

Proverbs 4

Sunday 3/9/2014

Oh, by the way, on the Restome Ministry, Bob has a team, and I didn't put anybody on his team because I told him this morning that his team is the band. So you'll all be going down there and playing on that day, and you can take turns preaching, and they'll get a kick out of that, I guarantee you. You can go down and play anytime you want.

I. The Five Crowns and Life's Choices

If you have your Bibles, I want you again to open to Proverbs chapter 4. Remember last week we laid out the five crowns. I told you last week we got that burst of snow, and we still had a great crowd here. Years and years and years ago, God gave me that verse that says, "Hast thou entered into the treasures of the snow?" I know what it means because if you take a cubic foot of snowfall, there's \$18.47 worth of minerals in it. So I understand what it's saying in the context of it.

At the same time, it's just always been that way that whenever we get something that the whole world decided not to go to church that morning, and they were closing churches everywhere, which made it good for us because nobody was on the road to get to church that morning, God always gives us something special. I think last week was probably one of the best times we've had together in the Word of God on the five crowns, and that makes up rewards at the judgment seat of Christ.

We also saw how each crown plays an intimate role in the five aspects of our Christian life. We've talked about the crowns many, many times, but I've never taken it to the level like I did last week that shows you how each one of them represents a facet of our lives that really come to full reality at the judgment seat of Christ, and what they picture as far as our surrendering to God to serve Him faithfully.

I showed you the difference, if you remember, between rewards and inheritance. Rewards will always deal with the judgment seat of Christ, called the day of Jesus Christ or the day of Christ in the Bible. But your inheritance is something different that deals with the millennium, that thousand-year reign that we've been talking about on Thursday nights, and how they both get applied to our lives.

Today I want to move on in chapter 4, and we're going to read verses 10 through 19. Here's what it says:

Proverbs 4:10-19

Hear, O my son, and receive my sayings; and the years of thy life shall be many.

I have taught thee in the way of wisdom; I have led thee in right paths.

When thou goest, thy steps shall not be straitened; and when thou runnest, thou shalt not stumble.

Take fast hold of instruction; let her not go: keep her; for she is thy life.

Enter not into the path of the wicked, and go not in the way of evil men.

Avoid it, pass not by it, turn from it, and pass away.

For they sleep not, except they have done mischief; and their sleep is taken away, unless they cause some to fall.

For they eat the bread of wickedness, and drink the wine of violence.

But the path of the just is as the shining light, that shineth more and more unto the perfect day.

The way of the wicked is as darkness: they know not at what they stumble.

Now Father, thank you for today, and thank you for the folks that have come out today, and this beautiful day that You have given us. We pray now, Father, as we look at this passage, that You will help us glean from it what You have us to have, Lord, and to help us grow, help us to be found faithful in the things that You have done for us, that we might in some small way give those things back to You. We love You. We pray now Your blessings upon those in our church that are sick today and struggling through things, that You put Your arms around them and love them and comfort them, and we will thank You and praise You. In Jesus' name, for His sake, we ask it, Amen.

II. The Two Basic Choices of Life

As you can see, or I hope you can see, this passage basically breaks down into two segments. Verses 10 through 13 basically talk about a life with the blessings of God in it, and then verses 14 through 19 basically talk about a life in the world without God's blessings in it. This passage will deal with the two basic choices of life, and there's really only two.

Most people think that they have a lot of choices in life, and you may have a lot of sub-choices, but when it comes to life, there's really only two choices. An unsaved man has two choices, and a Christian has two choices. An unsaved man has two basic choices in life: he's going to go to heaven or he's going to go to hell, and he gets to choose which one he does. For a Christian, it's the same aspect. We have two choices. We have a choice to take a life with God's principles and God's blessings and God's security, or we take a life without those things and struggle through the things of life because we don't have them.

It's about which influences we put in our lives—the people, the places, the circumstances that they represent—that we allow in our lives. It's just that simple. An unsaved man will either decide he's going to go to heaven or he's not. But a Christian will have to decide who they're going to allow in their life that's going to help them grow or keep them from growing, and the circumstances they'll allow themselves to get into.

We've talked about it many, many times. The Bible says that all things are lawful. We understand that. But not all things are expedient. Not all things, just because you can do it, is it a wise thing to do. Today we're going to basically talk about the first segment, verses 10 through 13.

III. Receiving God's Sayings

The last couple of months, and certainly last week, we saw the results of following and getting God's wisdom. The Bible has probably really been focusing on that. We've talked about getting God's wisdom and getting God's understanding, and the crowns that go along with it as our rewards at the judgment seat of Christ.

Now look at verse 10 where it starts out here, and it says, "Hear, O my son, and receive my sayings." That's a great principle to start with, and grasping it will answer a ton of questions for you. Through my Christian life as I grew up, as many of you are right now, and we're all continually growing, we're just on slightly different levels, there were always questions that I had of why things were the way they were. I'd look at circumstances, I'd look at people, I'd look at situations, and I'd say, "Now why is that the way that it is?"

I mean, I was somewhat of a purist, I think, when I first got saved. I looked at everything from a very, I thought, when I got saved, I thought everybody just loved God. I didn't know any better. I just thought everybody loved the Book, loved God, and wanted to do what's right. I had not yet come to the place in my life where I found out that wasn't exactly true. But it's one of those things.

I remember looking at different situations, and I asked myself, "How can a person, a saved person, how can they go to church all their lives, week after week, attend services year after year, hear the messages?" I mean, I grew up in a Baptist church. Many of you grew up in traditional Baptist churches. We went to church on Sunday morning, Sunday night, and Wednesday night. I don't know if you ever did the math on that, but that's over a thousand ninety-five sermons you hear a year.

I look at that, and I would stand back and I would see people that were deacons, or they would be this, or they would be that. They'd be there every time the door was open, and yet it simply never has any effect on them. Nothing ever changed in their life. They just go through one issue after another, one problem after another. They would be saved and on their way to heaven, but they'd have tremendous family problems or marriage problems. Many of themselves would struggle and have problems. They just never seem to get it and understand it. I used to struggle with things like that. I used to look at that, and I'm saying, "I don't understand."

