

Proverbs 12:20-22

Sunday 9/27/2015

Proverbs 12 has been a chapter I've really enjoyed. It has been a very good practical chapter for all of us. As I have said over and over as we come through this chapter, the Holy Spirit of God has really zeroed in on the tongue, on the mouth, the lips, and what we say. We also know from this chapter that it all originates with what is in our heart.

Last week we saw words to proclaim the righteousness of God, or words to be put forth like a piercing sword that was going to be a false witness about the things of God. Today, we again will develop some great practical teachings for our walk with the Lord Jesus.

I have told you this before: down at the mission, when you sing down there, they will sing songs, but when you sing one particular song, it lights up the whole crowd and everybody sings. The song that they love to sing more than anything else is "Victory in Jesus." Most people do not understand why that is. It is simply because in their lives, that is probably the one thing that they want more than anything else and probably eludes them more than anything else. They are there in the state that they are in, not because they have the victory in Jesus, and they really, really want that. It is an incredible thing to watch.

The key to a victorious Christian life will be a simple set of basics to follow. We tend to overcomplicate things with everything in the Bible and pretty much everything with God. I know that many churches you go to, and you hear a guy preach or lay something out, his goal is to make it as complicated as he can. Many times you take God's simple plan of salvation, and look what man has done with that. He makes it one of the most complicated, hard to grasp and understand concepts anywhere, and yet it is so basic and so simple. The key to Christianity and having a good relationship with the Lord simply comes down to the fundamentals of Christianity.

I had to start our fall single group yesterday, and we were talking about some things there, going through discipleship and helping them be prepared to be disciples. I told them that the fundamentals are true of everything in life. You see it all the way at the beginning. In Genesis, when God started it all, His plan was a garden. It does not get any more simple or uncomplicated or down to the basics than a garden. But when the first murderer left, he started a city. That city becomes all the complications that we have that we see today and all the things that go along with it.

Last week you all probably watched the Chiefs play the Broncos. I know Woody is glad that the Broncos won, but that is okay; we will let him stay in church today. The Chiefs lost that game for three reasons. Please do not get your hopes up; I am not turning into a football guy who knows everything about football. I know nothing about football. I know nothing about any professional sports. I really do not. I go to a ball game, and I have told you this before, I still wonder why all the umpires at the Royals game have to be named Al. They have it on their hat: "Al." I do not understand it. It is a thing where I do not know anything about it. But I am smart enough to know how the Chiefs lost the game last week. A blind man could see it. It was three things that put them down, and they never got back.

1. Too many penalties.
2. Too many turnovers.
3. Too many interceptions.

All three of those areas, when you break them down, simply happened because of a breakdown in those guys executing the basic fundamentals of football. It was not that the passing game or the fumble of that. It was not because there was some major complex reason for it. It was simply that for a moment in time, the fundamentals broke down. I do not care what it is in life that you do, that you are good at, your success will come down to a perfect execution of the fundamentals.

Golf. I hate golf. Golf is probably the most boring game on the planet. It has got to be. I mean, I know no respect for you guys who love to play golf. I understand. It is fine. I used to play at one time. I gave it up. To me, it was just the most pointless thing. They talked about birdies; I never saw any of the birdies that they said were around. It is just weird. But you know as well as I do, the key to being a good golfer is not how hard you hit the ball. I could hit that ball so hard. Guys would tell me that I hit the ball harder and farther than anybody they ever saw. My problem was it would not go straight. The last time I played golf, I quit because I did not want to go to prison for manslaughter. I am teeing up, and I love those big clubs they have now. They look like something Fred Flintstone would use. I will never forget, I hit that thing, and it came out of there at 800 feet per second, but it went this way. Coming down the green were three or four guys in a golf cart. That sucker went right for that golf cart, went right in it, and rattled around that cage in there. I am telling you what, I put him up and I said, "You know what? I could do all of the power things, but I did not have any control." That was because you have to have your feet right. You have to keep your arms straight. You have to keep backswing, whatever all those words are. Those are the fundamentals.

When I played the trumpet, I never was a great trumpet player because I never really took it seriously. I have to tell you, the only thing I have ever really taken seriously in my whole life has been the Bible. Everything else, I just kind of, I may have been good at it, but I was never great at it. I was in high school, and I sat first chair all years, but it was only because there was nobody else in it. I was not that good. But my band director, who was old school, saw something in me that he wanted to develop. He sent me to probably a guy who turned out some of the best trumpet players in the country. His name was Wayne Rigger, long dead now. He had a studio that he took young guys and gals in that had potential. He really, really turned out some incredible trumpet players.

When I went to meet him for the first time, and we sat down, he would not just take anybody. My band director recommended me, and that was fine, and got me in. But when he started teaching me and laying it out, he wrote a book. Here I am, a senior in high school. He is probably in his 60s at this time, a very accomplished musician. The book that he wrote on learning how to music is simply called *The Talking Trumpet*. It was a little book with a stick man with a trumpet on his head for a hat. Wayne Rigger was a diehard. He would say, "If you can master the fundamentals of the music, you can play anything." This book was nothing more than driving home in every key the fundamentals of playing the trumpet. If you master those fundamentals, in

his way of thinking, you could play anything. He never got off on the great things that you do over here or all this stuff. He just stayed with the fundamentals; that was his goal.

