

## I. Introduction to the Sermon and Proverbs

It is always good to have the kids and do what they do. If we are a visitor here, we are kind of not like our normal church a little bit. Most churches today do have a Christmas pageant, and they are having all kinds of stuff going on. It is all about Christmas and all about all those things. I am not against any of that. I have a Christmas tree at my house, and we have presents. It is just one of the holidays that come around. But I usually do not preach a Christmas message. I usually just keep on moving.

I think that—and I do not take this wrong—I think that people who set aside one day to be thankful that the Lord came into the world is probably not the best thing to do. To me, every day is Christmas, the fact that He came down for me and all that. My kids, I know a lot of Christian parents, they had felt determined to make their kids know that there was not any Santa Claus because they felt like they were lying to their kids when the kids grew up and found out that there was no Santa Claus. I respect the parents' right to do whatever they feel they need to do. Our kids grew up thinking there was a Santa Claus. We go down there today. John Hill is going to dress up like Santa Claus. He is the closest we got. He has always done it for years. It is not a fact that he does not want to do it anymore. It is the fact that after twenty years of doing it, nobody else wants to get into that outfit that he wears.

I am a realist. Kids are all gone now. There is no Santa Claus. There was at one time. He shot down over North Korea last year. All his little helpers got hooked up with the seven dwarfs, and they are now jihadists. Rudolph the red-nosed reindeer, his nose is red because he is an alcoholic. You need to understand these things. We always have a good time no matter what we do. I look at it as if it is a time of year that I can get close to somebody to tell them about the Lord Jesus Christ, and that is a good thing. I understand the whole concept, and Craig sent me a great email this week on the history of Santa, which was where I got it. That was a great day. I enjoyed that. I enjoy reading stuff like that.

So we are here today. We are going to get in the Bible a little bit. Last week we looked at the wise woman in Proverbs 14. We started Proverbs 14 last week and how she built her house. It said:

*Proverbs 14:1*

*Every wise woman buildeth her house: but the foolish plucketh it down with her hands.*

*Proverbs 14:2*

*He that walketh in his uprightness feareth the LORD: but he that is perverse in his ways despiseth him.*

We kind of took that verse apart and looked at it. We now know that the woman, the wise woman, we looked at it from an inspirational application. It will be your body. Your body is the

temple of God. It is the house of God as the bride of Christ. We also looked at it as it is a reference to a real mom and her family. A mother has so much input into her family and what the kids learn in those early years, either building them in righteousness or many times dragging them through the sins of their mother's life, and it always has a negative effect on it.

Today we want to look at verses 3 through 7, and our attention now again is going to be on this same woman as she follows or she does not follow the principles of the Word of God. You want to keep in mind, and I told you this before, that there are three aspects to the book of Proverbs. So you always want to keep it in that time frame or that mindset.

1. From a historical application, this is Solomon talking to his own son, giving him instruction, Rehoboam.
2. Doctrinally, it is a picture of God giving instruction to the nation of Israel, who the Bible says in Exodus 4 is also as a corporate nation God's son. So God is giving them instructions.
3. A practical application is you and me as God's son.

Through the Proverbs, we find, and we have been kind of going back and showing you all three because that is so vital to be able to learn how to take your Bible apart and put it back together that way. But we always want to come out with a practical because that is what is going to help you through life and everything that you do.

Today we are going to look at this woman again, and we are going to read verses 3 through 7 out of Proverbs 14. It simply says this:

*Proverbs 14:3*

*In the mouth of the foolish is a rod of pride: but the lips of the wise shall preserve them.*

*Proverbs 14:4*

*Where no oxen are, the crib is clean: but much increase is by the strength of the ox.*

*Proverbs 14:5*

*A faithful witness will not lie: but a false witness will utter lies.*

*Proverbs 14:6*

*A scorner seeketh wisdom, and findeth it not: but knowledge is easy unto him that understandeth.*

*Proverbs 14:7*

*Go from the presence of a foolish man, when thou perceivest not in him the lips of knowledge.*

Bubba, would you stand up and ask God's blessing on the service this morning and pray for us as we get into the Bible together?

[Prayer]

We thank you for the time that we get to all come together, Lord, and hear your word, Lord. We pray that you be with us as we endeavor in all that we are going to study here today. Lord, be

with Bob as he brings the message, and you will be with all of us. Open our eyes and our ears, Lord, to hear and see what you have for us. We love you and your presence in Christ. Amen.

## II. The Rod of Pride

This is a great passage today, and it is going to deal with a subject that is probably the number one subject in the Bible as it relates to people with problems in their lives. This will be a good study on the sin of pride, and the book of Proverbs says much about it. You will find it popping up all the time and how it will affect you and how you should deal with it.

The first part of verse 3 says, “In the mouth of the foolish is a rod of pride.” As you can get your notes in here, I want you to keep it together here as best you can. The rod of pride in the mouth of a fool as you find it here will doctrinally be the antichrist. You need to understand that. When you find this wicked man in Proverbs, and he is always doing something that is wrong or hurting somebody, it will always be in a doctrinal application the man of sin, the antichrist.

Before that, you will want to look at Isaiah 9:4 and Isaiah 10:5. Those are references there. You will find that the antichrist has a rod of pride that comes out of his mouth here that is really a rod of oppression by which he puts the nation of Israel under during the Tribulation by what he says to them and what he does with them by what he says.

Adjacent to that, when you study it out, you will find that when the Lord comes back in Revelation 19, when you get on down around verses 11 through 15, you will know that He establishes the millennial reign of Christ, and the Bible says in those verses that when He comes back and establishes righteous reign, the Bible calls it a rule with a rod of iron. So the word “rule” or “rod” here in the Bible, whether it is good or it is bad, it will always be connected to power. When you find it in the use of the antichrist, it is what he says in a negative way that controls people. When you find it from the Lord as the rod of iron in the millennial reign, it is always going to be a reference to the righteous reign in what He says that puts people under a power that is the power of the Holy Spirit of God.

