

Proverbs 14

Sunday 1/24/2016

If you have your Bibles this morning, we are in Proverbs 14. Last week we looked at Proverbs 14:13-17. I tried to emphasize and show you the value of each verse in the book of Proverbs once you get into chapters 8 through 30. I showed you the basic outline that I gave you when we started the book. Proverbs is an incredible book. I have told you many times that if there was one book in the Bible that I could have complete total recall of, it would be the book of Proverbs. It is an incredible book.

We saw how man last time will use laughter of the world, or mirth (which is lightheartedness), to try to mask the emptiness that he has inside his heart and inside his life. You look around in the world, in life, in the Christian world, and the unsaved world, and you look at the issues that man has. When I say "man," I mean men and women; I am using it in the context of just the human race. It is not a complicated concept. I know that we have a tendency to complicate things more than they really are, but fundamentally, when God created man back in Genesis, He created him complete and fulfilled.

The Garden of Eden was a place that, by God's design, He put a man named Adam and his wife Eve down there, and it was a perfect estate. Everything was absolutely the way it needed to be. That mindset of that mystical place where everything is beautiful, that mystical paradise, has driven man all down through the centuries. The great philosophers, Plato and Aristotle, talked about a utopia, a place that was perfect. Man, seemingly in everything he does, advances medicine to try to keep people alive because he actually thinks that he is making the world a better place to live. He actually believes that someday the world will just turn into that Garden of Eden. It is an amazing thing. The allure of the South Sea Islands, Tahiti, and those places back in the 1700s and 1600s when they were discovered, all the explorers, they found paradise. In fact, they equated some of the islands to Solomon when he reigned, and there is a whole strain of islands there that is called the Solomon Islands. Man has always tried to get back to that point, and the reason why he does is because fundamentally, man is empty on the inside. When God created him, He created him complete and to be fulfilled.

I. Free Will Versus Calvinism

But when sin entered into the heart of man in Genesis 3, it came in by his own free will. I have people who call me on the phone with questions all the time, and I have two or three guys who are Calvinists in their thinking, in their theology. For those of you who do not know what a Calvinist is, God has been good to you; you stay that way. Calvinism is called by other names; it is called Reformation theology, and sometimes Reformed theology. Calvinism is the teaching, starting with John Calvin, that really formed the Presbyterian church: that God, sometime in a distant past, looked down and chose the people to go to heaven and the people to go to hell. You have really no say in it; you were predestined by God way back here someplace to either go to heaven or hell. If you were one of the lucky ones and go into heaven, then you are going to heaven. There is nothing you can do to stop you from getting saved and winding up in heaven because God predestined you. If you are not one of the predestined ones, then Jesus loves me,

sorry about you, you are not one of the chosen few. You are not going to make it. There is nothing that you can do to gain salvation because you have been chosen by God to be un-predestined and go to hell. That is the basis of their theology.

I was telling one of them, "You know what? The thing I love about the Bible is if you have a heresy that you believe, you are going to—the reason why you will not be a deep Bible student—you will study spiritual things, but you will not be a deep Bible student because if you are a deep Bible student, you are going to break your neck on what your heresy is someplace in that Bible." I told the guy, "I know what you believe, and I look at Genesis 3. You believe that God chose everybody to go to heaven or hell, right? Yes, that is basically what you believe. Well, here is the problem. Here is why it is all about free will. Because when you look at Adam and Eve in the garden, and Calvinists have a tough time with this, in Genesis 1, 2, 3, and 4, you find the following events. When God created Adam, He chose Adam to be part of the elect, did He not? But in Genesis 3, Adam sinned, so now he is no longer the elect anymore. But then in Genesis 3 and 4, God makes him goatskins and puts him back in, and you find Adam in the line of Christ in Luke 3. So Adam was in, chosen in, and chosen out, and then chosen back in again. Ridiculous. You have to be an idiot to be a Calvinist, because it is all about free will."

When God created man, He created him complete, He created him perfect, and He created him to be fulfilled. He put him in a garden that was absolutely the greatest, best place where he did not have to work, he did not have to do anything; he just had to fellowship with God. It was by man's own free will that he chose to walk away from God. Now man, in his own free will, up through the history of the Bible, up to today, chooses to accept God or chooses to reject Him. It is not God coming down and picking somebody to go to heaven or somebody not; it is that God gave everybody the opportunity and the free will, and we choose. An unsaved man looks at salvation, he comes to church, somebody gives him a gospel tract, he reads it, the Holy Spirit of God knocks on the door of his heart; it is free will, he chooses to reject it. You will see it with saved people: a saved man or a saved woman will trust Christ as their own personal Savior, they will choose to get saved, and then God will begin to do something in their life, but then by their free will, they will choose not to go any farther, not to serve Him.

II. Man's Incompleteness and Restoration

So in Genesis 3, we see that man is now incomplete after the fall. He has no relationship or fellowship with God to do anything with God. In the Old Testament, you are going to find, and we have talked about this many, many times, the kingdom and his relationship with God is all physical. It is built on a physical law. It is built on a physical priesthood. It is built on a physical city, Jerusalem. But that all changed when Christ came at the first coming of Christ.