I look back at that and I think to myself, I do not know of the correlation in my mind, but maybe in a subconscious way, when I wrote my book on how to study the Bible, it is akin to The Talking Trumpet. It is just about the Bible, the basics, the fundamentals. It is the same way with the Bible. The key to the Bible will be the fundamentals of the book. Last week, we showed you that the fundamentals are simply the words of the Bible.

Joe asked a question in Thursday night Bible study about discipleship. Then we talked about discipleship yesterday in the Singles ministry as I am bringing them through the lesson, showing them how to teach them. I told you last Thursday night that the key to discipleship is just four basics. You get those four basic goals down, and you will be a great discipler.

In marriage, everybody makes marriage such a complicated thing today. Marriage gets complicated because people never learn or do not ever understand the basics. Marriage is just seven fundamental basics to get down. When I do premarital counseling or I bring somebody through, I just teach them those seven fundamental basic aspects of marriage. You get those seven fundamentals down, you are going to have a good marriage.

Training up children. Wow, you can go out to every bookstore and buy every book on it. There are a thousand books out there. There are five fundamentals about raising your children. You get those five down, you perfect those five in your children's life, you are good to go. You say, "Well, I already lost my kids. I already lost my, we were not saved and did not do what we should have done." That is how we got saved; our kids were gone. Back to the fundamentals. There are five fundamental things you do to get your child back. It all comes down to the fundamentals. It is just simply as that.

Every church in this city today, every church in this country today, who has lost its way, who is an absolute mess when it comes to losing the perspective and the concept, they could get back to where they need to get back in just one Sunday if they just do one thing: get back to the basics. Get back to the fundamentals. The Bible is based on 20 or 30 key words that really define the Bible in a fundamental way. You learn those words, and I give them to you all the time when every time we are in the Bible together, it unlocks the Bible. When I wrote my books back there, the subheading was "The Keys to the Bible Series" because it is all about fundamentals, and those are the keys to the Bible.

The Christian life will be the exact same way. You get the fundamentals down and you stay with them, and you will be able to work through whatever you need to work through in time. It may take you a while. You do not get into a mess and then just get out of it. I have told you many, many times, and this is a fundamental concept: it takes you longer to get out of something that you put in your life than it takes you to get into it. That is just the way it is.

If you have not noticed yet, the book of Proverbs, the reason why it is a simple, simple book, I mean, 99% of it is one-syllable words. Simple one-liners of absolutely profound but very practical truth. Because the book of Proverbs defines what the fundamentals are. The

fundamentals for a walk and a relationship with Christ or the Christian life that we want to live today. It is a simple format.

Years ago, most of you are probably too young to remember this. Some of you are older as well. But years ago, when the world was kind of, the Christian world was kind of going the other way, somebody came up with the idea that Baptists were going to be now called fundamentalists. They recorded what they called the fundamentalist movement. I remember back in the early 80s that they had a congressional, everybody, all the Baptists went to Washington, D.C. They had a conference on the fundamentals of Christianity. All preachers went from all across the country; they thought they were going to make some great statement by going to Washington. Hundreds and hundreds and hundreds of pastors and people from churches came. They had great preachers, and they preached on the fundamentals, why we need to stay with the fundamentals of the Bible.

When you talk about radical Muslim groups who want to kill us, we talk about radical fundamentalists. The Jews that you see over here in America are not really, really, really Jews. Over in Park and some of the places over there in Kansas City, they have, and this is certainly not a criticism, but there are all kinds of Jewish people all through that. But they are not really Jews; they are Americanized Jews. You want to find some real, real, real Jews? Go to New York. Go back to Jerusalem. There, they still wear their hair the way they are supposed to in the Bible. You know why they are that way? Because they are fundamentalist Jews. They have stuck with the fundamentals. The Jews in Overland Park or Kansas City are Americanized Jews. Not taking anything away from it, I am just telling you the concept of being a fundamentalist and what it means.

Even Pope Francis, I kind of follow him wherever he went. Yesterday he was in Philadelphia, the City of Brotherly Love, and he preached. Even he gets it. He stated, "Every country, every nation will be only as strong as it rests on the fundamental principles that it was built on." He said that. I had no idea that he had switched over and got connected to the King James Bible. He must have been following my website.

Churches today have come a long way. In most cases, churches are not very fundamental today. Fundamentalism is a joke today. Most fundamentalist mindsets, when it started good, it is like everything else, it falls apart because they lose their perspective. Where the fundamentalists at one time stood for the fundamentals of the Bible, the fundamentalists today, the name fundamentalist, have no fun, a lot of damn, and they are all mental. That is pretty much how it works. Fundamentalist, that is how it is.

I. The Five Fundamentals of Proverbs

The fundamentals of Proverbs, which become the fundamentals of our life, our Christian life, are just five fundamentals. You see it coming all the way through the proverb. He tells you:

4. Guard your heart. That is a fundamental.
5. Guard your thoughts. That is a fundamental.
6. Guard your mind.
7. Guard your tongue.

8. Guard the people you hang out with.

Those five simple basics are all through the book of Proverbs. We have seen them over and over and over again in different fashion, different formats, but the same concept. Five simple basic fundamentals that if you work and perfect them, you will have that victory in Christ that we talk about.