But you know also for you and for me, we want to look at the practical inspirational application. This rod of pride will be found in many of God’s people. I have been around for a while and dealt with people for most of my adult life, and one of the things I can honestly say to you is that every sin that an unsaved man can get into, a saved person can get into. We think that when we get saved, that it isolates us from sin. It really does not. You have the ability to insulate yourself from sin, but it will never isolate you from it. You will find that a saved person can do the exact same things as an unsaved person. A lot of people have a tough time with that because they do not understand the difference between the flesh and the spirit and the warfare that goes on. But you are going to find that that is simply the way it is, and the rod of pride in a fool’s mouth, and it will be seen very clearly in God’s people just like you will see it in unsaved people.

I have seen God’s people just like this verse. If you are around for any length of time or in the ministry or just dealing with people and you have any kind of understanding of the scriptures, you will too in time. When you have a Christian who will not yield to what is wrong in their life, and I have dealt with people where they had issues in their life, and you try to help them and you

try to talk with them about that, they will never see it. They will never believe that there is anything wrong with them, and it is always somebody else. When you see a Christian who will not yield when they are wrong, it will simply be because his or her pride has gotten in the way. Pride is something that is absolutely incredible, one of the greatest studies in all of the Bible. Pride will always keep a child of God from seeing his real issues. Pride becomes a power in their life.

In Proverbs 6:16, we have talked about this before, not only when we came through Proverbs 6, but I have talked about it lots of times on Bible study. You will find in that passage the seven things that God hates. One of the things that God hates very clearly there is these seven things that He hates here make up the seven characteristics of the devil. In Matthew 12:43-45, the Bible talks about the nation of Israel, and the Bible talks about an unclean spirit goes into the nation of Israel and then it leaves. When it comes back, the Bible says that he brings seven other spirits more wicked than himself. Those are the seven spirits you find here in Proverbs 6.

So many of God's people today, and it is an incredible thing to look at and to study and truly to understand, so many of God's people today who are truly honestly believingly saved, yet they walk in this false spirit of antichrist and mistake it for the Spirit of God. It is an incredible thing. I know people say, "Well, how does that happen? How can a saved man who has the Spirit of God living inside him, how does that person get to the point where they follow the wrong spirit, make all the mistakes in life that they can make, and come to the point where they still claim to be saved and many, many times justify themselves?" I have heard them justify a lifestyle that would be unbelievable simply because of the fact that they cannot see their real issue.

Somebody says, "How does that happen?" Well, it happens for a couple of ways. The first thing you want to understand is the fact that in our list in Proverbs 6:16, the first characteristic of the devil the Bible says that he has. Well, he has got a lot of problems, and he lists those things in there in an incredible way that I do not have time to go into it. I could take those seven things that he does or says about him in Proverbs 6, and I could show you the devil's attitude from Genesis right on through the rest of the Bible. It is an incredible study. But the first thing it says about the devil in Proverbs 6 is he had a proud look, a proud look.

Now all sin will start with pride, and pride is simply a proud look is simply how you look at things. Do you see it as it really is, or do you see it the way you want to see it? The second thing is you study when you go back to Ezekiel 14 and Isaiah 28 that the Bible says that the devil when he was lifted up and he began to have his problem with pride and a proud look, he had a proud heart. His heart got lifted up. The proud look will always come from a proud heart. Then the Bible says with that that when you get knowledge, it will puff you up and falsely lift you up, and then you get because of your pride, you get a false sense of spirituality.

*1 Corinthians 4:6*

*And these things, brethren, I have in a figure transferred to myself and to Apollos for your sakes; that ye might learn in us not to think of men above that which is written, that no one of you be puffed up for one against another.*

### *1 Corinthians 8:1*

*Now as touching things offered unto idols, we know that we all have knowledge. Knowledge puffeth up, but charity edifieth.*

We know about the church at Corinth was a baby church that had all kinds of problems. What Paul says to them in these two verses, he says, "You know what?" Paraphrase here, he said, "You got a little bit of knowledge. You have got truth, but because you have no balance in the truth, that truth has lifted you up to the point where now you become prideful with what you do know, and when you get to that point, you cannot really teach anybody anything."

The third thing or the fourth thing the Bible shows us that pride through Satan will blind us to the truth of God.

### *2 Corinthians 4:4*

*In whom the god of this world hath blinded the minds of them which believe not, lest the light of the glorious gospel of Christ, who is the image of God, should shine unto them.*

He does not blind your eyes. He blinds your mind because when you get a proud look, you get blinded, and you cannot see things the way they really are, and you are blinded to it. The fifth thing he says that pride comes before a fall in destruction.

### *Proverbs 16:18*

*Pride goeth before destruction, and an haughty spirit before a fall.*

A guy gets himself so lifted up or a lady gets herself so lifted up, she does not see things the way they really are. They go through life and never taking responsibility and thinking that everything that they do is okay, and it all leads to a disaster. Then the last thing is pride will affect a man's attitude of heart about everything, and yet they will try to maintain the illusion that they are spiritual.

Pride will do three things to a person. It affects three aspects of our lives.1.) It affects the way you look at things.2.) It affects the way you think about things.3.) It affects the way that you speak about things.

A rod of pride coming out of his mouth. I am sure probably if you have been around here any length of time, the great model for this in the Bible of pride in a man's life, Christian's life. I am not even talking about unsaved people today. Unsaved people can come and go do whatever. I am talking about God's people because as I said earlier, there is an assent that an unsaved man or woman does that a saved child of God could not do also.