I've seen people over the course of my ministry who I've thought have had incredibly great potential. I look for potential in people. I think, again, you go through life as a pastor, you can do two things: you can look at the negative side of people, which we all can find negative things about people, or you can look past the negative and you can look for the positive in people and look for the potential.

One of the other things that's always bothered me over the years is I've seen people who had, I thought, absolutely great potential, and yet they never do one thing for God on a consistent basis. Never do. They'll talk about it. They'll kind of play the game, but it's just the fact that they're one way here, and then when they get back out after Sunday or Thursday night or whenever, it's just like business as usual, right back to the things of the world.

I've watched as God tried over and over again to reach them. God will put trials and situations in our lives. He's no different than you are. As a parent, when your child does something wrong, and they have a favorite toy or whatever it is that they play with, many parents think their way to correct a child, and I'm not saying it's wrong in some cases, but they'll take away that child's favorite thing. That is a valid form in many people's minds of how to raise your children. I'm not arguing that fact, but I'm just saying God does the same thing.

God will put things in your life and will give you things as you begin to grow. I've seen God, I've seen people start getting their lives turned around, start really getting into the Bible, doing what they thought, what they needed to do, and their life was a travesty. It was a mess. They had no job or a low job, or they hated the job, they were stuck in a dead-end street. And one by one, I've seen God turn that around. I've seen God take and give them a better job. I've seen God give them the desires of their hearts, so to speak.

Matthew 7:11

If ye then, being evil, know how to give good gifts unto your children, how much more shall your Father which is in heaven give good things to them that ask him?

He follows the same line. You do what's right, you want to do what's right. God is going to change your life from a negative to a positive. It's just that simple. That's what His job is. That's what He does. He won't do it all in one day. Mel Shabbat, my Father in the Lord, always had a great saying: "Yeah, God owns the cattle on a thousand hills, but He only gives it to you one hamburger at a time." There's a lot of truth in that. God could fix all of our problems today, but that wouldn't do us any good. By the end of the week, we'd just have another full set of problems, you see. Because I've told you, like a couple of weeks ago, it's not about you going through your problems, is it? But it's rather you growing through your problems. That's what God wants us to do.

I've seen God give it, and I've seen God take it away. I've seen those same people, once they got to a point in their life, because maybe they let some bad influences come in, or they got hooked up with the wrong crowd again, or they never maybe fully broke with that crowd, that the devil reclaims them, so to speak. They start to regress, and the things that were once important, the things of God, were no longer important to them. I'm not kidding you. I've seen it just as sure as I'm standing here, that God, one by one, the things that He gave, one by one, the things He takes back. He does it just like we do it. If you're not going to do what's right with that, you give me that for a week or two. God does the same thing. God follows the same pattern.

I've seen Him again and again put things in people's lives, trials in people's lives. Let me say, I'm not a heart reader. I don't look at situations like that and automatically just think that somebody's going through something because they got some sin in their life. I don't read people's hearts. I don't claim to be able to do that. Don't want to do that. I've got enough problems of my own. But I do know what a Christian should be. The Bible is very clear that God will bring things in our lives to get our attention. He has in my life, and I'm probably, if you're honest this morning, He has in everybody's life here. So, He does do that. God will give us things when we're doing right, and then to get our attention, God will take things from us.

I've seen people over the years who did not want to do what was right when God had blessed them, and then I've seen them go through great financial disaster. I've seen them lose their families. I've seen God give them some health issues. Yet, I'm telling you, I'm not saying that all the people that have issues in their life are not doing what's right. I'm not saying that. But what I do know is God allows things in our life for two reasons. He allows things to come into our lives for one, to strengthen us and make us closer to Him. I know He does that. The Bible says He does. But I also know He allows things to come into our lives when we're not doing what's right to get our attention.

I can't speak for you, but the first thing I do in my own mind, in my own heart, when something follows me that is a little out of the ordinary, the first thing I do is I just kind of check my little meter and make sure that there's not something that I haven't taken care of between me and God. Because I know God does those things. Again, I'm saying I don't have this little antenna coming out of my head that everybody's going through a trial and issue where you got to... now there are people that do that. But I don't. But I do know, you have to figure it out for yourself, but I do know that God does things to get our attention.

Do you know why He does that? He puts things in our life. He'll put trials in our life because it's the only way God can get our undivided attention. That's really what God wants. He wants what every parent wants when they're training up their children. He wants your undivided attention. I've seen you parents, when you start to correct your kids and your kids start looking off, I've seen you grab their chin. I mean, you could be child abused by grabbing their chin with the way somebody, the look in your face. "I'm talking to you!" You're all laughing at that because you know it's true. But I'm telling you, if you've got common sense, when you're trying to correct your child and he or she won't give you their undivided attention, and you make sure you get it, you think God isn't smart enough to figure that out? Well, sometimes God grabs His body's chin. He wants our undivided attention. He doesn't want you sharing it with something else or somebody else.

1 Corinthians 11:30

For this cause many are weak and sickly among you, and many sleep.

The church of Corinth had a lot of problems. One of the issues that they had in chapter 11 was the Lord's Supper, and they were doing it completely wrong. You know from our time around here, there's nothing more probably precious than the time that we celebrate the Lord's Supper. He says basically for this cause, because some of them aren't doing what's right, he says, "many are weak." Now that's a physical weakness, spiritual weakness. They're not up to where they should be. And then he says in the same verse, "many are sick." We now know from that verse that physical ailments can come from not doing what God's called you to do when you have this tremendous potential, but you're just all about you. It's all about what you want and what's going on in your world: your career, your money, your bank account, your job, your this, your that, your house, your car, all that you have, all your life, you. The Bible says that God does do things like that. Again, I'm not saying that everybody that has issues, but I do know that you'll have issues for one or two reasons. You've got to figure it out.