Most people who have issues, severe issues, or just general issues in their life, will always misdiagnose the problem. I watch it all the time. Much of my counseling and dealing with people is to redefine their problem for them, because they come in thinking that this is my problem. Hence, they do not understand what the true problem is, so they never solve the problem. They will have some issue in their life. Maybe it is just a minor thing, maybe it is a medium thing, or it can be a stronghold in their life that they think that this is the problem, this issue here, this stronghold. That is not your problem. The problem is you have failed in the fundamentals of the Christian life. The stronghold that you think is the problem is nothing more than a result of that failure in the fundamentals. That is why they will never get the victory, because they will never see and understand that the answer to their problem is to focus and go back to the fundamentals.

I do not remember who it was. Some of you sports guys would probably remember. Jim Peruff probably would know who did this. Years ago, they asked a famous ball player, a coach, I think he was, if he could really define, and he could really tell them the secret of his team winning so many games. I do not remember who it was. But on national TV, he said, "Sure, I can." He held up a baseball, and he said, "Gentlemen, this is a baseball." Everybody laughed and thought that was funny. What he was saying in essence is, "You want to know the secret of my team winning? The baseball. The fundamental. Baseball." That is the key. It always will be.

The fundamental structure for New Testament Christians in its basic format is just simply three things in your life: the Word of God, the Holy Spirit, and the New Testament local church. Use them right, you will fix anything. Use them wrong, you will fix nothing. These three form a basic fundamental structure in our life from which we then build our relationship with Christ. So Proverbs is a great book on the fundamentals of the Christian life.

II. Deceit and Imagining Evil

With that in mind, let us read our text today. We are going to be in Proverbs chapter 12, verses 20, 21, and 22. Here is what it says:

Proverbs 12:20-22

Deceit is in the heart of them that imagine evil: but to the counsellors of peace is joy.

There shall no evil happen to the just: but the wicked shall be filled with mischief.

Lying lips are abomination to the LORD: but they that deal truly are his delight.

Now, Father, we thank You and praise You for the Lord Jesus. We do love You today. We thank You, Father, for the Word of God that You have given us in its simplistic form and how true it is, Father, the basics. Lord, salvation is just the basics. Eternal security, just the basics. Everything

in our relationship with You, You have made it so simple, even the Bible. But it is man who takes it and complicates it, gets our focus off the simple things, and then we never figure out the complicated things. So help us today. We will thank You and praise You in Jesus' name for the sake we ask it. Amen.

Now look at verse 20 here. We will start with verse 20 and work our way through. "Deceit is in the heart of them that imagine evil: but to the counsellors of peace is joy." Again, we see the source of all this will be man's heart. That is the number one fundamental aspect of our life: our heart attitude. We have talked it many, many times: attitude versus action.

The verse is a great one and it is loaded with truth. It says, "Deceit is in the heart of them that imagine evil." That verse is a premeditated verse. Before every evil act that any man or any woman ever commits, there will be a process of thought about it, thinking about it long before you do it. In fact, the standard teaching is, if you think about something long enough, you will do it.

In Ezekiel chapter 8, verses 1 through 18, you see a great example of this. Israel is in probably the darkest part of her history. She is in an absolute total state of denial when it comes to God. She has allowed Baal worship to come in and all the wickedness that has come along with that. Ezekiel is writing because of the fact that God has come down and judged the nation of Israel for their wickedness. When he writes, we see in Ezekiel chapter 8 the terrible wicked condition of Israel's state of mind. The sins of the nation are deep, dark, and very wicked. We see that the real issue here is, as you come down through it, he says in verse 7 that Ezekiel says:

Ezekiel 8:7

And when I looked, behold a hole in the wall.

He goes in that hole, and in verse 9 says:

Ezekiel 8:9

And he said unto me, Go in, and behold the wicked abominations that they do here.

And all the wicked things that Israel does. He says in verse 10:

Ezekiel 8:10

So I went in and saw; and behold every form of creeping things, and abominable beasts, and all the idols of the house of Israel, pourtrayed upon the wall round about.

All of these wicked images of clean and unclean and all the filthy stuff that Israel is connected with, were like images portrayed on a wall. In verse 12, he brings it all into focus and tells us what he is talking about where he says:

Ezekiel 8:12

Then said he unto me, Son of man, hast thou seen what the ancients of the house of Israel do in the dark, every man in the chambers of his imagery? for they say, The LORD seeth us not; the LORD hath forsaken the earth.

He is looking at what is going on in Israel's mind. All the wicked things that Israel were doing started with a wicked thing that they allowed in their minds. Israel's wickedness starts with what they allow inside in their imagination. Now it has produced a nation, a lifestyle, a people that are totally without God and totally wicked.

In the New Testament, 2 Corinthians chapter 10, verse 4 and 5, Paul talks about:

2 Corinthians 10:4-5

(For the weapons of our warfare are not carnal, but mighty through God to the pulling down of strong holds;)

Casting down imaginations, and every high thing that exalteth itself against the knowledge of God, and bringing into captivity every thought to the obedience of Christ;

Now see that thing? You cannot fulfill your obedience to the Word of God without taking revenge on your disobedience. That is an incredible verse. Note that the pulling down of strongholds starts with verse 5, right where we are talking about. The casting down of imaginations, imagining evil. That is where sin starts. After it starts, that is where it reigns. When it begins to reign, that is when it becomes a stronghold, "deceitful in the heart of them that imagine evil."