The model of this will be Genesis 1:1, which also ties into Ezekiel 28 and Isaiah 14, going way back when God and Lucifer long before all sin entered into the world. You think about this, God had given Lucifer a tremendous ministry over all that God had. The Bible tells us that he was the covering cherub. In other words, he covered everything that God had. It was like God created everything, and then He put Lucifer over it. That was his ministry. And yet they were so close. They were so close. They are so close in the Bible before they fell that the Mormon church sees

how close they are. They actually get the idea that Christ and the devil were brothers, which is an interesting concept. But they actually see that because they see how close they were way back then.

Lucifer got all his knowledge, all of his wisdom, all of his beauty, all of his light, all of his splendor and glory from his spiritual Father, God. God the Father made him a key part of His plan. It is an incredible study to go back. But Lucifer got disillusioned with God. There came a day when Lucifer looked at God, and did he look at Him the same way? God had, the Bible says that the morning stars sang together and all the sons of God shouted for joy on creation morning, and God had spoken the worlds into existence. But there came a time when Lucifer got lifted up that he did not think God knew what He was talking about anymore.

He did three things. Those three things are recorded for us in Genesis 3, and they happened all the way back, way back when. But they come to light, and they are the same three things that God's people do when pride gets into their world.1.) The first thing that the devil did once he fell or got him to fall? The first thing he did was question God's wisdom. When he shows up in Genesis 3, he thinks he knows more about the plan than God did.2.) The second thing that he did in Genesis 3, he questioned His word. He said to Eve, "Yea, hath God said?" He not only questioned God's wisdom, he also questioned God's word.3.) Then in Genesis 3 and in Isaiah 14 and Ezekiel 28, he questions His ability to be God.

You know what? Just like people today. He just did not question it to himself, did he? Because when you lay the whole thing out and you study it, you find out that when Satan finally left heaven and ceased to be Lucifer and now became Satan, and he led a revolt against God because he thought now that he knew more about it than God did. The Bible says by his pride and beauty he was lifted up. He took a third of the angels with him, the Bible says in Revelation 12. Now how did those third of the angels decide to go with him? I will tell you how they decided to go with him. He questioned God's ability to be God. He did not keep it to himself. He made some private little inroads with some of the sons of God. Through his pride, he then turned on God and in time led a revolt against heaven, and ultimately it threw the universe into chaos. He tried to destroy what God, his Father, was doing, or so he thought he could.

The first rebellion in the Bible was against authority. The first rebellion in the Bible dealt with a proud look against the authority of the Word of God that what God had established was not really that good. It sets the theme for all rebellion down through history, whether it be the Old Testament nation of Israel. Every time they got into problems, you know how they got into the problem? They got it because they started questioning those three things about God, and they never started questioning them until they got prideful, or it will be for the New Testament church. You know what gets you in trouble? You know what gets me in trouble?

You are sitting here this morning, and most of you are probably in fellowship with God. I hope you are. I hope you are all saved. Maybe some of you are not, but I hope you are. But you know honestly what gets us into trouble, gets all of us into trouble. There is not a different thing that will get you messed up, that will get me messed up. You know what really fundamentally when

we start to have issues in our life, you know what it comes down to? It simply comes down to this: we think we know more about how to run our lives than God does. That is how it happens.

You and I have the Bible right there in front of us. You hear it every Sunday. You hear it on Thursday. You hear it in the prayer meetings. You hear it in discipleship. How many times have we talked about the absolute importance of the Word of God in your life and following those principles? But when you and I start to go down the wrong road, we will always go hand in hand because of one reason. We simply think that we know more about doing it than God does, and that will be because of pride. Pride will lift us up. Pride will always keep a child of God from seeing his real issues. The first rebellion in the Bible was against authority that God had established. Rebellion over the authority through pride, the rod of pride, the power of pride in a person's life.

The rod of pride will be a man or a woman who has lifted himself up to the point where he uses words and actions to take control or to oppress others with a false sense of truth. The greatest example of that today that I could ever give you is right there. You hear it all the time. You see it all the time. It does not matter what your political persuasion is. I could care one way or the other. But the greatest prideful person out there in public today would be Donald Trump. I have nothing against the guy. I have no political persuasion one way or the other. I do not care. It does not matter if he gets a nomination to me or not. It really does not. I do not care one way or the other. I am just looking at the example of a man who likes to bully everybody around him. I only saw his show, that reality show about where he hired and fired people. I saw it one time, and I said, "You know what? I have to deal with this all my life. I am not going to watch this stupid thing where he is so powerful. He is so sure of himself. He has got more money than anybody in the world that nobody can touch him as he thinks." So he bullies people. He says about immigration, "We are going to build a wall and make Mexico pay for it." That would be wonderful. "We are going to take all the illegal aliens, and we are going to bus them back to Mexico." Hey, you know what? We do not have that many buses. He talks great things. Some of it is probably good stuff.

Somebody says, "Well, you know, I heard a commentator today saying how much of a bully he was." Now, I understand. But you know what? On one hand, let me just say this. We have had such a weak country for so long. We have been bullied by everybody. North Korea bullies us. Putin bullies us. The drug cartel bullies us. The radical jihadist bully us. The people in Gitmo bully us. Maybe it is time we get us a bully and bully somebody back. I do not know. But there is somebody who you want to talk about. You look up the word "pride" in the dictionary, his picture will be there. He has done everything. He has never lost. He is never a loser. He said John McCain, because he was captured and shot down over Vietnam, was a loser. That is the height of arrogance of pride. But that is the way people are. You see, that is the bully type of pride.