When Christ came and died on the cross, He came really for one fundamental reason. I know there are a lot of different ramifications to the death on the cross, but putting all that aside, staying with where we are at here, His death and Him coming down to die did one thing: it gave you and me the chance to get back what Adam had lost. It gave you and me now a chance to be complete and fulfilled and have fellowship with God.

The whole book of Hebrews, somebody asked a question about Hebrews Thursday night in Bible study, and the whole book of Hebrews is a book that really compares the Old Testament with the New Testament. The writer of Hebrews, when he compares it, keeps telling us that the New Testament is better than the Old Testament. He goes through it. He talks about that the New Testament has a better priesthood. It has a better sacrifice. He says the blood of bulls and goats of the Old Testament could never pay for sin, but Christ was a better sacrifice. He says there are better promises in the New Testament. He says you have an Old Testament and a New Testament. He says the New Testament is better than the Old Testament. You know why? Because nobody in the Old Testament could ever get complete. When Christ came and died on the cross, He is the New Testament because it is the New Testament of His blood, and a Testament does not come into effect until a man is dead. So the New Testament is based on Christ's death, and it testifies to the fact that you and I can now get back what we lost in Adam.

The Bible calls it regeneration: "re," again, over again, second time. You only find the word regeneration two times in the Bible. One is in Titus 3:5, where it says that we are saved by the washing of regeneration. By the Word of God. When you got saved, you got regenerated. You had it once. You lost it in Adam's sin. Death passed upon all men. But when Christ came down and died, He made a way for you and me to get back what Adam had but lost. The second time you find it is in Matthew 19:28, and it talks about the regeneration of the nation of Israel. Israel once had it as a nation, lost it as a nation, but then gets it back in the millennium.

Now man in the New Testament has the ability to have a working relationship with God through daily fellowship with Him. Now it is back to Adam's condition before the fall. The Bible says in Colossians 2:10 that we are complete in Him. Adam lost the image of God, and now, after Christ dying on the cross, you and I can have that image restored through a spiritual new birth.

III. Man's Attempts to Fill the Void

When a man rejects Christ and stays unsaved, or a saved man who gets saved but refuses to grow in his relationship, he will never really fill that void. Christ getting saved does a lot of things for you. It determines where you are going to spend eternity. But it does not give you the fulfillment; it only gives you the beginning of the ability to have the fulfillment. That is why you find so many of God's people are so miserable. They walk around with their whole lives in a mess. He will never fill that void.

Here is the point you do not want to miss: because he has, in both cases, whether he is saved or he is lost, he now absolutely has no understanding. He gets himself deceived, as we have been talking about the last couple of weeks. He gets himself deceived by the things that he tries to fill that void with when they are not the things of the Word of God.

- > He tries religion.
- > He tries possessions.
- > They try to fill that void with relationships.

- They will get into sin.

IV. The Power of Principles

I am sure people ask themselves, because I say it all the time, "Why do you talk so much about principles?" I told the people a couple of weeks ago, we were doing the seven pillars of marriage. One of those pillars, I was talking about what principles do for you. I remember the development of cameras. I remember when you used to have a big Brownie Kodak that you had to pull out like that was flat, and it developed itself in 30 seconds if you kept waving it in the wind. Then you peeled it off, and there would be the most god-awful picture you ever saw in your life. Then they came up with those little cardboard box cameras. Remember them? You just took pictures, and they gave the worst pictures on the planet. Then they came up with 35 millimeter, and everybody had to have one of them. They really did some good pictures, and they were great cameras. Then somebody, I never forget, somebody came up with the idea of an instant focus camera where you had a 35 millimeter, and usually you have to look through it and crank the lens around until you get it in focus, and you can miss your shot. This was, if you were skilled at it, the button that you took the picture, you pushed it halfway, and that little lens automatically would go right into perfect focus. Push it down, took the picture. So if you were really good and practiced with it, you could see something moving, get the picture just like that. I was amazed at how they did that. How does the camera know what your eye is seeing when it is in focus? I still do not know to this day. It was an amazing thing.

But years later, when I got into the Bible, I thought to myself, "You know what? That is what the principles of the Word of God do for every child of God sitting out here this morning." You know what the principles do for you? They will give you an instant focus in your life. You do not even have to push any buttons. We look through life most of the time, and it is blurry. We do not see clearly. We need something that brings life, events, people, circumstances, situations into sharp focus. Nothing will do it faster or better than the instant focus of the principles, because faster than a camera, it will focus in and show you clearly what you are dealing with. That is why I give you principles. These principles in Proverbs, they are the key, as far as I am concerned, in my own humble opinion. They are the key to it all by God's design.

Proverbs 4:7

Wisdom is the principal thing; therefore get wisdom: and with all thy getting get understanding.

What he is saying there is that wisdom is built on the principles of the Word of God. When you get wisdom through the principles, it leads to understanding, a clear focus of what you are looking at.