Then he says, "some sleep," some died. There were some people at the church at Corinth that had potential that didn't do what was right, and I don't know who they are. Their names aren't listed. I don't even know what their deal was. But I don't need to know. What I do need to know is that God, in dealing with them, tried to get their attention, tried to get their attention, tried to get their attention, and for some reason, why God took this person and not this person, because the truth of the matter is we all should be dead this morning. But why God would take this person here and not take this person here, it's always been a terrible thing in my mind that if you're a true Christian and God just lets you keep going on in your life and never coming down and doing something with you until you get to the judgment seat of Christ, boy, that always would scare the fire out of me that God would just let you go. I think that's the worst thing God can do with a person, a saved person: just let him go.

I mean, I don't know why He does that. I don't understand His mindset behind it that I could explain it effectually. I mean, I kind of grasped it a little bit just dealing with people myself. But I'm telling you, to me, that's the scariest thought on this planet for me as a Christian. There will come a day in my life when God said, "Bob's doing this, he needs to be straightened out," and God said, "Nah, just let him go." That's scary to me. That terrifies me. But here's a case where the Bible says, "For this cause many are weak, some are sick, and some sleep." God took them home. So we know that He can do it.

Do you know why He does it? Because in some extreme cases, that's the only way He can get your attention. He gives us a Bible that says that we're supposed to stay out of the world. He gives us a Bible that says that we're supposed to be separated from the world and do what the Bible says. The sermons this morning that you hear, the Bible studies, your prayer groups, everything that you hear and you listen to, or your time in the Bible, it's all about God reinforcing that and getting your undivided attention that you stay close to God and the Word of God.

So I guess, I mean, I'm just taking a wild stab at it now. So I guess after all that He does in so many people's lives, and we just, in cases it happens, that we won't get out of the world, we won't give God our undivided attention. So I guess in some cases, the only thing He can do is when we won't take ourselves out of the world, He'll come down and take us out of the world. Now I know one thing that He has when that happens: your undivided attention. That's what He wants right now. I learned a long time ago, I'd much rather give God what He wants here than Him dragging it out of me over there. It's just the way it is.

But I look at something like that, and I know God does that. Again, I'm not saying that every time somebody has some ailment or somebody has a problem or somebody has that, that's what's happening. But I'm telling you, God does do that, and it's very clear from the Bible that He wants our undivided attention, and if we will not give it to Him, I'm telling you right now, He's going to get it one way or the other. But I look at that, and I think to myself, "What a waste. What a tragedy that is."

I think the thing that most, and I love the ministry. I love people in the ministry. I love being in the ministry. I love preaching in the ministry. I'll never get out of the ministry until I just can't

grow anymore and can't, I mean, it's everything to me, and I love it. But I'll tell you the downside to me of the ministry: the downside to me of the ministry is seeing people who I think have incredible, incredible, incredible ability and incredible potential who just waste their life spiritually.

I have seen them all of my life. I've seen people that I thought had the stuff to really do things for God, and brother, for whatever reason, they just can't get over the hump. They'll go so far. They'll get to a point. I've had people in my ministry for 40 years that will come for like six or seven months. I'm not kidding you. They'll come for six and seven months, maybe eight months, do good. They're gone, and I never see them again. Four years later, they'll show back up again. They'll make another run up the hill. They'll get about four or five, six, seven, eight months into it. Don't see them again for another four years. You go out again, they come back, and they'll go out again six months, seven months, eight months, nine months, and they're gone again. They just never seem to get it.

Last week when I told you about the five crowns and how they're based on what God has done for us, and what, in that day when we lay them at His feet, what they're going to represent, yet I'm telling you, this is us, all of us. This is what you've got to work on every day, not just you, me, every one of us. We don't look forward to that day. No matter how bad it may be for me, I'm looking forward to that day because no matter what I don't get, I do know this: my life is over as far as this filthy hole down here I'm living in right now. So no matter how bad I've got to go through the judgment seat of Christ or whatever the case may be, I know that part of it's over, and I'll finally be in a place where I'll never have to worry about what I think, what I say, what I do ever again. I'm good with that. I can handle that.

But you know what? We purposely get busy, stay busy, fill up our day with all the non-essential stuff, and we try to put that day of standing before the Lord as far from our thoughts as we can. I get it. I understand it. Listen, I know how we do it. I know how I do it. But don't wait till that day to learn what you should be learning right now about that day. That's my advice to you. I guarantee you, when that day comes, we stand before the Lord, and it's like a freight train coming to us at about 90 miles an hour. We finally realize for the first time where our undivided attention is now on the One who died for us, and we focus to realize, "Oh, now for the first time in our life, we understand and realize all that He did for us."

You see, right now He wants to tell you that through this, but we're so busy busying ourselves up so we don't have to think about that. But in that day, that'll all be gone. In that day, you'll be faced with the reality that you ought to be facing right now every day in this Book, and that is the fact: all that He did for you, and nothing that we've done for Him. I promise you, there'll be people begging to go back down to planet Earth for just five minutes to serve Him with a pure motive and a pure heart. I guarantee you, reality will have set in.

Do you know why these problems are the way they are in people? Do you know why you'll see people who go to church every week and they get a thousand sermons a year and Bible studies and daily breads and listen to Christian radio and all that stuff, and yet nothing ever changes in their life, and there's never any difference? Verse 10 is the answer. It says, "Hear, O my son, and

receive my sayings." The problem is they hear it, but they won't receive it. That's the problem. Week after week, month after month, year after year, you hear what you're supposed to do, you just won't receive the instruction to do it.

I've seen people who have got bad marriages, and they hate their ex so bad that their ex stands between them and God the rest of their life. They can't ever get to where God wants them to be because they hate that person who was in that relationship that did them wrong, did them right, or just didn't do what they... they hate them. I've seen people have a problem with people that they hated them so bad and didn't want nothing to do with them that it preoccupied everything in their life and never allowed them to get where God wanted them to be.