Then you find the other type of pride, which you find in Christianity with higher education in the scholastic world of the Bible scholars. They will bully you the same way, but they will hold their education over you and intimidate you, and their pride of what they have learned will lift them up to the point that in their mind you will never get to the same understanding of the Bible that they have. They will always leave you a little short. They will always make sure that no matter

what you do learn about the Bible, that you will always come up short of what they know about the Bible. That is all they have got in life. They have never built a church. They probably have not won a soul to Christ in thirty-five years. They sit around and study some of the goofiest stuff you ever saw in your life, and yet they are put into position to taking young men and teaching them and young ladies and giving them truth. And yet they hold that truth at arm's length. I say it all the time. You have been around here ten years. If you do not know the Bible as good as me or better than me, there is something wrong with you. There is no holding back of truth. There is no pride involved in it.

I knew a preacher one time that he hated the idea of the King James Bible being the Word of God, and he was a real prominent preacher in the fellowship and around the country, very well known. His joy in life was finding little preachers out there in southern Missouri or Kansas that were out there with small churches who believed the Bible, and he would take them and he would write them and cause them into a debate. He was a great debater. He would write them letters and belittle them and make fun of them and just chew them up because of the fact that he had such a superior knowledge. He did not know squat when it came to the Bible. The rod of pride in a man's mouth.

In the Bible, there are obviously great examples.\* Pharaoh, Exodus 5.\* Nabal, 1 Samuel 25:10.\* Absalom, 2 Samuel 14.

Well, there is a perfect example of the Antichrist. The Bible says that he is one of the eighteen types in the Old Testament of the man of sin. The Bible says he was perfect in beauty. The Bible says that he had perfect knowledge. He was everything that the devil was. You know what he did? He got to that point where he thought he was so great and so good. David was his father who was the king. He tries to lead a revolt against David just like Lucifer led a revolt against God, all because of his pride. This rod will come from an attitude of pride that develops in a man or woman's heart as they question God's authority or simply go against God's authority. All the time in a Christian's world, anyhow, they are all claiming how much they love God and are following God.

In the New Testament church, Paul addresses young Timothy who was his son in the Lord and was also a pastor. Timothy makes up what we know as the pastoral epistles in the Bible. They are written to pastors, for pastors, everybody, but directly as Timothy and Titus and Philemon, they were pastors. They are written to keep this in mind when it comes to people and the ministry. He said in 1 Timothy 3:6-7, he said, "Timothy, when it comes to putting people that are Christian, when it comes to putting them in a position of leadership or giving them ministry or giving them power or giving them some kind of control, he says, 'Follow this.'"

*1 Timothy 3:6*

*Not a novice, lest being lifted up with pride he fall into the condemnation of the devil.*

*1 Timothy 3:7*

*Moreover he must have a good report of them which are without; lest he fall into reproach and the snare of the devil.*

That is a new baby Christian. That is somebody that just got saved, somebody that maybe has just got through discipleship one or two. He says, "Not a novice because," he says, "lest being filled up with pride of what you learn, you will fall into condemnation of the devil." He says, "Moreover, he must have a good report of them which are without lest he fall into the reproach and the snare of the devil." You see this in young Christians from time to time. They become prideful. Young men and young ladies, they get to that point. They only see the surface of things. There is no depth to them. There is no real growth to them. They have grown to a part, but now they have got knowledge. They have got a little bit of power, and it goes to their head, and it blinds them. Many times the people will get to the point and sometimes that they will, you cannot teach them anything. They see what they see. I have had in my life over the years that you come in and they will ask for help. You will try to lay out something, and then it will wind up arguing with you about what they asked you.

### III. Time and Grade

I want to explain something to you today. I think this will be a help to you. We have in the military what we call time and grade. You know and I know that if you are Christians here this morning, you are supposed to be a soldier for Jesus Christ. The military principles of any military army on this planet fundamentally start from the Christian and his militant lifestyle. I have told you before that in the Christian life there are two kinds of concepts. There is the church triumphant, and there is a church militant. The church triumphant will be when we all get to heaven with the Lord Jesus Christ. The church militant is what we are in right now. You are in a war. You are in a war that makes all the other wars seem like nothing. I know that is hard for some people to grasp, but I am just telling you.

But in the military, we have what we call time and grade. It is an incredible concept because it is true in Christianity. The grade you make will be your rank: a corporal, PFC, sergeant. But it always is in proportion to the time that you served. In other words, you do not come out of basic, and they make you a colonel. You do not come out of basic, and they make you a sergeant. There has to be a process that you go through that has those two concepts: time, how long you are in, and grade, the rank that you make, always in proportion with each other.

In World War II, they came up with a concept that was pretty, I understand why they did it, but it was pretty ridiculous looking back on it. They were so short of officers in the World War II theater of operation, both in the Pacific and both in the European theater, that they came up with the idea of what they called OCS, which was Officer Candidate School. It was a program that you sent a young man with great potential, and he went away to an OCS school for ninety days. That is three months. What I am saying is he came off the street, went into OCS because he had the intelligence and passed the criteria for it, and then immediately went into OCS school and three months later came out as a second lieutenant. They called him ninety-day wonders.

In the military, the best officers came out of West Point. All the generals of World War II, all the generals that we have today, all are West Point graduates. But above all of that, the best officers, the best officers in any combat unit, the best officers will be the ones that came in as privates, became NCOs, and then became, through a battlefield commission, became an officer. They

learned how to survive. They understood. When you go to OCS, you got your rank or grade based on your schooling, not combat on the battlefield. You had the grade, but you had no time. After ninety days, you come out with your shiny second lieutenant bars on, and they were put in charge of a combat unit with guys who were privates, who were corporals, who were sergeants, who had been in combat for maybe one or two years. They have been on the line, many of them, in Normandy, in Bastogne, and places where, you know, well, this guy was back in the States doing his thing. These guys were learning how to stay alive, and they knew what would get them killed.