My job as a pastor, and again, there are many things that a pastor does, but when you boil it all down, a pastor's job is simply a twofold process for his people. I realize that some people want this and some people do not. But taking that out of the equation, my job is so basically simple. It is just two little formats:

1. Get the principles to you. I do that by preaching and teaching, keeping them before you, because as you all well know, the price of learning is repetition. So my first part of my process is to get the principles to you.
2. Help you get to the principles. Help you get them inside you, spend time with you one on one, get into your life, whatever you need. The principles of learning and how to put those things together in your life, how to get them inside you, how to use them so you too can get the wisdom and understanding by the principles of the Word of God that you, in your life at work, with your family, in your marriage, in any relationship you have, or anything you have to deal with, you do not have to go through life looking at it blurry. You look at it through instant focus.

V. Proverbs 14:18-21

Now today we are going to look at our next set of verses. Yes, that was an introduction, a very fine introduction if I may say so myself. We are going to look at Proverbs 14:18-21. Again, we will see the great principles of life unfold. Allow me to read for you. We will pick it up in Proverbs 14:18.

Proverbs 14:18-21

18 The simple inherit folly; but the prudent are crowned with knowledge.

19 The evil bow before the good; and the wicked at the gates of the righteous.

20 The poor is hated even of his own neighbour: but the rich hath many friends.

21 He that despiseth his neighbour sinneth: but he that hath mercy on the poor, happy is he.

VI. The Simple, The Prudent, Inheritance, and Crowns

Let us look at Proverbs 14:18 and begin to look at some of these verses. Every time I preach on Sunday morning or Thursday night, I expect you to do a number of things. One of the things that I expect you to do is watch how we can take a seemingly nothing passage and walk away with a lot of gold out of it. I want you to learn how to do that because that is really the key. People think that the key to the Bible is really just how much you know about the Bible. I am not taking that away; that is important. But I want to tell you something: really knowing the Bible is nothing more than just knowing what to look for in the Bible. You can look at a mundane passage like this. Certainly, if you were invited to preach at some worldwide conference event of preachers, that would probably not be your favorite verse that you would pick. But yet you are going to see, and I want you to learn how you unearth great principles out of something that looks like it is just an ordinary verse. Because I say it again, the key to learning the Bible is just simply knowing what to look for when you are reading.

Proverbs 14:18 says: "The simple inherit folly, but the prudent are crowned with knowledge." From last week, we now know that the simple and the prudent will simply be the foolish man

and the wise man of the book of Proverbs. The book is written about these two men. We know that now.

When you study the Bible, you will find that one of the great ways of studying out your Bible is by what we call association: looking at words that will always associate with a greater theme of the Bible. This is what I mean when I talk about what to look for in the Bible. Once you get familiar with the Bible and you learn some of the key words, whenever you read those key words, by association, you will pretty much know where you have to go. When you look at Proverbs 14:18, there are two key words here that set this whole thing up for us. As I said, knowing the Bible is nothing more than knowing what to look for, much more than it is in knowing what you know.

The two key words are:

3. Inheritance
4. Crown

We know that when it applies to us, these two words will always be about two things. Your inheritance will always be about the millennial reign of Christ. The crown will always be associated with the judgment seat of Christ. So right out of the gate, we see that this verse, in a practical sense, will be to us as an admonition or a warning, however you want to call it, not to lose sight of these two great doctrines of the Bible.

Historically, this will be Solomon's son, Rehoboam. He is getting good advice from his father Solomon on getting the father's inheritance and being a good king. But Rehoboam fails in both. He never takes the instructions. He is a terrible king. He loses it all. What I think is an incredible thing that we are going to look at today is that Rehoboam sets the stage for the future generations of the nation of Israel to go into captivity 500 years later. Think about that. One man, in his disobedience to the instructions of his father, not only did he lose his inheritance and his kingship, but he set the stage for his own people 500 years later to go into captivity. Rehoboam, along with Jeroboam, did the worst thing that ever happened to Israel: they split the kingdom north and south, and they got conquered.

Many of God's people reject God's instructions. They really do. Most parents do not know this, and maybe you are sitting here this morning, but right now, across this city, many parents are simply setting the stage for their children to be taken captive by the world. They are in church. They are saved. But because they have not obeyed the instructions from the Father (Proverbs to you and me), and they themselves have no spiritual inheritance, as sure as we are sitting here this morning, they are setting the stage, just like Rehoboam did, for their own children to be taken captive and go into the world.

Last week, I gave you that little basic outline of Proverbs. I showed you that Proverbs 1-7 was the instructions given to a son. Proverbs 8-30 were basically the Proverbs themselves laid out. Proverbs 31 was the end result. I always make things in the Bible simpler for me in a little outline. When you take the Proverbs, talking about what we are talking about, it is simply this:

- Proverbs 1-7: The instructions given.

- Proverbs 2:30: The instructions implied.
- Proverbs 31: The instructions realized.