I'm telling you, you can read the Bible all you want. When I grew up in churches where the great punch line from the preacher was the fact that reading the Bible will change your life, and we used to put it on this and put it on that and give them to everybody, "Reading the Bible will change your life." Years later, I looked back at that, and I thought to myself, that was probably one of the biggest lies I've ever heard in my life. Reading the Bible will not change your life if you're not willing to apply into your life what you're reading in the Bible. So he says, "Hear, O my son, and receive my sayings."

1 Thessalonians 2:13

For this cause also thank we God without ceasing, because, when ye received the word of God which ye heard of us, ye received it not as the word of men, but as it is in truth, the word of God, which effectually worketh also in you that believe.

If you don't receive it, then it won't work in you. I've said this a couple of times because I want to make it clear: I can't read hearts. I don't have a meter reader that I put on your head to find out your motive. I don't want to, like I said, I've got enough problems of my own. But I'll tell you this, based on biblical principles, you cannot receive the Word of God without it changing every aspect of your life. You can't. You can pretend you do. You can tell everybody you have. But I'm telling you right now, you cannot biblically receive the Word of God and not have it affect every area of your life.

Now in the Bible, there's two receivings of the Word of God.

1. John 1:12 talks about: John 1:12

But as many as received him, to them gave he power to become the sons of God, even to them that believe on his name: That's salvation, receiving Christ as your Savior. When you do that, the Bible says in 2 Corinthians 5:17 that it changes everything about your life spiritually. You're now a new creature in Christ Jesus. 2 Corinthians 5:17

Therefore if any man be in Christ, he is a new creature: old things are passed away; behold, all things are become new.

2. The second type of receiving in the Bible is in 1 Thessalonians 2:13, the verse I just gave you, where it says: 1 Thessalonians 2:13

For this cause also thank we God without ceasing, because, when ye received the word of God which ye heard of us, ye received it not as the word of men, but as it is in truth,

the word of God, which effectually worketh also in you that believe. Now that's after you're saved, getting the Bible as your final authority.

Both of these will change your life. One will change your life, receiving Christ as your Savior will change your life eternally. The other one will change your life externally. It'll give you a whole new perspective of everything in life on planet Earth.

You can see our issue. Many of us will receive Him as our Savior, will take the salvation, but you'll not receive Him as the Lord and the God of your life after you're saved. Everybody, in one form or the other, unless you're just totally disorganized, has a daily planner. You can go back to that table back there and you'll see mine. I buy mine at Walmart. I'm used to it. Some of you put it on your iPads. Some of you put it on your little flat screen things that you've got. Some of you carry around a little notebook. I remember they used to have them big fat ones where everybody, what were they called back then? Day planners. Yeah, that's what they were called. No, there was a name for that. Franklin. They had all kinds. Everybody had one. They kind of went by the wayside now because electronics has taken over. But Franklin Planner, you go into a bookstore, Franklin Planner, I mean, big one. They had everything you wanted. You could plan your life out for the next 25 years. They were thick and fat, but I mean, they're bigger than any Bible I ever saw. People would plan their lives out.

We still do it. I mean, I've seen people, you get your plan out where you're going. You look at mine back there, I've got all my appointments on this week. I've got all the places we go, time we go to Restart. I've got everything planned out from what camp is right on down the line. We don't have a problem doing that. But I'm telling you, the concept of a daily planner is really the Word of God, and for the spiritual side of us, the Word of God is our daily planner. You hear me talk about short term and long term. You look at my planner back there, I've got work out of next week, and I've got what we're going to do six, seven, eight months from now. The Bible will help you plan short term what you've got to do today in your life. It will give you the planning process for what you want to do a year from now, where you want to be in a spiritual sense, so you can lay it out day by day, year by year, a long way out in advance.

IV. The Way of Wisdom

Now look at verse 11. He says, "I have taught thee in the way of wisdom." I'm going to give you a little example of word studies today, and word studies are on different levels. A lot of people start out with basic word studies. These are kind of advanced word studies based on advanced principles, but you'll see how it works. He says, "I have taught thee in the way of wisdom." That's a great principle, and the importance of paying attention, like I said, to the keywords in the Bible. But it says "the way of wisdom." You see, when you receive the instructions of your Father, principles, doctrine, wisdom, and understanding, it's not just a bunch of verses and a nice saying that you get. No, it's the way of wisdom. The Bible will conform you and transform you to a new way of life. So when he says "the way of wisdom," he's not talking about anything other than when you get it, it's a way of life.

Just as you received the Word of God that changed everything eternally, now after you're saved, you receive it on your daily planner, so to speak, and it changes everything in your physical life: what you do, who you hang out with, your events of your life. It's really the real concept of repentance. You've got to turn from something, but you've got to then turn to something.

Have you ever noticed the major, major factor between the Old Testament nation of Israel? Here's an example. We go back to what we talked about the other night. We know that the biggest two advantages is one is the physical kingdom, the kingdom of heaven, that'd be the Old Testament, and the New Testament, the church, would be the kingdom of God, the spiritual kingdom. But have you ever noticed the difference basically in the structure of those two? The Old Testament under the law, the New Testament under grace. When an Old Testament Jew was born into the family, the Jewish religion or the Jewish faith was all-inclusive. Everything he did from the time he was born to the time he died revolved around everything in the Old Testament: what he ate, where he went on certain days of the week. Everything in his life from the time he was born to the time he died was all-inclusive to everything in the Old Testament structure. It was a lifestyle. It was a way of life for the nation of Israel.

Somebody asked me a couple of weeks ago, "How much the Jews really knew about the Bible?" I told him, the average Jew of his day knew more about the Bible than the greatest Bible mind you could find today. Do you know why? Because it was his life. It was everything from the time he got up to the time he went to bed, from the time he was born to the time he died. Everything in his life revolved around that Old Testament law: what he ate, as I said, where he went, how far he could go, who he could marry. Every aspect of his life was put into his culture.