There was a real resentment with the common troops over these guys because they did not know what they were doing. They would get into a combat situation. This lieutenant, because he demanded respect because he was an officer, and he had to give him respect because he was an officer, he would order the men to do things that everybody on the line knows half of them are going to get killed because that is not the way you do it. In other words, he could not learn in ninety days when it took a combat vet two years to learn in the trenches, but he thought he could. The average lifespan in World War II of a second lieutenant was sixteen hours. Sometimes he was killed by his own men.

It is about understanding how spiritual growth works in the body of Christ. In Christianity, a novice may know some things about the Bible. He may have been through discipleship one or discipleship two, but until you have been in combat, until you have got down in the mud and the trenches for a period of time, and you really understand how it works. I am going to tell you something. In war, there are some things that you better learn to stay alive. In Christianity, there are some things you better learn to spiritually stay alive. Something about real combat that takes all the pride out of it.

I have talked to World War II vets and had to have them give me their stuff so I could display it as you so many of you have seen. Most of the combat vets that were real in combat, they just wanted to come home. They had their unit patch on, they maybe had their CIB or their jump wing, but they did not flour a lot of things up. They knew that what they had done was what they had to do. There was no pride involved. Brother, it got taken out. The first time they held their dying friend in their hands with his face blown off. But the guys had never been in combat. They looked like an army navy store. They went into Paris, they went into Luxembourg, they went into these places and bought all the ribbons and all the metals and all the aiguillettes and all the things that they could wear. They were home looking like they just stepped out of a parade. Combat will take the pride out of you. It is hard to be prideful about who you are when somebody is trying to kill you. In Christianity, when you really get into thick evidence, you take your stand for God, it is hard to get all lifted up when every day somebody is trying to kill you spiritually. It just kind of takes the edge off of it for you.

A new Christian four or five years has to have some time to grow, time in grade. Time will represent the length of time he has served and been saved and ministered. Grade will be the depth of doctrine he gets to that point in the same time span.

*2 Timothy 3:16*

*All scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness:*

When the two balance each other out and he matures and grows in time and listed up in grade and does more for God, he can handle more of the ministry because he sees the depth of the ministry, not just the surface.

In 1969, when I finished basic training, the sergeant major who was over our battalion, training battalion, his name was Sergeant Jingles. You laugh, only behind his back. This guy, I still got my yearbook from basic someplace, this guy just looking at his picture will scare the fire out of you. This guy was something else. He gave us a talk on the night of our graduation. I remember just like it was yesterday. He said, "You know what men, right now you are tomorrow. You are going to graduate from basic, and you are going to officially be in the army. But," he says, "you do not really understand anything about the army yet." He said, "Ten years from now if you are still alive, you see how the army as it really is and how it works." What he was saying was the longer you are in the army and train and learn to fight, the deeper you get into the army and you understand it. When you stay with it and you understand how it works and as you understand how it works through the time and the grade, you will be promoted up the chain. That is how it works. He went in as a private at the end of World War II. Now keep in mind, this was 1969. He went in in a private in World War II, fought in Korea, fought in Vietnam, had three or four tours, three wars, and had come to the place where now he was a command sergeant major, the highest he could go at that time. He understood the army inside and out, and he was more than qualified to explain it to us who did not understand it.

Right now many of you are novices when it comes to the ministry. Many of you in your first year after being saved or just gotten saved or two or three years in even being saved. But as you grow, you see the depth of what the ministry and church is really all about. You will see the depth of the doctrine of the church and how it all plays into everything, and it begins to focus and take shape. When you get that time and grade, and it is a tender balance between the two, you will be able to see and understand how the church works and how you work in it.

Now the difference between the army and the ministry is that in the army you get deeper into it as you see it and understand it. In Christianity where the army gets deeper in you, you get deeper in the army, and Christianity the Bible gets deeper in you. You understand it. You grow. You are tried through things. When you do not go through that process, 1 Timothy 3:6-7, you get lifted up with pride, and you fall into the condemnation of the devil. Do not misunderstand, Job 41:34 says the devil is the king over all the children of pride. You know why? Because way back to Genesis before 1:1, he had a proud look. Many of God's people today follow Proverbs 6:16 and think they are following the Lord. Well, you cannot be following God with pride and arrogance in your life and not following the Word of God.

You know that when it comes to your spiritual growth, you decide how far you are going to go. I mean, I can preach good sermons all the time, lay out great Bible studies, have the greatest lessons, have a thousand people there as your beck and call to help you. But at the end of the day, you decide how far you are going to go in your spiritual walk with God. Your walk with God is

like a spiral going up. You do not want to go down. You want to go up. It is like walking one of those staircases in a lighthouse where it goes around in a circle up for maybe a hundred feet. Life is like that. When you get saved, you are at the bottom, and you start to go up. You go around two times maybe moving up, and then you are going to find an obstacle. That obstacle was put there by God to help you get to the next level. When you are in a church, when you have people working with you and you come up against that obstacle, then right there you have the wherewithal to help it, solve it. That obstacle may be something in your life that you had not been willing to give up yet. It may be somebody, something that you know that has got to go. When you give that up, you know what you do? You go up to another couple rungs, and then you are going to hit another problem. There will be something else in your life that God is showing you now. You have got to fix this. You have got to change this. You have got to do this. When you fix that and change it, you keep going up again, and you will get another three or four levels, and there will be another issue. This issue will be again about something that God is showing you that has got to go, has got to change. As long as you keep dealing with those things and you take the church, the Bible, and the Word of God and all that God has given you and you get those things worked through in your life, you keep going up.