When you take the instructions of God and put Him into your life, into your marriage, into your family, there will be an inheritance. That verse simply says that a fool, a simple one, will never inherit his millennial inheritance, and he will inherit what folly he has in his life that has brought him. 1 Corinthians 3 and 2 Corinthians 5 talk about that being the shame.

There is a verse in 2 Timothy 2:12-13 which is probably one of the most misunderstood verses in the Bible. People use it all the time to prove you can lose your salvation, which we know you cannot. But they cannot read.

2 Timothy 2:12-13

12 If we suffer, we shall also reign with him: if we deny him, he also will deny us:

13 If we believe not, yet he abideth faithful: he cannot deny himself.

That verse is taken right there so many times that people take verse 12 and say, "See there, if you deny God, He will deny you." But they do not read the next verse. Verse 12 says, "If we suffer, we shall also reign with Him." That is your millennial inheritance. "If we deny Him, He will also deny us." Just so you would not think that the denying there was you losing your salvation, he penned verse 13: "If we believe not, yet he abideth faithful: he cannot deny himself." So the verse is not talking about God denying you as His child. The verse is simply saying if you suffer with God, you will reign with Him. If you do not suffer with Him, He will deny you your reign, your inheritance.

He goes on and says that the crown will only go to a prudent man with knowledge. In the Bible, we know that there are five crowns listed that you can get at the judgment seat of Christ. We have talked about it many, many times. We also know the Bible says in Revelation 3:11 that you are warned to "let no man take thy crown." 2 John 8 says that we need to look to receive a full reward. In this life, a Christian will be crowned with knowledge. In the next life, you will get the actual crowns for the knowledge that you have right now. It is just that simple. You either will or you will not.

Along with that, there are a couple of other things here I want to look at. I want to talk for just a moment about the idea of a parent passing on to their children an inheritance of folly. In a physical sense, when a parent dies, mom and dad will leave their estate to their kids unless there is some big fight going on. Most good parents do that because they want their kids to be better off than they were. I know that 90% of you are young; you do not even think about that. Old age is as far away from you as looking up at me. You never think about these things.

It always amazed me how parents will always be drawn to the physical much more than they will the spiritual. They will leave their kids set up physically. They will leave them in good shape. They will leave them in a disaster and inherit spiritually. They will just leave those kids the same undisciplined folly and lifestyle of no knowledge that they had. Parents want to make their kids better, but it is more than just making your kid better physically. What inheritance are parents

today looking to leave as a legacy for their children? Their spiritual 401k to your children. The idea here is that people who are foolish and unstructured and have no knowledge will only leave folly as a spiritual inheritance to their kids. That will be a saved person or a lost person. They said one time, "When there is no cross in the family, there will be no crowns in the family." When there is no cross that the family bears for the cause of Christ, there will be no crown for the family at the Judgment Seat of Christ. I have seen 40-plus years of disastrous inheritance of lost crowns in so many lives because of folly and foolishness.

In 1 Samuel 3, I think you have probably the greatest single story in the Bible that really reveals how God, and I wish I had time to go through the chapter today, but it is the greatest chapter. We have been through it before, but it is the greatest single chapter in the Bible that I know of that shows exactly the relationship that you should have between God, your pastor, and yourself. It is a picture of young Samuel being turned over to the priest Eli to work in the temple because Samuel's mother wanted the very best for her boy. So she took him to the very best of Israel, the high priest Eli, and she turned him over to him and she said, "Make him for God everything that He wants him to be." In that passage, you see how young Samuel did not know anything about the Lord. He did not know anything about it. He just started it just like so many of you when you first started coming to church here.

We think the job of a pastor is how well the pastor knows his Bible. I want to tell you, a pastor should know his Bible, but that is not the greatest, that is not what makes a pastor. We think a man is a good pastor because of how good he teaches or preaches. I believe he ought to be a good teacher and a good preacher, but that is not what makes a good pastor. The greatest qualification and the job of a pastor, which are my own personal feelings, is what excludes so many people out of the ministry, even the ones that are in it today: that the pastor has to have the ability to see in you today what you do not see in yourself yet. He has to have the ability to see what God is doing in you long before you see it. That was Samuel. Samuel goes three times to Eli. "I think God has called me." Eli just says, "Son, just go back to sleep. It is okay." But it was the third time when young Samuel came that the Bible says that now Samuel perceived that God was in it.

Most pastors want to have a long-distance pastor relationship. They want to keep their people at arm's length. They want to always present themselves above the people so they do not have to become one with the people. I want to be very honest with you: you will never see in you what God sees in you from a long distance. You have to get into that person's life. You have to get into that person's world. When a pastor sees it, his next job is to get that young man or that young lady, or that mom or dad, or that couple everything that they need to make sure that they get a full inheritance and a crown that comes from the right knowledge, because wisdom is the principal thing. You get them the principles of the Word of God. You get the principles to them, and then you help get them to the principles.

In ministry, one of the most amazing things I have ever seen, and I will be very honest, I do not understand it completely. I need to say this, so please bear with me. Many of you came from good Christian homes. Your mom and dad made sure you got the spiritual inheritance, and that is

why you are in church today. They loved you. They taught you right from wrong. You are here today because you got that good inheritance, and praise the Lord for that.