We don't have that today. We should spiritually, and that's the difference between the kingdom of heaven where it's a physical, literal thing, than the kingdom of God where it's a spiritual thing. Our lives today spiritually should be exactly what the nation of Israel's lives were literally. Our lives spiritually should be our culture. The Christian life is a way. It's a way of life. But what we do is we go to church on Sunday morning or Thursday night, and then we live the way we want to live the rest of the week. We do what we want to do. It's not all-inclusive. It's not part of our culture. We allow church in two or three times a week, and then we want the rest of the time for ourselves. You see, and then we wonder why we don't know anything about the Bible, and the average sheep herder back there in the Old Testament knew 10,000 times more than we do because it was everything in his life every day.

For us, we pick and choose. I'm not saying it's right. It's the difference between understanding the spiritual kingdom and the literal kingdom. But that's what we do. Now we have, under grace, we have the liberty to choose. I'm going to make this thing all-inclusive in my life: everything I eat, everything I do, every place I go, every person I hang out with. We don't do that, and that's the big problem today. That's the big problem. That's what's missing in Christianity in a spiritual sense. It's not part of our total lifestyle. New Testament Christianity should encompass every aspect of our lives today. We separate our lives and maybe let Christianity in a couple of times a week. But real New Testament Christianity should be a complete lifestyle of a way of living that is dictated to us based on the New Testament way of wisdom. That's why he says "way." It's an incredible study.

Now the second thing about that verse in the way of wisdom, take your Bible and turn over to Job chapter 38. This is one of the greatest verses in Job in the Bible on the science, and the Bible is the most scientific Book the world has ever seen. There ain't nothing that science ever came up with that the Bible didn't deal with two or three, four thousand years before it ever showed up in the science manual. Here's one of them.

Now look at Job 38:19:

Job 38:19

Where is the way where light dwelleth? and as for darkness, where is the place thereof?

Now look at that. Two concepts here, and boy, they're both killers. First thing he says is "where the way where light dwelleth." The second thing is "the place that darkness resides." Now both of these have a great doctrinal application: one to God, the other one to the devil. But the thing that I want you to see here before I give you the real thing I want you to see is this: there's a place on this Earth right now where darkness resides. That's a scary thought. In other words, if you want to find the devil, where his core residence is, if you want to get his address of where he lives, the Bible is very clear about laying it out. That Bible verse tells you right there, "for darkness where is the place thereof." There's a place on this Earth where darkness resides.

But notice when it comes to light, there is no place. It says, "where is the way where light dwelleth." Do you know why it says that? Why "the way light dwelleth," not the place as darkness? Because whoever wrote that, in this case Job, probably 1800, 1900 BC, 1900 years before Christ, he knew that light never stood still, and light was always moving. Light moves at 186,000 miles a second. It never stands still. Now Einstein proved that in the 1920s and 1930s with his theory on relativity, and he came up and proved the fact that light was always moving, was never in one point, never stationary at any point in time. How did Job figure that out 1900 years before Einstein had to serve, take it out of the formula? That Bible is more scientific than anything on this planet, and that's what I love about my Bible: 4,000 years ahead of most modern, all modern science on their theory and concept.

He uses the same word here in Proverbs chapter 4, verse 11: "I have taught thee in the way of wisdom." Do you know why he uses the word "way" here? Because just like there's never a time that light is stationary and light is always moving, there's never a time where a Christian's life through the Word of God and God's wisdom are not moving forward in our lives. You're never to be stationary as a Christian. I get people say, "Well, I'm not moving forward right now, Bob. I'm just kind of standing still." No, you're not. It says "the way of wisdom." Right now, sitting in this room this morning, if you're saved, you're doing one of two things: you're either moving forward or you're moving backwards. Get it out of your brain that you're standing still. That's not happening. You're either moving forward or you're moving backwards. It's just that simple.

Of course, Genesis 1:2 says:

Genesis 1:2

And the earth was without form, and void; and darkness was upon the face of the deep. And the Spirit of God moved upon the face of the waters.

That's the first time you find the Spirit of God in the Bible, and it's moving upon the face of the waters. That Spirit of God never stops moving all through the Bible. So when he talks about God's wisdom and he's talking about the way of wisdom, he's not only talking about the fact like I told you first off, but he's talking about the fact that that's your spiritual growth. You should never stop. Spiritual growth is a 24/7 thing. It's something every day of your life you grow. You learn from every experience, everything you go through, everything you see.

Look at Ephesians 4:15. This is exactly what the Bible is talking about as to our spiritual growth never stopping.

Ephesians 4:15

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

Now there's the ongoing moving process of your life from salvation to the rapture. It doesn't say "grow up unto him," it says "growing up into him." It's a process. Every day of your life, are you becoming more like Jesus Christ? If you take a couple of days off, you're not standing neutral. You take a couple days off, you're moving backwards. A couple of days, and I'll tell you what, you move backwards a lot farther than you move forward. It's just a simple fact.

I mean, it's incredible. I say it all the time, there is never to be a time in your Christian life that you stop growing because wisdom is always moving. It's a way of wisdom. That's not the place of wisdom. It's the way of wisdom because just as light is always moving, the Word of God, wisdom, is always moving. The Holy Spirit of God, the Christian in his spiritual walk and growth, is always moving. You show me a Christian who gets mad at something or somebody and won't follow the biblical principles in their life, and I'll show you somebody on their way out the door because it's only a matter of time and a process. So when you start going forward, the moment you stop going forward, you are moving backwards. It's an illusion of your mind that "I'm just going to stand right here now, and I'm in my spiritual growth, and I'm just going to kind of absorb it all."

Somebody left the church one time four or five years ago, and their advice to other people that left the church was, "You just need to stay out of church for a while and just need to, you just stay away from everything in the Bible." That's the worst advice you could ever give. But that's great advice coming from somebody who stopped growing, who wants you to stop growing too, because the moment you quit going forwards, baby, you're going backwards. You don't just stop and stand where you're at. I wish you did.