But when you finally hit the problem that you are not willing to fix now, when God shows to you, "This is what is wrong with you. You have got to fix this. You have got to let this go. You have got to change this." And you simply say, "I am not going to do that. I am not going to fix that." You delude yourself into thinking, "I can have a walk with God with this in my life." You are done growing. You are not going to come into church the next Sunday and say, "I just want everybody to know I hit a snag in my life, and I am not going any farther, but I am glad to be here today." You are not going to do that. Your pride now is going to kick in, and you are going to pretend you are okay when you are not. You are going to stay right there on that spot, and their pride is going to force you to play the part if you are something that you are not now, something we refuse to deal with.

Now let me say this, this rod of pride that you have and I have and use will also be the rod by which God will bring us down. The Bible says Proverbs 16:18, "Pride goeth before destruction, and an haughty spirit before a fall." The rod of pride is what God uses to destroy the antichrist, and He will use it to bring us down because we think that we can get by with it.

You ever notice Chuck Norris is a favorite. He is a Christian by the way. He is a great Christian, and I love his movies. He does not make any real blockbuster movies like Star Wars or anything. He would not fit in a Star Wars deal. But he sure likes to, if you ever have a bad day and you just want to beat the world up, just put one of his movies in. Steven Seagal is another one. I noticed something about all these guys. When they fight somebody, most of the time they do not have anything in their hands. The other guy has got something, and they are, I mean the guy has got a big club or he has got a knife. He has got nothing. But he knows he does not need nothing because he is smarter, faster, quicker, and better than the other guy. This guy is so foolish that he thinks he is going to go up against Norris. He comes to that thing, and Norris just stands there, and the guy, he will both do it. They will take away whatever he has got and beat him to death with it. When you come to God with your rod of pride, He is quicker than you, He is smarter

than you, He is faster than you, and He is tougher than you. He will take it right out of your hands and beat you to death with it. In Jesus' name.

## IV. The Lips of the Wise

Look at the last part of verse 3, "but the lips of the wise shall preserve them." Wise lips will keep you from pride and destruction, not only the things that you say, but the people that you listen to. This is one of the great concepts in all the Bible, God's preservation. It is an incredible study. Man is preserved because he stays in the structure that God has provided for him. You will notice if you ever want to study it in the Bible that there are three basic structures of preservation that God has preserved in the Word of God. It is incredible.

The first one will be in the Old Testament, and that will be the nation of Israel. Israel's preservation depended on what their nation did. Charles Krauthammer, who is a Fox News contributor, and I like to listen to him. I think he is, I do not know if he is a Christian or not, but he has got a lot of insight. He was talking about the nation of Israel one time, and he said this. He says, "Israel, the nation of Israel is the very embodiment of Jewish contingency." It is always been amazing to me that people hate the Jews. I am not saying he does. They hate the Jews. They cannot stand them, but yet you cannot deny them. He was making the point that Israel is the only nation on earth that inhabits the same land that it was given 5,000 years ago. He said it is the only nation that speaks its original language that was developed 5,000 years ago. All the rest are gone. He said it is the only nation that worships the same God. He said it is the only nation that bears the same name. Where are the Hittites today? Where are the Babylonians today? Where are the Assyrians? Where are the nations that were talked about in the Old Testament? They are gone. You realize that there are only two nations that bear the same name. One of them Israel, and the other one is Egypt. In the Bible, Egypt is God's people and represents the preservation of God, and Egypt is a type of the world. You know what that tells me? Bill's being the only two nations is telling me that God's people will always be here, and the world will always be here, and you get to choose which one you are going to be part of.

The preservation of the nation of Israel, the Old Testament structure for every Jew. When Moses was met there with God in Exodus 3:2, God spoke to him through a burning bush. Moses looked at it, and he was astounded because the bush was burning, but he says it is not being consumed. It is not burning up. The reason why God spoke to him out of a bush that burned was not consumed, it because that bush is the picture of the nation of Israel that it may be burned by the fires of this world, but God's preservation, it will never be consumed. Incredible. Incredible. Incredible.

The second hand of preservation of God was in the Word of God, the Old Testament and the New Testament. God's hand of keeping the Bible pure for 6,000 years. As I said last week, I love the Bible because the Bible is the only thing that I have that is not of this world. It is supernatural. You know in history we talk about the seven wonders of the ancient world, and there is only one of them left. But you know in the Bible coming down through the Bible and history with God there are seven spiritual wonders of the world that God put on this earth. The Word of God is one of them. The preservation of the Word of God, one of the most amazing feats of all the history of

mankind. All through history. People talk about the inspiration of the Bible. Well, we believe the Bible is inspired of God. Well, I do too, but I will tell you something else. What good is it is the fact that God inspired something at some point in time if I cannot get a copy of it that He did not preserve it.

Third preservation of God was the New Testament church where God provided the nation of Israel their structure. God provided the New Testament Christian their structure. A structure you and I could stay where God wanted us to be, keep us accountable, keep us from allowing sin to creep in, and keep us from getting prideful with the lips of the wise shall preserve them it says.

## V. The Oxen and the Crib

Now look at verse 4:

*Proverbs 14:4*

*Where no oxen are, the crib is clean: but much increase is by the strength of the ox.*

Scratching your head looking at that verse, I can see it now. Looks complicated, does it not? I mean, you are asking yourself, “Well, so far we have been talking, what is the context here? Rule number one, we are talking about a wise man, a foolish woman builds her house, now we have got an ox. We have got an ox and a crib, and the crib is clean. And then we have got much increase by the strength of the ox.” Okay, how does that fit into here? I mean, come on. Time and grade, my friend, time and grade.

What He is saying is really simple. In the context of what we are talking about here, He is talking about a man who is prideful versus a man who is not, a woman who builds her house versus a woman who does not. What He is saying is simple. You get an ox because you want to do some work with it. But an ox has to eat, cost you money, has got to feed him. So if you are going to make a living and make a profit, you need an ox that works more than it eats.