Honestly, some of you others should not really be here today doing what you are doing the way you are. I do not mean this in a disrespectful way. Some of your parents lived a life of folly and a continual life of being dysfunctional. Some of your parents were lost and cared nothing about God. Some of them were saved and cared nothing about God. They never could or would not ever do what God had called them to do. By all human reasoning, their complete lack of any spiritual inheritance and only the inheritance of folly should have been passed on to you.

Listen to me. The thing that amazes me is today you defy the odds. By the odds of human nature, you really should not be in church doing what you are doing for God. You stand in stark contrast to everything that is an absolute principle in the Word of God. With what you came from, what you have to go through, what you have experienced in life, what you did not get, you simply should not be here today plugged into that Book doing what God wants you to do. You are an absolute miracle of God. You should be just like them, absolutely worthless, but yet you are not. I can see that in you.

Now, why? Why you? I have seen them where sometimes they had three or four kids in a family, and all three or four kids were absolutely worthless, never went anywhere, did anything. You all were raised the same way. You all ate the same food. You all had the same parents. Three of them will do nothing, and one of you will turn into a piece of gold. Why is that? It haunts me. I look at that. I have seen it. Sometimes in a Christian family or a lost family, the kids, all of them, are just as dysfunctional as the parents, and nobody ever does anything for God. Why is it that some of you are here today, and you defy the odds that were stacked against you, that were astronomical for you to be here where you are at today? Why are you the exception to that absolute rule?

Some of you were raised Catholic, and you were caught in a vacuum of religion, and you find so many of them just go on with religion, and they never break free, and they go on all of their life, and then they raise their kids, and it is an endless cycle. Why did God come down and pull you out? It is amazing to me. Some of you were Mormon. Some of you were Jehovah's Witness. Some of you were Charismatic. You had no Bible. It was all emotion. It was all feeling. If there is anything that is hard to break out of, it is a family in a life where everybody is jibber-jabbering and running around and praising the Lord over nothing, but God brought you out. Some of you were in churches, and you had no Bible. You went to churches where they sang songs and they gave sermons, but there was no absolute truth in your life. If you look back in that church, there are still 5,000 people in it, but you are not there anymore. Why you? Why you? Why are you so special?

Charles and Laura gave their testimony on New Year's Eve, so it is no great news that they were in drugs, prison, and their life was absolutely a shambles, and it was absolutely at an end, and they should spend the rest of their life locked up someplace or in drugs. My friend, God reached down and performed a miracle. Why was that? Why was that? Your family had the most screwed up, dysfunctional, broken, busted family on the planet. Your oldest boy has taken those boys and

is teaching them how to give devotion. That is against the law. I do not get it. Why did God pick you to give you the right inheritance or the ability to have the right inheritance?

Some of you are struggling in your own relationship with God. Some of you are struggling with your own relationship in your marriage or with your kids, and you think it is some accident that you are here this morning. You think it just happened this way. Somebody invited you, so you showed up, or you have come a couple of times in the past. I want to tell you something: God has something He wants for you. He does not want you to have an inheritance of folly. He wants to give you the best. If God cared enough about you to pull you out of that and pick you, why will you not pick Him? Why did God do that? Why did God pick you to give you the right inheritance and leave the other guy?

I will tell you why. You better listen to me. God saw something special in you, and you do not yet see it yourself. All down through the Bible, when God reached a man, He pulled Abraham out. Middle Earth was populated with millions and billions of people, and yet God, in all of that, saw one man and called him out. In Genesis 6, there must have been six billion people on the planet, but God looked down and saw Noah. Moses, is there anybody starting out goofier than Moses? God picked him. David. Why? When they came to Jesse, his father, to look for a king, they called all the other boys. They did not even consider David. One by one, they walked through, and God said, "Nope, nope, nope, nope, that is the one I want." Now, why did God look down in your family, in your history, in your friends, in your school, in your yearbook, just go through it, look at the endless pictures, and why did God say, "Nope, nope, nope, nope, nope. That one right there is the one I want"? You are something special. Some of you came through religion. Some of you came from without a Bible. Some of you came from the most dysfunctional situation you could ever imagine.

God picked Paul. He was the enemy of God. He had killed, I do not know how many Christians. You are not going to tell me there were not 10,000 other guys who loved God more than Paul, who were faithful when Paul did not even care about God. Why did He pick him? Same reason He picked you. God saw something special. He saw something special in you that He saw deep down in you that He did not see in somebody else, and you do not even understand that today. Maybe you are not supposed to understand it. Obviously, it would be a lot easier for you if you did, but maybe He does not want to make it easier for you. But you know why you do not have to stay inside you and see it just yet? Because He gave you a pastor who sees it when you do not.