There are people, and the more you work with people, and the older you get, you will see this. Probably most of you understand it pretty much now. There are people who all day long just think about doing evil. All they imagine in life is how they can take advantage of something, somebody, or get some leverage in something. They live off the people they use. In Christianity, I have what I call Christian con artists. Their whole life is a con job. Their whole life is a sham on everything they do that everybody, that they can do it to. I have seen pastors who were the biggest crooks in the world, and they go from one church to another. Of course, God is always leading them. It is always, "This is of God," but they go one place and they are dishonest with the people, they are dishonest in their dealings and everything they do. It causes a ruckus, so they have to move to another place, and then it causes the problem there. If you would back up and look at their life, it looks like a checker game, moving from position to position to position, and yet all at a time, it is always somebody else's problem. It is always the last church's fault. It is always these people's fault. It is always, "Well, this person." All of their lives, they have used the very thing that God has given them. It is one church after another, fleecing everybody they can. When they get caught or because of a problem, then God suddenly moves them someplace else.

I knew a pastor one time, and he is still alive. I will not tell his name. It does not really matter. He was a missionary in America to the military guys. His concept was incredible, but he was a crook. Great preacher. But every sermon he ever preached, he wound up crying in. Now, I am not saying there are not times that you get emotionally moved when you preach and God touches your heart, but not every time you get in the pulpit. We all laughingly, behind his back lovingly, but laughingly, we called him the weeping prophet. I do not care where he was, what he would do, what he would preach on. Somewhere in the sermon, he would stop and just blubber for about 10 minutes, and everybody would feel sympathetic toward him.

He would come into a pastor's church, and I know this to be true. I am not making this up. This is an absolute true statement. He went to a guy's church out in Montana one time, and he preached out there. The pastor here made a little deal. He is always going around preaching because he wants to raise money for his programs. So where he would find pastors who were as crooked as he was, he would make a little deal with them. This is exactly what happened out in Montana. He went into that church, and these were good people in this church. I preached in this church. They were good people who loved the Lord. The problem was they had a crook for a shepherd who fleeced them and used them. He brought in this other crook who got up there in the pulpit and took the verse that says that a pastor is worth double honor. He said that verse says a pastor is due double honor. He berated the people in that church, and he called and said, "If we believe the Bible, if we do what is right, you all believe that?" Well, everybody believes the Bible; they say amen. Then he said, "Then I call for the church right now, whatever you are paying your pastor, to double his salary, because the Bible says that he is worth a double honor." And they, good, godly people who love the Lord, were stupid enough to do it. One person stood up and said, "What is wrong with?" And what happened was he got the preacher a double salary. He got a \$10,000 love offering. That is how it works. That is how it works. You find Christians who use the church, pastors who use their people, people who use the pastor. People who use situations. And every one time do they ever really want to do anything, but take advantage for their own gain, because they are deceitful in their heart. In the heart of many people today, all they know is a heart to do and imagine evil.

Then you have some of God's people, bless their hearts, who desperately want to break out and cannot. They struggle. They have issues in their life. I have actually dealt with people who, when I laid out going back to the fundamentals, simply looked at me and said, in their mind, they are thinking, "It cannot just be that simple." Because their problem was so complex. Their problem was so graphic. Their problem was so ingrained that they were like, they were like, "Nam." The army captain, they had thought that some great spiritual experience had to happen. Heavens had to crack open. Lightning had to come down and strike that person and take it away from them. No, no, no. I do not care how complicated it is. I do not care how bad you think it is. That is not your problem. Your problem is you have gotten away and forgotten to perfectly execute the fundamentals of the Christian life in your life. Whatever you are going through right now is nothing more than the result of what you are not doing over here. It is just that simple.

There is a key word in verse 20, and it is the word "deceit." "Deceit is in the heart of them that imagine evil." They are deceitful. Their deceitful nature will always put up a deception to fool you. This is something that you want to really listen to because there are going to be people out there in your Christian life who are going to try to deceive you. They do that to fool you. When a person has a deception in their life toward you, it is because they want to disarm you. They want to make you feel at ease about them, so they are not suspect in anything. They will always tell you what they think you want to hear to try to gain your confidence. They want to try to make you think that they love you and appreciate you, and then all the time it is just part of a deception. Many people get deceived.

But if you know the book of Proverbs, or you know the Bible, you know the end result of deception is the fact that the deceiver is always going to get caught in his own deception. Sometimes go through Psalms 9:15, Psalms 31:4, Psalms 35:7, Psalms 57:6, Psalms 145, Proverbs 1:17, Habakkuk 1:15-17, Psalms 69:22, Psalms 119:10, Psalms 145. You will find the word "net," and you will find the word "snare." Doctorally, it is dealing with the Antichrist, setting a snare for the nation of Israel, setting a trap for them, setting out a net that they would get caught in because he wants to destroy them. He is deceitful in his heart. The Bible says when the first three and a half years he shows up, he brings in peace and safety. He claims to be the Messiah. He does everything that he is supposed to do, but in his heart there is deception and wickedness. He does it because he has a personal agenda. He wants to destroy the people of God.