Now I can give you the best example I know, sitting home right now, I know what they are doing on my couch, Buddy and Daisy. Brother and sister, labs. Without a doubt, the two laziest dogs on the planet. Cost me \$100 a month for dog food. Cost me \$10,000 a year for vet bills, not counting the bones, they love the ones with the stuff stuffed inside of them. And yet they do nothing. They have got the greatest noses on the planet. I get up in the morning, and twelve hours earlier, one of them knocked a bone way under the couch. I did not see it happen. I do not think they were recording it either. I will sit down there, try to work on my sermon, try to do this. My desk is right there by the couch. Buddy is over me barking, coming over to that couch, doing everything, but he knows that bone is under there. He smells it. So I have got to get down on my hands and knees. I have got to move everything around, reach back there and get that bone. He knows that bone is under there. If I could just get them to sniff out drugs, I would make a million dollars. I mean, we went on the Staten Island ferry. Did you notice that dog there, everybody that came in, he had to smell the person’s bag? Oh, my dogs could do that. Take them to the airport, man, and they could smell out drugs or smell out bombs or smell out gunpowder or whatever. Man, they would be up and down there. They have got noses. They can find a bone sixty feet

under the couch. They will not do it. They just sprawl out on that couch and just look at me. They know when it is time to eat. They do not even have watches. Never get off that couch.

Now, let me put in a practical application for you. In the Bible, oxen are likened to Christians. Do not know if you know that or not. You know an ox is not born an ox? An ox has to have a special operation that makes him an ox. You know you are not born a Christian? You have to have a special operation, Colossians 2, that makes you a Christian. Oxen are hooked up to a yoke to plow fields. Matthew 13 says, “the fields the world.” In Matthew 11:29-30, Jesus says, “Take my yoke upon you because it is a lot easier than the world’s.” You work best in pairs, husband and wife teams. So 2 Corinthians 6:14, talking about marriage and you getting married says, “Be ye not unequally yoked together with unbelievers.” You are oxen. Believe it or not, when an ox is pulling alone and he gets to an impasse and he cannot go on, you know how he rests? He rests by kneeling down on his front knees, standing on his back. But every position, every child of God should be in when you are reaching impasse on your wife, you hit your knees. Tough when an ox is smarter than most of God’s people.

Now my job as a pastor is to feed you, give you all you can eat. But as you grow in the Lord in time and grade, here is the principle. I expect you to do more work for God than you eat. I expect you to be the ox that turns a profit for the Lord. I expect you to be an ox that does not just sit around and eat all the food all the time, but you do more work than you take in. We saw in Luke 19 a couple of weeks ago the story about the pounds, how God gave this guy a power, a pound, ten guys, and they came back and made investment. That is what you and I are supposed to do. We are to be making investments within our life. We in this church, our goal in this church is to turn a spiritual profit for the Lord and investment. But that will never happen with Labrador Christians who just eat and sprawl out on the couch. A lot of God’s people like that. Probably what led old Bob Jones Sr. to preach his famous message on some dogs I have known.

## VI. The Faithful Witness

Now verse 5:

*Proverbs 14:5*

*A faithful witness will not lie: but a false witness will utter lies.*

The context of verse 5 will be our little guy up there in verse 3 with a rod of pride. Verse 5 is saying, when you are filled with pride, it will force you to be a false witness and a lie. Why? Because your pride will not let you be wrong, so it has to be other people who are wrong, so you position yourself by making them look bad and you look good, bearing false witness, half truths. A faithful witness will always tell you the truth. He has nothing to lose. He will not tell you one person half truth and tell somebody else no truth. The truth is always the truth to him. His story will always be the same to everybody. He is open and he is transparent.

## VII. Seeking Wisdom

Now look at verse 6:

*Proverbs 14:6*

*A scorner seeketh wisdom, and findeth it not: but knowledge is easy unto him that understandeth.*

One of the greatest telling verses in all the Bible. I have met people, Christians all of my life that was on a pursuit of truth, wisdom, and understanding, and yet they never find it. The reason they cannot find it is because of pride. It blinds them to any real truth. Bless their heart, all their lives, they go from one place to another, one church to another, and they never find what they are looking for. You see his pride will always get in the way, and he becomes to the point where he cannot see him, and it is right in front of him.

This morning I was ready kind of in a rush to get out of, go to church, and I, I have to always put my keys, my phone, my wallet always in the same place. If I do not, I come in a rush, throw them here, throw this here, and then when I have got to leave, I cannot find them. So I have one spot. My wallet goes here, my keys hang up here, and my phone goes right here. Well whatever happened, I put my wallet someplace else last night, and I am up here, last thing I am doing and ready to get in the car, car is running. I mean I am ready to go, got to get to church, cannot find my wallet. I look upstairs, I look downstairs. I look where I am supposed to put it, it was not there. I looked everywhere. I thought, "Okay, we are back, got all my pants to wear yesterday, was not in there. Got the jacket to wear, was not in there." I thought, "Well maybe I put it in my desk, was not in there." I am looking all around the place, and I cannot find that thing, and finally in desperation I walk back out there, and I stop, and I think to myself, "Where did I put that wallet?" And then I looked exactly where I always put it, there it was. I asked myself, "I looked there three times and did not see it." And it was there all the time. I am thinking to myself, "Why could not I see it?" But the reason why, because I was so preoccupied with looking for the wallet that I did not see the wallet right where it was. So many times we get so busy looking for the truth, we do not see it right where it is at. That becomes a problem. That is pride. It becomes a rod of pride. That rod will become so heavy in time it will destroy everything about us. We wind up just a bitter, cantankerous old shell of a person.