That is my job. My job is not to look at your problems or your dysfunctionality or your idiocy or your stupid things. You want to talk about stupid things? Just talk to me about it. I could fill up your day with it. He saw something in you. He saw something in you. Glory to God, in spite of your religion, in spite of your goofy parents, in spite of your brothers and your sisters, He reached down and got you out because He has an inheritance for you. Do you see that today? He did not leave you behind. He came back for you.

Brother, I am telling you, when I see that, I am in. When I see that in a man or a woman's life who comes into this church, I mean, I am in for everybody, and I am here for everybody. No one better than the other, but I am telling you, I have the ability that God gave me that I see inside of

you what you do not see in yourself yet. Old Eli saw what God was doing in Samuel's life, and he put together a plan to get him everything he needed, and Samuel turned out to be one of the best prophets that Israel ever had. When I see it in you, whether you like it or not, whether you stick around or not, whether you do what is right or not, if you do, I will get you everything you need so you too can be the best for God, because that is why He pulls you out.

Are you looking in the middle of your problem, and you see this and you see that, and you get overwhelmed? I get it. You get overwhelmed with it so much, and you focus so much on your issues, so much on your problems, and the longer you go, the more complicated it becomes, and the more complex it becomes, and that is all you can see. You cannot pull that curtain back and see that deep down inside, God has something for you. When you cannot see it, bless God, I can. He showed me what you are really like.

We are unlike most churches in a couple of ways, but one of the ways that we are not like most churches is we do not have a lot of goofy people here. A lot of that is by accident because we did not even put a sign up. When you put a sign out front, the first thing everybody who has left this church down here that is mad is looking for another church to come to so they can get mad there. I always told you, we do not need a sign because you need to be the sign. When people see your life, see your fulfillment, see your completeness, see your happiness, see you have it together, they are going to say, "Where? How did that happen?" You just lead them right back to the yellow brick road to the Wizard of Oz. My job is to see it in you the way God sees you, seeing in you what you yet see in yourself. I do not look at your family history; I do not even look at your own history. But I am able to see beyond that, see those key areas that shine like nuggets of gold in the moonlight. My job is to take you, to make you, to develop you, to make you better, to develop that inheritance that leads to a crown of righteousness which fadeth not away. So you as a parent, in time, as you grow older and get married, you can carry on to that third generation and instill that inheritance and leave it to your children and their children's children.

Living in a world of better places is not complicated; it simply starts with you and me being better Christians. Then you and your wife becoming a better marriage. Then your family becoming a better Christian family, because we now know that God reaches the world through families. Better because you have an inheritance to look forward to and a crown to be passed on. Your spiritual 401k. The verse says, "The simple inherit folly, but the prudent are crowned with knowledge."

VII. The Evil and The Righteous

Look at Proverbs 14:19 for a moment: "The evil bow before the good, and the wicked at the gates of the righteous." Doctrinally, this will be a reference to the Jews at the second coming of Christ and on into the millennium. Right now, the Jews are on the bottom, and the Gentiles are on the top. That is the devil's plan. But you know from Christ's first coming in places like Matthew 5-10 that all changes at the second coming of Christ. This is called the Sermon on the Mount, Matthew 5-10. When the Lord comes back, it all changes.

That is why He says in Matthew 5:5 that "the meek shall inherit the earth." That is the nation of Israel. They will when Christ comes back. That is why He says, "Blessed are the poor in spirit," Matthew 5:3, "for theirs is the kingdom of heaven." That is true, second coming. That is why He says in Matthew 19:30, "the first shall be last and the last shall be first." That is true. Israel right now is last, but when Christ comes back, she will be first. That is why Matthew 5:10 says, "Blessed are they which are persecuted for righteousness' sake: for theirs is the kingdom of heaven." It all gets turned around. So you need to understand that there is a coming day, from a doctrinal standpoint, that the evil nation will bow before the good, the nation of Israel.

But for you and for me, in a practical way, it simply means that at the end of your life and my life of folly, we will lose all that we thought was important, and we will stand before God with all the righteous saints, and we will lose it all. The evil will bow before the good. An unsaved man will bow before all the righteous at the Great White Throne Judgment, and he will lose it all. A saved man will bow before the saved people at the Judgment Seat of Christ, and he will lose it all. One goes to hell, one goes to heaven, but they both lose everything God had for them.

Philippians 2:10-11

10 That at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, of things in heaven, and things in earth, and things under the earth;

11 And that every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.

We get the idea that your life is your own, and you are going to do your own thing. It is not a matter of whether you will or you will not bow your knee to Jesus Christ, whether you are saved or lost; it is just a matter of when you will.

Look at the last part of Proverbs 14:19: "and the wicked at the gates of the righteous." Doctrinally, two things here. The gate here, in an Old Testament setting, would be the gate of Jerusalem in the millennium. You will find in Zechariah 14 and numerous places in the Bible that that is going to be where all the Gentiles have to come in. In a practical application, the gate there will be Revelation 21:22; it will be the gates of the New Jerusalem, and that will be the Church-Age Christian. For an unsaved man or for a worldly Christian child of God, it is not, as I said, a question of will you bow your knee, only when. You will either take Him now under regard of love, or you will take Him that day under regard of judgment, one way or the other.