You know as well as I do that those verses, if you continue on with them and get a concordance sometime and just take the word "snare" and take the word "net," just run it through the Bible, you will find that when the devil sets down the net and snare for the nation of Israel, God takes that snare and that net that he set for them, and he catches him in his own snare and his own trap and his own net. You will find it in Ezekiel 21:21-23. Everybody likes the book of Revelation because it talks about the Antichrist and the Battle of Armageddon and all that stuff. That stuff is just the surface stuff. You want to really find out what is going on and all those things, you have to get back into the Old Testament. You have to find out where the Antichrist gets trapped. You have to go back to Ezekiel 21.

Ezekiel 21 tells the story that the Antichrist is coming down in the final phase to destroy Jerusalem. This will be the Battle of Armageddon. He comes to a point and he stops and he says, "Okay, which way do I want to attack them? I got him in a trap. What is the best way to wipe them out?" The Bible says he goes to a diviner like he did at the Witch of Endor. He inquires of them, "What is the best way to destroy the nation of Israel?" You think he would have learned a lesson just as God intervened back there at the Witch of Endor and sent Samuel to him, God intervenes again and sends him down the wrong way, and God takes him in his own trap. That is the end of all deception.

The man who imagines to do evil is kidding himself. He is deceiving himself because all evil imagination will always be the element of some kind of fantasy in your mind, some make-believe, a pretense, a non-reality of self-denial. In time, it will destroy you. Not only does the man practice deceit to those around him, but he deceives himself in thinking that he can get away with it before the Lord and God is never going to catch up to him.

Sometimes the deception is simple and easy to spot. Other times it is layered and cloaked very well, and it is hard to spot. When we came through people ministry here, a couple, I do not know when it was, it had to be early on because this was in Genesis, I showed you that the greatest place in the Bible that lays out in the definitive chapter on understanding and unmasking a deception is Genesis chapter 27. It is Jacob when he is scheming to get the birthright and the blessing from Esau. You know the story. The birthright and the blessing, even though they are separate, they are connected, and their father Isaac is the only one who can give it. By right, Esau, who is the elder, should get it. So Jacob, a picture of a Christian, schemes every aspect of his life to get what he thinks he wants, and he is always giving God the credit for it.

So he gets a goatskin because Esau is a hairy man. He puts it on. Isaac is almost blind. Isaac loves the venison from the deer that Esau, the great hunter, would bring in. So he makes some little stew, and Jacob puts on the goatskin and brings it into his father, puts it down there, and his father says, "Who are you?" He says, "I am Esau." He says, "Daddy, feel my hairy arm," and he feels the goatskin. It is a deception. He says, "Oh, and I know how you love venison stew. I made some for you, Daddy." His father says, "Son, you just went out hunting about 40 minutes ago. How did you get that deer so fast?" "Oh, the Lord brought it right to me." They always bring God into deception, do they not?

Now, Daddy is not too sure. He is blind. He is a picture of a young Christian or any Christian who is spiritually blind, but he has the basic fundamental keys to sniff out the deception. For he says, "You know, some men right here, because you smell and you feel like Esau. But you sound like Jacob." There is your key. Always watch what they do and what they say. The old adage is, "Something is rotten in Denmark." I love it because Jacob schemes in everything in his life. When he brings that pottage and that great deception over to his daddy, his daddy says, "What is your name?" He lies and he says, "Well, it is Esau, Daddy." All of his life, all of his life, he schemed to get everything he wanted. He schemed to get the blessing. He schemed to get the birthright. A little bit later on when he wants a wife, he schemed to get her. When Daddy says you can have all of the cattle that come out with certain markings on them, he had read in National Scientific Review that if you feed cattle certain things that they will come out with those certain markings. So he schemes to feed the cattle that gets the best title. He is a picture of a child of God who schemes all of his life to get what he wants.

But there comes a day 20 years later, we all look at so serious for like now, this is just a nice little sermon. Is not true. Do not you wish he just had a 20 minute sermonette this morning you get to go home with. I am sitting up here man, I am having fun preaching this and you all look like you are at a funeral. All right, every head bowed, every eye closed. Right now, every head bowed, every eye closed. Get right with God and then we can have some fun with it. Amen.

20 years later, in Genesis chapter 32, verse 23, he finally comes to the end of his deception when he meets God face to face. From this point on, his deception is done. But he wrestles with the Lord and walks away with a limp. I always found it interesting. Jacob lived in denial. The word name Jacob means "supplanter." It means "schemer." Jacob was always in denial of his scheming. When he came to his daddy and his daddy says, "What is your name?" and he lied and got the birthright and the blessing. 20 years later, when he comes face to face with God, the first question God asked him is the same question his daddy asked him 20 years ago. "What is your name?" This time he says, "It is Jacob." The schemer. The supplanter. He did not have to do any of that. Genesis chapter 25, verse 23 says that God already told them when they were born that the elder was going to serve the younger. He already made the prophecy that Jacob was going to get not only the birthright, but he was going to get the blessing because of Esau. He is like so many of God's people. He is saved, he is on his way to heaven, but he is a schemer. He just cannot believe what God told him. So he makes it happen himself.

