whatever you read from that point on, whether it be books, magazines, or newspapers, whatever you see, whether it be TV news broadcasts or documentaries, whatever conversations you have with your friends or your family or people that you meet, it will always be illuminated and enlightened by what the Word of God has shown you, how the whole thing works. Now you will understand, I say you will understand it all, you will understand a lot of it, how everything in life relates back to God's master plan, including you and me.

That is why Paul lived his life the way that he did, and that is why John was chosen to write the books that he wrote, and finally the book of Revelation. One is taken up to the third heaven and sees the mind of God. The other one is taken to the second coming of Christ, and he sees God's heart. That is why he never quit. That is why he never gave up, both of them, in spite of all that they faced. He not only saw the bigger picture of life, but he saw the bigger picture of his life: the reason why God saved him, the purpose for his existence, never losing his focus or his perspective.

VI. The Call to Leadership and Enduring Faith

This is why, as I said a couple of weeks ago in a message on holding the line, that it takes a special kind of person to do the ministry and the work of God today. Because in John's life, tradition says John was boiled in oil on the Isle of Patmos after he wrote the book of Revelation. He had been on the Isle of Patmos for sure; he had been exiled there by one of the Roman emperors, and however he died, it was a horrible death, I am sure. We have already seen what

Paul had gone through. This is why I said when I preached that message on holding the line that it takes a special kind of person to do what God wants to be done today, because we have to decide that we are going to pay the price that comes with it. We are going to have to, before we pay that price, sit down and count the cost before we move forward. We have to get to the place in our lives where we hear what nobody else hears, we see what nobody else sees, we touch the things that nobody else can. We build a supernatural relationship with a supernatural book that in time brings you to a crowning point of your life as a Christian to do the things that nobody else can do.

I told you last week, I see a glimmer of this in so many of you. I really do. So many of you have come to the point where you are almost there, and I am not saying you do not have some things you have to learn, and after you get there, I am not saying you will not have some more things you have to learn. But it is what I have told you before, it is what I look for in people. A couple of weeks ago, I told you that when we start the book of Proverbs here in a couple of, maybe a month or so, a couple of months, whatever we get to it, I am going to take a little time and do a mini-camp on leadership. The reason why I want to do that is I want to set the stage when we get into the greatest book in the Bible that really deals with all the issues of life. On top of that, if you look around here, we have probably gotten, we have a lot of people on vacation this morning, we have probably got 20 or 30 brand new people that have come into our church in just the last couple of weeks. I am always looking for people who have the ability to be leaders. I will look through a crowd, and I am going to talk to you about it when we get into that session. But I am always looking for people who have the ability to be what God wants them to be. I mean, I love everybody. I hate no one. I am mad at nobody. But I realize that it takes a special kind of person today to stand and to make a stand up to the world. It does. There are so many pressures.

It takes someone who is flexible to circumstance.

It takes someone who is adaptable the way God changes things.

It takes somebody who is compatible with other people in the ministry.

It certainly takes somebody that is durable.

It takes someone who will take and make a stand and will work to get to the point in their life like Paul or like John, like Abraham, Moses, and all the rest, where you suddenly leave this world behind. If ever there was a time that you should be able to see what I have been preaching to you about the last 10 years, it is today in Christianity: that the choices we make can and certainly will kill us, that the association and the friends that we hang on to will drag us down and bring us right into the mixed multitude.

You see, all these things and a hundred thousand more are out there for simply four reasons, and I will leave you with this:

3. The devil wants to stop you. He knows better than you do what potential you have. I see the potential in you, and it discourages me when I do not see it develop. He sees it in a greater way than I do, and it just makes him the happiest guy in the world when you do not develop it. He wants to stop you. He wants to keep you entangled and embroiled in the goofy little

things of this world that do not mean a thing, that always keeps us off track, the "who's who" and "who did what to me today."

4. The second thing: he wants you to lose your real purpose of why God saved you. He wants you to give God your soul, but he wants you to keep your own life.
5. The third thing is to get you to lose our focus. I told you before that the focus is why God saved you and put you where He did. It is no accident that you are here. No accident you are in Kansas City. God orchestrated the events in everybody's life. If we believe what the Bible says and who God is, then it stands to reason, and our church is what it claims to be, then it is no accident you are here. God has orchestrated everything in your life to put you to a place because He must have saw something in you that is powerful. Too bad you cannot see it in yourself.
6. The fourth thing: to get us to lose or never get the right perspective of how you do the work of the ministry. God has something for each one of us. Why I put you here, He saw something in you. I see it in many of you. He sees it in all of you. He could have brought you, He could have put you in any dead-headed church on this planet. He could have put you in a church that does not even know where a Bible is. He could have put you in a place where they did not teach anything about the Bible. He did not. He puts you here, and there is a reason for that.

Let us pray, and we will be dismissed here. Father, we do thank You and praise You for