VIII. The Poor and The Rich

Look at Proverbs 14:20: "The poor is hated even of his own neighbour: but the rich hath many friends." Doctrinally, this is Israel in our present time period. The word "neighbor" here is an Old English term. We use it differently than they used it back there. We think of a neighbor as a person who lives across the street, and that is true in a practical sense, but in a Bible sense, a neighbor will be somebody that can live miles away from you, hundreds of miles, but you are friendly with them like they were your next-door neighbor. Doctrinally, the neighbors here that hate the poor, the poor will be the nation of Israel, and the neighbors here would represent all of the neighboring countries around the nation of Israel today: Iraq, Jordan, Saudi Arabia, Pakistan,

Iran, Afghanistan. Israel is completely surrounded with neighboring nations that stand for one thing: they hate her and they want to destroy her. That is the doctrinal application.

In America, we have six or seven terrorist attacks, and it is terrible when people get killed, I am not suggesting that it is not, but we have six or seven terrorist attacks in 20 years and think that it is absolutely the end of the world. People in America are afraid of anything; they do not go anywhere. Yet over in Israel, they live that way every day of their lives. Since 1948, not a day has gone by that a terrorist attack has not killed somebody. They live their life under that threat every day of their life, and they function and just go on, where America has a couple of them and falls apart.

In a practical sense, it is also true: people look down at poor people. When you get a new neighbor, we all do it. When you get a new neighbor that moves in next door or across the street, the first thing we do is check them out. See if we get a good one or a bad one. Nobody wants a neighbor that parks four or five old cars in their yard, lets the trash build up, or has barking dogs all night. I have had neighbors in the back of me that had dogs out that cried all night long and barked all night long, and I knew there was something wrong with it. I went up there; that dog had not had any food or water for three days. So I would go up at night when it was dark and do a little recon and take food and water. That dog and I became the best friends in the world. The people moved out and left the dog. But nobody wants barking dogs all night when you are trying to sleep. Kids running through the neighborhood, lawns not mowed. My next-door neighbor did not like me, I think he likes me now, but for a long time, he did not like me because I did not take care of my lawn like he takes care of his. He has a ChemLawn out there, five times a day spraying the thing to kill the dandelions, and his lawn is as green as can be. My lawn had raw dirt with a dog running up and down; it had dandelions all over the place. If you could ever dry dandelions and smoke them like dope, I would be a millionaire.

We look at, we want people to be like us, and when they do not look like we think they ought to look, we do not like them so much. It is just human nature. We have our standards, and we do not think they match up. This is true. There are so many churches. There are a lot of churches you go to, the "up-a-dee-up-a-dee," they look down. There is a section for all the poor people, and they look down at that. Pastors would never spend any time. If you are a poor person in most big churches and you have a problem, you will never hear from anybody. If you are a big giver and somebody that has a lot of money, they will be on your doorstep. But we are all like that.

My neighborhood is not the greatest in the world. I live in the south end of Raytown, right behind Raytown South. We have been there for many, many, many years, and we are not going anywhere. The duplexes right across the street from my end, you do not always get nice people in there. Down the north end on the other side, 83rd, there are many nights we come home, and the SWAT teams are down there. They have the road blocked off. Guys walking, I was sitting down there at the thing, watching the whole thing in binoculars, a guy walking down, putting his clip in his M16, and they are all foaming up there because they were going to get somebody out down there. SWAT team walking by, and I am sitting there saying, "Good luck, be careful now, be careful." Then after a while, I thought, "This is a great opportunity; I am going to be spiritual," and I say, "Go with God, my son." You go down the road.

I have met some really, really, really neat people in my neighborhood. But at first glance, you would not think they were bad. They have their problems, but you know, I would tell you what time to be smarter than the problem. We had people over there across the street a number of years ago. My lab before these days, I had a big brown lab named Buddy. He must have weighed about 140, 150 pounds. He was a monster. Labs are usually the most friendly dogs on the planet. He hated everybody but me. Steve Bracken's dad one time came to my house, came in through the garage, and reached over to pet him. Buddy jumped up over the gate, grabbed him by the shirt, and pulled him right over the gate. He did not like anybody who was around me or close to me. When I would walk him, he would just growl.

I remember the people across the street had a bunch of teenage boys, and they were all dope people. I would walk out there at night, and there would be a purple haze over that side of the street. I mean, I knew one time Barbara went out to take the little dog out and came in. She was skipping over through the front. But I learned you just have to get on their level. So I am walking Buddy one night, and they are over there. You can smell it everywhere. I am on my side of the street; they are on that side. Buddy, there are like nine or ten of them, and Buddy is just on his back legs, clattering and growling, just like he wants to get at them. They are nice kids, and one kid says, "Hey, how are you, Mr. Alexander?" I said, "I am pretty good, how are you?" He says, "Fine." He says, "That is a big dog you got there?" I said, "Yeah." He says, "He is not very friendly, is he?" I said, "Well," I said, "What is he all upset about?" I said, "My opportunity." I said, "Well, he is a police dog, and he has been trained to sniff out drugs. You guys got any drugs over there?" They were gone. Every time I saw them, they never smoked. I do not know where they smoked, but they were not out in the front of the yard. I never smelled it again. Every time they see me, "Hello, Mr. Alexander, hello, how are you?" "I am fine. How is that dog?" "Oh, he is fine. He is watching you guys over there. He likes you guys a lot." Every Memorial Day, I will take four or five of them big plates of ribs. Big joke. I will say, "Yeah, I know these are white man ribs, but they are really good." And they will laugh and say, "I bet you cannot jump either, can you?" And I said, "No, I cannot."