I'm telling you, this is why I put so much importance on association. I know some of you don't know this yet. Some of you probably don't even believe this yet. But if you stay with this thing for 20, 30 years, you're going to get this truth in this world, Christian world, and we're going to look at it next week, but I'll give you a little preview, kind of like The Walking Dead, you get a short clip of what next week's coming. But I'm going to tell you right now, there are people,

saved people in this world, there are couples, saved couples in this world, there are families, saved families in this world, who will destroy you faster than anything else in your spiritual growth. It seems like their whole life is nothing but drama and destruction, and they want to take everybody else down in their path. If you don't learn at some point in your life to sort that out, see that, stay away from that, you'll stop growing.

I love people who don't want to grow. I pray for people who don't want to grow. But we really don't have much in common because I'm going one way and you're going the other, and there's just nothing we've got to say. I mean, I love you and I pray for you, but I'm going this way, you're going that way. The quicker you learn that principle, the better off you're going to be, and it may take some of you a long time to get it. We already see it in an unsaved world. That's why as a Christian, you shouldn't have no fellowship with the unfruitful workers of darkness. But the problem is we don't think in those terms of saved people because many of you were like I was when I first got saved. I just thought everybody loved God.

Boy, I remember the night I went down and got right with God, man, and I'll tell you, I got up there, and people were slapping on my back, and I could hear the angels sing, man, and I was the happiest I'd ever been for a long time, boy. People were coming up and shaking my hands, and there were deacons slapping me on the back, and people coming up and hugging me, and everybody's saying, "Bob, that's the greatest thing for you." I'll tell you what, if somebody would have told me that some of those deacons weren't tithing, and some of those deacons were cheating on their wives, and some of those people over here were gossiping and doing this and causing problems with the preacher, I'd have fought you right on the spot. I wouldn't fight you now. You learn some things. You learn some things, and the quicker you learn, the better off you're going to be.

V. Steps and Running

Now look at verse 12: "When thou goest, thy steps shall not be straitened." You can see that thing, "when thou goest," you're always moving. Your steps, you're walking with the Lord, taking steps, step by step. You're always moving, and your spiritual relationship with God, you're either moving forward or you're moving backwards, but you're never idle.

Now look at verse 12, the word "straitened." That's an old English word where we don't use it the way that it was used back then. We straighten something out, but that's not how the original word is used. The old English definition of it means to be hindered, to be put in a place where you can't move, like "I'm in a strait betwixt two things." I'm in a strait, a very narrow passage where you cannot maneuver. In other words, he's saying in verse 12 that "when thou goest, thy steps shall not be straitened." The principle is this: when you keep moving forward, the devil can't ever box you in. It's the moment you stop growing that he boxes you in. You start regressing, you're going backwards. He can't get you in a narrow spot and box you up if you keep moving. As long as you keep moving, you can't get you. It's when you stop, he boxes you in, and then you regress. That's how it works. I mean, this is all simple stuff, but man, I'll tell you what, it's incredible stuff.

Now look at verse 12 again: "When thou runnest, thou shalt not stumble." In our Christian lives, there'll be times that we walk. If you want to study a walk with God in the Bible, there's two great guys, character studies that the Bible says walk with God: Noah is one, Enoch is another. Strangely enough, one's the type of the church, the other one the type of the nation of Israel. One represents the kingdom of heaven, one represents the kingdom of God. Just one of those things I'll throw out this morning. You don't have to pay for that, take it with you when you go. But it shows you the concept that in our life, we're to walk with God, and a walk with God is a steady progress. The Bible says that Enoch walked with God and was not, for God took him. To me, that always suggested that it was a steady progress, and that's all your life needs to be: a steady progress. As long as you keep moving, you can't get put in a strait. You can't get hindered. The devil can't box you in. You've got it made. You don't have to make big steps. You don't have to take giant steps. You can take baby steps as long as you're taking steps.

But then the second thing he says here, "when thou runnest." There's time that you'll walk with God, and it's time that you'll run with God. Of course, that's a great concept. Just like Noah and Enoch will define for you your walk with God, there's a great example in Acts chapter 8, verses 29 and 30, about running for God. It's dealing with Philip and the Ethiopian eunuch. Here's a man where God's down there in Samaria, he's having a great revival time down there, and God's got some Ethiopian eunuch on the backside of the desert over here that needs to get saved. The Holy Spirit of God pulls Philip up, shows me that Philip is in touch with the Holy Spirit of God, and He breezes him up and He takes him over to that desert and puts him down.

The Bible says over there in the book of Acts chapter 8, down around verse 29 and 30:

Acts 8:29-30

Then the Spirit said unto Philip, Go near, and join thyself to this chariot.

And Philip ran thither to him, and heard him read the prophet Esaias, and said, Understandest thou what thou readest?

Do you know what running means in the Bible based on that definition? The opportunities that God gives you. You walk with God. Do you see an opportunity? Then you run to it because opportunities will advance your spiritual growth, something you're going to learn out of it while you're doing something for somebody else. So I try to get so many opportunities for you guys to do things. That's why this nursing home ministry will be a tremendous thing for some of you younger guys that want to learn how to preach, and yet you'll be a blessing to those old folks down there. Something I guarantee you, by the time your little teams get down there, you guys will figure it out. You'll have cookies for them, you'll have special stuff for them, you'll do things for them. You'll be their favorites, and one by one, every one of those workers down there will start going to the church that really cares about the people that they care about. It's just that simple.

You can look at opportunities all around you, and they are all around you. That story of Philip and the Ethiopian eunuch, some of you couldn't see the opportunities around you because your whole world is all about you. You're the king of drama, queen of drama. Everything is all about

you and what you're going through and all this stuff and all you're dealing with, and you can't see the people around you that are in carnage that God saved you for, that He had in His mind when He saved you, you'd be the one to reach these people. But you're so busy focused on yourself, you're not moving forward, you're moving backward. You can't even see the opportunities. They're all around us.