Last part of that verse, "but knowledge is easy unto him that understandeth." Listen, for you and me to have wisdom, there are some things about God and His word that we better let somebody teach us, time and grade. Mark Twain said, "When time in life is not the things that we don't know that mess us up rather the things that we're sure of that are simply not true." Boy, that is such a great statement. So many of God's people operate completely outside the way God operates. You will try to tell them, and pride will blind them to it. You know it is a thing where you see how easy the victory of God really is.

When I was up in the station at Fort Devens, Massachusetts, I had a TDY for a funeral up, I forget the seaport, Gloucester, one of those places. It was a great place. I had a lot of time to kill, and I always like to go down and look at all the ships down there. I talked to this old guy, and I asked this guy, I said, "You know, most places only have one lighthouse." He says, I said, "There is a lighthouse here and a lighthouse here. Why do you guys have three lighthouses in this harbor?" He began to tell me that this was one of the trickiest harbors that anywhere in the world. He said so many ships were wrecked and messed up because trying to get into the harbor,

they would follow the light of a lighthouse or a fire on the shore, and it would be deceiving to them, and it would run aground. He says about 100 years ago, somebody came up with the idea of putting three lighthouses in strategic places, one here, one here, and one here. When you are out in the ocean coming into the, trying to make your approach, you see three lighthouses. He says, "Well, you angle your ship." He says, "You want to get the angle your ship where those two, three lighthouses all line up and become one." He says, "When those three lights become one light, he knows you are right on the right course to take you safely in the harbor." He says, "You see two, you are going to wind up on a rock. You see three, it is going to be a disaster." He says, "You have to take those three lights of those lighthouses coming in on your approach and make those three lights into one light and stay right on that one light, and you will get safely in the shore."

Years later I thought about that, and I thought to myself, "You know what? That is exactly what every Christian has to do with the three most important structure concepts that God ever gave him." The principles of the Word of God. The only way you know for sure it is of God is to line up the principles. Get all the principles that it only sees one. You know what it is? God's three lights are God's structure for you and for me.1.) The Word of God.2.) The local church.3.) The leadership of the pastor that God has given you.

Those three line up, you are going home safe. You just line them up the way you want to, you are going on the rocks. It is just that simple. It is not hard at all.

## VIII. Go From the Presence of a Foolish Man

Verse 7 says:

*Proverbs 14:7*

*Go from the presence of a foolish man, when thou perceivest not in him the lips of knowledge.*

Now last verse is simple and straightforward and very clear. It goes back to the principle on association that we have talked about many, many times. When you perceive that somebody is caught up in pride in what they are saying is not biblical and they are blinded to it, then you move on in life.

*Galatians 5:9*

*A little leaven leaveneth the whole lump.*

*1 Corinthians 5:6*

*Your glorying is not good. Know ye not that a little leaven leaveneth the whole lump?*

*1 Corinthians 5:8*

*Therefore let us keep the feast, not with old leaven, neither with the leaven of malice and wickedness; but with the unleavened bread of sincerity and truth.*

Stay away from it. The devil will not miss the opportunity to get you into the details and confuse you in hope of blinding you too. I have never understood it. We do it all the time. When somebody has a bad cold, you stay away from them. I do not know how many times I have been up to hug somebody on Sunday morning, and they say, "You know what? You do not want this. Stay away from me." And I said, "Thank you. I do not want that. Thank you very much." When they have the flu, you do not hug them. When they have some sickness that can be communicated, you do not drink after them, you do not eat after them. The old days when they had measles and they used to put a quarantine sign on your house, you could not go out. The reason why you stay away from people like that is because you do not want to catch what they have. But yet you will hang out with prideful people, and you will catch what they have, and the devil will make sure you do. He really will.

With time and grade, you will see how God's people will identify themselves by who they associate with. My old grandmother used to say, my mom used to say, I have told you before, the old saying, "Birds of a feather flock together." Eagles always fly with eagles. Buzzards always fly with buzzards. You do not see a mixing. It says, "Go from the presence of a foolish man." That is simple. When a man or woman moves in a direction that is not biblical and has the rod of pride, he goes his way, you go yours. He is headed down, you are headed up. He is headed for a fall, you are ascending to new heights.

It is a lot like this, and I leave you with one of the most practical examples that I could give you here on a very practical portion of the Word of God. If you went to the airport tomorrow morning and you wanted to go to LA, and there were on the tarmac there were two planes both going to LA. One plane had a big sign out in front of it that says, "This plane will make it to LA safely." And the other had a big sign out that this plane will crash one hour and forty minutes into the flight. What plane would you get on? That sounds pretty stupid, does it not? Nobody in their right mind is going to get on the plane, is going to crash an hour and forty minutes into the flight. Well based on the Bible, doctrine and truth and principles, whether you know it or not, people have a sign hanging on them. When you have the perception through time and grade to read the signs, sign one says, "I am going to get all from God that I can." Sign two will say, "I am going to crash and burn." You just have got to ask yourself which one am I going to get on board with? It is just that simple. This is why God gave us the Bible. This is why the principles of the Word of God are so important. You look at life and everything in life, you see it from God's standpoint, what He wants you to do, then you and I have to make the decision of which way we are going to go.

As I told you earlier, nobody on this world will decide when you stop growing spiritually other than you. There are lots of problems in life. There are lots of problems you will have to face of the Christian. There are a lot of things out there that will hurt you, a lot of things in the dark that will bite you, a lot of things that will try to throw you off track. But I can safely say this morning after being a Christian and in the ministry for over forty years, the greatest enemy we have as Christians will be ourselves. God and who we allow to influence our lives and take our focus off what God wants us to be. We will hold up there. Let us have a word of prayer.

[Prayer]

Father, we thank you and praise you for the Lord Jesus.