Now look at the last part of verse 20. If you want to unmask a scheme, just ask the person, "Are you smelling what you are selling?" The last part of verse 20 says, "but to the counsellors of

peace is joy." In dealing with people, you become a counselor. Your structure for being a biblical counselor will be the local New Testament church and the Bible that you use. I have explained this to you many, many times. We talked about it in the first week of dealing with people in the people ministry. We have talked about it in the church many, many times.

People have problems for two reasons. Fundamentally, they are either lost and they have no joy. They are lost because they have no God, and they have filled their life with everything, trying to fill that void. It all leads to a disaster and problems because there is no fulfillment outside of God and His love for you. Or you are a saved person, and God is living inside you, but you are far away from where God is at, and you are grieving Him in the Holy Spirit of God. You are grieving Him in everything that you do, because that is not what He saved you for. You take the Holy Spirit of God into that little hole in the little wall, and you allow Him to see all the things portrayed on the wall.

My counsel to an unsaved man is simple: get saved. It will solve every problem you have. My counsel to a saved man is: get right with God. It will solve every problem you have. See how simple that is? No psychiatry, no therapist, no Prozac, no pills, no "What is your favorite color?", no childhood experiences. "Deep down inside you, we have to unearth." Not the fact that when you grew up, your mom and dad were so poor that you never had cereal and no, you grew up to be a serial killer. None of that. None of that. You have issues in your life this morning for one or two reasons. You are either lost and your life is unfulfilled and will never be fulfilled, or you are saved and you are anathema as you have got, and your life still will never be fulfilled. That is the fundamentals.

III. Evil to the Just and Wicked Filled with Mischief

Verse 21: "There shall no evil happen to the just: but the wicked shall be filled with mischief." That verse, as it stands, I can see where some people would have a tough time with that, because in life it appears that evil will happen to the just all the time. Paul himself said that all that live godly in Christ Jesus shall suffer persecution. 2 Timothy 3:12. He goes on in 2 Corinthians chapter 11, verses 23 through 33, and he talks about the tremendous things that he suffered. He says:

2 Corinthians 11:24-27

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

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

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

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

He says, "You want to talk about perils? How about perils of water? Perils of robbers. Perils of my own countrymen. Perils in the city. Perils in the wilderness. Perils with false brethren. Hunger, thirsty, naked and cold." But you see the difference is, as always, seeing it from a human perspective and seeing it from God's perspective. Romans 8:28 says:

Romans 8:28

And we know that all things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are the called according to his purpose.

A while back a book came out that was titled, *Why Bad Things Happen to Good People*. It is a typical non-biblical Christian fiction book. Because in God's mind, nothing ever happens bad to His people. Even when God comes down and chastises you and me, when we are out of fellowship with God, the Bible says that afterward it yields peaceable fruit unto God. If it all has a purpose, the guy who wrote that book based it on the book of Job. Job was a good man and Job was a righteous man. "Why do bad things happen to good people?" The guy was so inept with the Bible, he was so short when it came to reading English language, he never saw the fact that in the story of Job and God and the devil, when there was a day when the sons of God came before the Lord and Satan came in, when the guy, Job's name came up, it was not the devil that brought Job's name up, it was God that brought Job's name up. God had a message for Job. The devil was just a delivery boy in the message. Sometimes God will have a message for you and for me. Sometimes, yes, He will use the devil as a delivery boy. What do we do? We get so focused on the delivery boy, we never receive the message. The things in life we deem negative and bad are the very things God uses to strengthen us, to perfect us, to make us better. It is all things, all things working together, not just the good things. But people do not want that today. We want a convenient Christianity. We do not want that sacrificial Christianity.

Look at the last part of verse 21: "But the wicked shall be filled with mischief." Here is another key word, and it is the word "filled." Simple little word. What is inside you? That will be your substance. That will be your character or your lack of it. That will be in the vernacular, guts. Intestinal fortitude in the classical, guts in the Koine. That will be your inner strength, your stamina. Inside, you are either filled with truth and honesty, or inside you are filled with falsehood and deceit. Deceiving yourself as you try to deceive others will keep you filled with trouble all of your life.

I go back to Jacob when he schemed with Esau. Got the birthright, got the blessing. When you study the rest of those two boys' lives, their life is filled with turmoil. Esau hates Jacob for the rest of his life, and there is not a thing Jacob can do to get it back. You know why? Because of that verse right there, brother. "But the wicked shall be filled with mischief." It never ended in his life.

The importance of keeping your spiritual gas tank filled up. Topped off. This is the reason why churches hold meetings throughout the week other than just Sunday. I understand some of them overdo it. Some of them have it every night. That is stupid. But there has to be a balance. We have Sunday morning, Thursday night. If you are involved in ministry, you have your own personal time, and all the other fun things we do make for a good balance. But you know it is

true in life. You cannot keep running your car forever on a 20-gallon tank. You just cannot. At some point, you are going to hit empty, and you are going to sit by the road, and you are going to be out of gas. Spiritually speaking, you are going to run out of gas if you do not get your spiritual tank filled up on a regular basis. This is why so many of God's people who once were on fire for the Lord, came to church doing everything for God, doing a good work for God, are sitting along the road of life now, watching everything in Christianity pass them by because they are out of gas. They have hit empty. It is just that simple. It is just that fundamental.