Most of you people that are in our church today, this is a true statement: most of you people that are in our church today that are saved and love this church and love this ministry are here because somebody saw you as an opportunity one time. At one time, you were out there doing something, maybe eating at a restaurant or going playing ball or doing this or going here or going there or working here or being here, and somebody, God put you up to your Philip, and that Philip saw you as an opportunity, and he ran to you.

I'd like to think that you're all here because of my magnificence in preaching. It'd do a lot for my ego. I'd like to think you're all here because of my magnanimous personality. I hope magnanimous is not a dirty word. But I know that's not true. I know that we're all just spokes in the wheel. I know that my job is no less important and no more important than your job. I know that if I take the position up here that I'm the head cheese and everybody else out here is just the holes in the cheese and the little wraps, that one part of the cheese will never go anywhere. We're all in this together. Everybody's on equal footing. I may preach the Word of God on a regular basis, but you're the one that carries it out on a regular basis. My job wouldn't be any good without you, and you won't be any good without me. That's the way it's supposed to work.

You know what? You get motivated to the point where when you grow and you get walking and you get growing, then after a while, you get to that point that you start seeing the opportunities all around you. That's the way of wisdom. The way of wisdom is not a place where wisdom is. The way of wisdom is the way that your life and my life should be because we're saved. That's what it is. It's just that simple. But you've got to get motivated.

Every year, we didn't have one last year. I don't know if we're going to have one this year. I'm not in charge of those things. But remember we used to have the Easter egg hunts? I always liked, I liked the one we had up there at the... we, there was, it was snow that morning, it was freezing, but we had it in Lake Jacomo. Remember that? That was fun. I had to get out there early because you don't reserve it, first come, first serve. So I was there at 4:30 in the morning with snow coming down and thinking, "How's this going to be an Easter egg hunt?" We had a great time. We had two, three hundred people there.

I always watch that. We, in our church here, when we used to do it here, we got about 80 kids. We know we're going to have one, and we hide the eggs down here and hide the eggs upstairs, hide everywhere. I always enjoyed it because I get all the kids lined up here, and they're ready to go. When somebody says the signal, there's a sea of eggs out there, and there's kids out there. The older kids, they're aggressive, man. They're out there elbowing people. They're putting them in their brothers and sisters, spitting on each other, biting each other, the whole nine yards, because you get, you win a prize for the egg. Then I always feel sorry for the little ones because they're just standing around. They don't really know what to do. When we used to have Easter

eggs at our hunt, we'd hide some, and then when the kids were real, real small, we would put them out there where they could find them. They still couldn't find them. You've got to put them out in plain sight.

But even in that, I've watched those little kids just stand around. They're caught up with everything going around them, and they're not getting any eggs. Everybody else are getting 30 eggs, 40 eggs, 50 eggs, and they've got nothing. Of course, you know what's going to happen? Once reality sets in that they didn't get any eggs, they're going to cry. I've looked at that all my life, and I try to... it's just me, I'm just the way I am. The worst thing I ever did was get into that Bible. It ruled me for life. I look at things like that, and I don't know how many times I sit back and I'm smiling and enjoying and watching the kids, and I'm thinking to myself, "You know what? That's just like Christians." Those eggs out there are opportunities. Some of the older kids, like older Christians, they've been around for a while, they're aggressive in getting them eggs. They're not going to miss an egg. They're going to kill their brother or kill their sister to get their eggs. I like that. For some of them younger little Christians, they're just confused. They don't get any eggs. They don't see it. They don't understand the concept. You can even put them out there where they can see them, and they still don't know what they're supposed to do with it. I'm thinking to myself, "Boy, those eggs are just like the opportunities that God puts around us." Some of the mature Christians who grow, they never miss. They run to get those eggs. And some of the younger Christians that aren't growing, they just stand around, watch what's going on, and truthfully, at the end, just like the judgment seat of Christ, some will come in and dump eggs out and claim the prize, and some will be standing over here crying because they didn't get any eggs.

VI. Qualities of a Good Pastor

When you're speaking, you do that. I don't know what to tell you. See, that was a movement the guys did in the band today. I love it when you're doing, you're going for a while, and they're up here, and they've got you going on the music, and everybody's into it, and then they stop playing it, and they just sing it a cappella, and immediately it impacts. Then I love it, and then they're singing it, and then they lead back into it. You hear that big old bass, "boom, boom, boom." I was sitting back there watching you, man, and everybody, I was sucked into it. I thought, "It does." So that's what you do when you speak.

I don't need these as a preacher. A good preacher needs to be able to do eight things well. First, he needs to do... this is a great sermon, but I'm not going to preach it to you. The first thing a good preacher needs to do, he needs to learn how to relate. That's to the people. You see some pastors that they want nothing to do with people. They want you to come, they want you to be there, they want you to tithe, they want you to be involved, but they don't want anything to do with you.

I listen to Joel Osteen. I get my morning inspiration from Joel Osteen on Sunday morning when I'm in the shower. He was telling a story a couple weeks ago about this dear saint that was in his church, and he was so faithful for 35 years. He was an usher, and he was making a point about faithfulness. That was a great point. I mean, he's got some good things to say. Even a broken watch works twice a day. Think about that, you'll get it a little bit later. He was up there, and he

said this guy was the most faithful guy you ever want to meet in your life, and he was in our church for 35 years, and he was so proud to be an usher. He said when he died, he wanted to be buried with his little usher pin on, and he was. Everybody was just going, "Oh." And then he said, if he'd have stopped right there, he'd have hit the thing over the park. Even I'd have been impressed. But then he cut his throat. He said, "I never met the man. I'm not even sure what his name was." Oh, I don't get that, man. I'll tell you, you talk about just shooting yourself in the foot. If you didn't just stop where you were, it was wonderful.

You've got to learn to relate. You've got to relate to people, and a lot of pastors don't want that. They stay in a little cubicle, and they come out and preach, and they go back in. You can't touch them. You can't talk to them. You want an appointment, they've got to subcontract you out to somebody else. The pastor never deals with your problems. It's just the way it is.