Let me say this. In a literal sense, in your car, probably everybody here has run out of gas at some point or other. You know there are two reasons why you run out of gas? Only two.

9. The first reason you run out of gas is because you see it is on empty, but you only have about 20 miles to get home, and you think you can make it. The light is flashing. You are on E, and you are sitting there thinking, "I can make it. I can make it. I can make it." To me, you have to get gas at some point, and so you make it home. Congratulations. Then you run out of gas, go into the gas station. I have seen them pass four or five gas stations that had gas. All they had to do was pull in, fill her up. But no, no, no, no. We think that we can make it without filling it up.
10. The second reason, you just are not paying attention. Oh, I see them. I see them driving down the freeway. My wife gets upset with me. She does not want me to drive her new car because of the fact that I drive like a madman. She says, "You drive angry." Well, absolutely. There are a lot of people out there that make me angry. I am an angry man. The Bible says, "Have no fellowship with an angry man." Do not fellowship with me. I am angry. Just ask her. I watch them drive down the street. I see some of these ones over there, man, that they are at a rock concert. I mean, they are driving by, and my windows are going, "One bar, one bar, one bar." I mean, I have those big Bose speakers around the back. He is playing back there with a whatever out of his mouth, dark sunglasses on, and he is going to and down the road, and he is not paying attention to nothing. I pray to God he got filled up before he left because he will never know he is almost out of gas. I see them driving down the road, and they are talking back and forth. I guess husband and wife. They are just going at it back and forth. They are not paying attention to anything. I am trying to get around them. They are talking. I will tell you something else. While I get this off my chest, when the light turns green from being red, will you go through it? Put your foot on the gas and move out smartly. Greatest thing they ever put on a car was a horn. I want to get me somebody. I forget who it was. I do not think it was in our church here, but somebody that we hooked up with had on their car one of those big train truck air horns. I mean, it sounded like judgment day when it went off. I think he had to carry a 400-pound per square inch compressor in his trunk just to sound that sucker off. But it went off. It woke the dead. Now, how would you like to be behind some old fud up there in front, or some goofy get up there? That is the thing. They are up there. I mean, they are... "Hey, man, you are driving a car. Go to Westport if you want to dance." They are swaying back and forth. I saw one lady one time, the light was red. She is up there. The light has been green for 20 minutes. Oh, I would love to have a... So they either just think they can make it or they just simply are not paying attention.

Those are the same two reasons that people run out of gas spiritually. You have problems. You have issues, but you just think you can get by without it. You think you can make it, and you cannot. Or you are just not paying attention. You come every Sunday and do not hear a thing that is said. You come to Thursday night. I have had people that I preached on something on Sunday morning, and honest to goodness, Thursday night, I would say, "God is love." Preach the whole message on God is love. Thursday night, I got a question. "What is it? Is God love?" Where were you? I know where you were. You were sitting at the light, listening to your music. In your life and in my life, when it comes to where we are going for God, it will just come down to what is on the inside. What you are filled with. Somebody says, "Man, you are full of it." Yes, you are. It is just a matter of what you are full of: God or the world.

IV. Lying Lips and Dealing Truly

Verse 22 says, "Lying lips are abomination to the LORD: but they that deal truly are his delight." This is one of the cleanest, clearest, simplest, straightforward verses in all the Bible. It talks about lying lips. You will always have to deal with people who want to avoid dealing with issues. So they lie about it. Half-truths. They will hide behind the deception. People who will totally be out to purposely deceive somebody for their own personal gain. Or somebody who just never gives you the whole story of where they are at. They always keep back part of it because they do not want to really deal with the issue. It makes helping them almost impossible.

One of the fundamentals of the Bible, my dear friend, is truth. If you do not have that in your life, not much else is going to happen in your life. Your life is going to be a deception. Look at verse 22: "But they that deal truly are his delight." People who deal in truth and delight in it will never get caught into a deception. Did you ever notice that? That is because first of all, he will not fellowship with that element of people. He believes Psalms 1 when it says to stay well from the counsel of the ungodly, the way of sinners in the seat of the scornful. So he is not part of it.

The con artists of the world, men who deceive and make money off of people, who will deceive them, will actually tell you this: "You cannot con or deceive an honest man." He will not take a shortcut to making money because he knows there is no shortcut. He will not take the bait. He will not fall into a deceptive scam or practice because he knows that they are fast tracks, and the fast tracks are not real. It appeals only to the people. It appeals only to people who want to get ahead without real hard work involved or doing everything the right way. He will not be part of that. An honest man knows if it seems too good to be true, it probably is. So he stays away from it. He knows there is always a hidden angle.

All week long, and I am sure you too, "Congratulations, you just won a free trip to the Bahamas!" I get that once a week. "Free trip to the Bahamas. Just call this number. Your tickets are waiting for you." Right. "Congratulations, you have been referred by your neighbors who also are part of this plan to have your house sided almost next to nothing. It is the greatest deal that your neighbors have and give us and refer us to you. And you too, like them, can have your whole house encased in aluminum." My neighbors hate me. They would not give me diddly squat. I always love this: "It is free at a very low cost." "Congratulations, you are only one of four people in your neighborhood that have been selected for a free alarm system. We will come

in and put it in absolutely free. All we want to do is put a sign in your yard so other people will see it."