Here are the eight things a good pastor needs to be able to do:

3. Relate: To the people.
4. Educate: To be able to teach you things.
5. Elevate: To be able to edify, lift people up, take you when you're down and make you feel good, feel better.
6. Placate: That means you put up with a lot of goofy stuff. There's a lot of stuff that people bring to me that I'm sitting there thinking to myself, "This is the dumbest thing I've ever heard in my life." But you know what? You get past that real quick because if it's important to them where they're at, then it better be important to you. So you get involved in it. You care about it. Now to you, your problem may be up at a high level up here that doesn't even phase you, but they're not there. So you've got to be able to placate. You meet them on their terms, and you help them where they're at.
7. Regenerate: To be able to get people saved.
8. Duplicate: To be able to take the things of the Word of God and duplicate them in people.
9. Accelerate: You're getting a good example on Thursday night. Thursday night, for the next just little mini-series, there's an acceleration class. It's all that it is, is to get you a lot farther down the road. It may take you eight or nine years to get what you're going to get in two, three, two months maybe, and get it in two or three months where it would take you maybe nine years to get it, eight years to get it the other way.
10. Motivate: He has to know how to motivate because motivation is going to... that's your preaching. Motivation is going to get you to the point where you see what you need to do, and then you start doing it. But if you don't get motivated to move, you ain't going anywhere. Motivation is what keeps you growing. Motivation is what keeps you moving forward and not regressing backwards.

VII. Take Fast Hold of Instruction

Then verse 13 says, "Take fast hold of instruction." I like that, "fast hold." Don't wait. Don't waste the time you have right now to get it. So many people could get so much more of the Bible. They could get past themselves. They could go much, get much, much more out of the Bible and God if they just get through the little rinky-dink problems they've got and really focus

on some real problems. He says "fast hold." He doesn't say "hold fast." He says "fast hold." Two things here: you get it quickly, and then you get a strong grip on it. You learn the Bible, that's wisdom. Then you learn how to use the Bible, that's understanding. He said in Proverbs chapter 4, verse 5, that you get wisdom, you get understanding, and he said wisdom is the principal thing. We preached on it a couple weeks ago. So you want to fast hold. You want to get a fast hold on it. You want to get it as quickly as you can, and then you want to hold on to it once you get it.

Those eight things I gave you over there that a pastor is supposed to do, they'll help you get it fast. The average Christian, if you just try to get it out on your own, it'll probably take you 10, 12, maybe 20 years, maybe you never get it. You get into a church that understands the concept and can teach you the Bible and take a lot of shortcuts to get you stuff that took somebody else 30, 40 years to get it, and is willing to give it to you, you can get it in three or four years.

Then he says, "let her not go." We talked about this the last couple of weeks in verse 5 where it said, "forget her not, forsake her not," talking about wisdom, "neither decline from the words of her mouth." It's simply learning how to keep it once you get it, knowing that verse 13, the last part of that verse, is so true, and probably no truer statement anywhere in the Bible when it comes to the wisdom of God and the Word of God. It simply says, "for she is thy life." She's not only your life spiritually by the day you got saved when you received it, but you receive it on a daily basis as it is the Word of God. She'll be your life, the way of life, the way of wisdom that'll get you through every circumstance you go through.

I'm telling you, there's no truer statement that has ever been spoken. History is a record of the lives that have been salvaged from the ash heap, and the men and women and families that the Word of God has effectively affected and changed their life. A couple of weeks ago, I like to go around and hear some of the devotions, and I appreciate the fact that some of you guys use the younger kids, AJ and some of these other guys, to bring them in and do devotions. I think it's a great thing for them. I think it's a great thing for you. This wasn't AJ speaking, it was another little guy, and I slipped over there just out of where I could hear it, and I tell you, it was a very moving thing. This little guy began talking about what God had done in his life and in his family, and he's sitting there talking about how that he got saved and what the Word of God means to him. Then he started to talk about his dad who was once an alcoholic, and now he's a spiritual leader of the family, how in our church he's a leader of men, and boy, he certainly is. In fact, if there's mighty men of valor in the New Testament church as there was under David, he'd certainly be one of the mighty men of valor. He said, "My dad once was an alcoholic, and alcohol controlled his life. Now the Spirit of God controls his life."

I'm going to tell you something, don't you ever think the kids don't see it. Don't you ever doubt it for a second that the kids don't see it. They really do. I'm telling you, boy, when that old verse says, "Hang on to her, she is thy life," I've seen over the years marriages that were wrecked and destroyed, relationships that were broken and busted, couples who were sure to become a part of the statistics of this country of a broken family and a divorce. But God makes a difference. The Word of God makes a difference with all of its healing power. Took what was broken and put it back together. I know sometimes you can't fix it, but even when you can't, God's healing Holy

Spirit of God gives you the next one better when it's done right in the Word of God. Today, many couples, many families, stand as a testimony to that great verse, verse 13, and a great instruction and principle: "Take hold of her, for she is thy life."

Believe me, on that great day of our final promotion, there will be millions of souls praising God and laying those crowns at His feet because they were saved from the pit of hell, saved from the world system that wanted to destroy everything in their life after they got saved. Men and women who not only heard what He said, but men and women who received it into their hearts, into their life, and into their family. That will make all the difference between a life with the blessings of God and a life where spiritually you just live from paycheck to paycheck, where you struggle all your life simply because you hear it Sunday after Sunday, but you're not willing to receive it into your heart, the instructions of the Word of God.

Next week I'm going to take and I'm going to show you the second part of this passage, and we're going to look at a life without the blessings of God. But you'll learn some great principles today that'll help you. You never stand still in your Christian life. That's why he said "the way of wisdom." There's always moving in your life. If you're not growing daily, then you're regressing daily. We get these weird ideas, "Well, I'm kind of not out of fellowship, but I'm not really in fellowship." No, friend, you're either in or you're out. You're either growing or you're going. It's just that simple.

Well, let's have a word of prayer. We'll be dismissed now.