Now I have to confess, I get so fed up with these after a while. Maybe I should not even tell you this. I have a little fun with them. I have four characters that I play pretty well. My favorite is Jerome. I can do a Chinese immigrant really well. I will actually push that. I am so fed up with it. The one lies to you all the time. "If you do not want this call again, just press two and we will take you on our no call list. It will take about 24 hours, but we will get you off." I push that number every time for six months. They still keep calling me. So I have earned a right to be whoever I want to be when they call. You ought to hear my Jerome. You ought to hear my Chinese immigrant. I can get them on there, and they actually think that I am a Chinese immigrant, just came over here. I am just having a ball with them. Then finally, they will say, "Well, we are having a tough time understanding you, Mr. Chang. Could maybe we call back and somebody else at the house?" No, I have been talking in broken Chinese, English, Chinese. I am just having a ball with them. So now they come to the point when they say, and I am mad because they are doing this to me, so I did come down, it was, "Could we call back at a later time and maybe we could talk to it?" Then I will say, "Absolutely. I would love to have your call back at some point." Click the phone.

Listen, there will always be people who will try to deceive you whether they are saved or whether they are lost. I was told I should not probably tell you that. Sometimes it just gets to me. I am just like everybody else. But your response in 99.9 cases, except something like this, always do what is right by them. I have down here in my notes, I might as well throw this out: "Do not start a counter deception to show you are better than they are." Throw that one out. Never get on their level. I love it. But in most cases, if you are normal, and I am not normal, just stay with the Bible principles that are the truth. You are always safe there. In ministry, always be able to look back at the people you have dealt with and say in your heart, "I did what the Bible says." Very important.

People will try to deceive you, try to burn you, take advantage of you. I said "try to." Never look back and focus. This is a problem for a lot of people. Never, listen to me, never look back and focus on how they try to deceive you. It will drive you crazy. My wife has a little thing on the refrigerator that says, "People cannot drive you crazy unless you give them your car keys." That is so true. Do not look back and focus on how they try to deceive you. It will drive you nuts, but rather always look back and focus on how you dealt with them. Did you follow the principles? Because I want to tell you something, dealing with people of good conscience before God is worth a hundred million dollars. Allow them in their fantasy world to live their life by denial or deception. They will all self-destruct in time. They always do. That is a fundamental, but you stay with the truth. You operate by biblical principles. You always in any situation be able to open the Bible and say and show them, "Here is how and why I responded to you the way I did."

You will never have a chance to do those things. People like that will stay as far away from an open Bible as they can. They just cut you with the short of their mouth from a distance, courage behind a keyboard. Remember, cowards always hide behind either somebody or something else, but never face to face with an open Bible before them. The reason you do is because of the fact

that the Bible says in verse 21, "There shall no evil happen to the just." You stay with the book. One will be filled with mischief. The other will be filled with truth.

I want to say this, and I am closing here. Every true Christian who does his best to give God his all and to do everything that God has called him to do, you are going to get clobbered. You are going to get people who try to deceive you. There are going to be people who see your spirituality and your maturity who do not appreciate it because they do not have it. So they are going to try to make you look bad and put you in a bad spot. They are really jealous of what you have. You are going to find people like that in every walk of life that you try to work with people. But every one of you here today who try to do the best you can before God, and you live your life, nobody is perfect. You live your life to the best of your ability. You always strive to be everything that God wants you to be. You really work at doing what is right with people.

Before you die, about a week, maybe a month before you die, or just when you get old, you do not know when you are going to die. You should write one book. You should be able to look back in your life and chronicle all that God has done with you, where you have been, the road down through life that God has walked with you, the people that He has put in your life, some good, some bad. You ought to write one book that would prove to your children and to anybody around you that the way you lived your life was the best way to live it. You ought to title that book simply, *Where Are They Now?* A book of where you are at after a life of doing right and serving God to the best of your ability, and where they are all at who are filled with deception and all the things that they did to try to stop the work of God. It would be a great book because their life of deception will always lead them to disaster.

If you have time and time permits after you write that book, I would suggest you write a second volume, and that second volume would be *Where Are Their Kids At?* Because you see, the same plan of deception that the parents have gets translated right into the children, and they become exactly what they want. You can write one book after 20, 30 years of seeing it and look at those lives and the disasters and their marriages and their personal life is a mess. Then you can write a second book of looking where their children are, how their children are a mess. Because I am going to tell you in Genesis chapter 27, going back to where Jacob and Esau went, old Jacob went in to deceive his daddy. When old Jacob went in to deceive his daddy, he put on a goatskin. When he went into Isaac, the deception was all centered around a goatskin that he put on to deceive his daddy. Many, many years later in Genesis chapter 37, when the boys want to get rid of Joseph, and they put him in a hole and they are going to kill him. Then they sell him to the Midianites, and he winds up in Egypt. When they go home to their daddy, Jacob, they cannot tell him the truth. They have to put forth another deception, so they use the same goatskin to deceive their daddy that their daddy used 40 years earlier to do his deception. I wonder where they learned that.

"Deceit is in the heart of them that imagine evil: but to the counsellors of peace is joy." The key to whatever you do or I do in life, whether it is in the world, in your business, or in your ministry with the Lord, will go back to the simple fundamentals of the Bible and the Christian life. Every head bowed, every eye closed.