One thing we all need to remember: Jesus loved the poor people. I want to keep that in mind. Look at the last part of Proverbs 14:20: "but the rich hath many friends." You never really know how many friends you have until you come into a lot of money. Then you will be everybody's friend until your money runs out. You will have more family, more aunts, more uncles than you ever imagined. You will get on the phone and you will say, "Well, I appreciate that, but I have all the friends I can afford right now. Thank you very much." In truth, from a Bible perspective, we get so out of whack sometimes. A rich man is just, in most cases, a poor man with money. His money just temporarily hides how poor he really is spiritually, emotionally, and physically. Somebody said one time, "If you do not have a lot of money, nobody knows who you really are. If you do have a lot of money, then you lose track of who you really are." A lot of truth in that.

IX. Mercy on the Poor

Look at Proverbs 14:21. It goes along with Proverbs 14:20: "He that despiseth his neighbour sinneth: but he that hath mercy on the poor, happy is he." Again, the doctrinal reference is to

Israel. God said in Genesis 12:3, talking to Abraham, "I will bless them that bless thee, and curse him that curseth thee." There are blessings for any nation. History proves that out. Any church, history proves that out. Any Christian who takes care of the Jew, who understands Romans 9-11, who understands what the Bible says when it says that they are, "I am an enemy to them, but they are never to be an enemy." They look at me as an enemy, but I am never to look at them as my enemy. But in a practical way, there will be some blessings in taking care of the poor.

I am going to say this, and I believe it is true. Maybe you do not agree with it, but that is okay. I think we have a very blessed church here, almost to the point where you are spoiled sometimes. I know it primarily has to do with the Book that we hold up. I understand that. And the reverence that we have for God's Word. I know that down through history, the nations and churches and Christians have been blessed, and God uses them because of the Word of God. I get that. There are those natural blessings that come. There is nothing you have to do except just reverence the Word that God gave you. The rest will take care of itself. But I will tell you something else that brings blessings of God: it is helping the poor. Many of them do not want a handout; they just want a hand up to get back on track.

We have a little family here, Maurice, that we met down at Restart. They are not here today, obviously, so I would not have said this if they were here. But when they first came here, we loved them. We invited them to New Year's Eve. They came. They never asked for a thing. About the second week, he came to me and he said, "Can I talk to you a moment, Pastor?" And I said, "Sure." Here is a family that you all know did not have anything. We supplied all of their furniture. They lived at Restart. He finally got a house. I found out that he cannot work because he had a serious heart attack, and he is on disability, and that is basically nothing. He has two of the best kids. His wife deserted him. He has two of the best kids you could ever want. There is a miracle that the odds are stacked against somebody.

So he comes over to me and he says this. He says, "I have my car where I have to," he got some deal out in Lee's Summit where he has to pay the payment every month, or it has some kind of deal on his car that they go on a computer and shut it off, and he cannot run it until he pays the deal. I do not know. Here is what he asked. He says, "Pastor, I had to make a choice between living in the cold or getting a place for my kids, and I did not make my car payment. So I am automatically," and I am ready to go. I am going to help him get whatever he needs. But I am thinking he is going to say, "Could you help me out?" And he says, "So I do not have a car." He said, "So I was wondering," he says, "Me and my family, we go down to a couple of different places, and we pick up food for people who have less than we do." He says, "And they depend on us." He says, "If I do not have a car, I cannot get the food. Do you think there is anybody in your church that would drive down and pick up the food and take it to those people who do not have anything for me?" Here is a guy who does not have anything at all, and he is worried about the poor. There are some of God's people who have everything and do not think about anybody else but themselves. I said to him, "Maurice, you know what, we could do that. Well, would it not be a lot easier if the church just helped you get your car back, and then you could go on from there?" He broke down and cried. He never asked for a thing all the time that they have been here. They have never asked for anything other than to help do the ministry. You folks that are

discipling those boys and him, those kids are absolutely loving it. You are giving those kids an inheritance.

Most people down at Restart, we just look at it. I get it. Somebody will say, "Well, I do not go down to Restart or I do not go to 18th and Cherry because I have heard people say it, 'Well, I just do not see any real results down there,' and 'I just do not see those people are not very appreciative down there.'" Well, did you ever stop and think that the fruit, the results, might be you and not them? God is using that to show you what He has given you, that you do not get to the place that you think you are better than everybody else. There is a time I drive home from that place that I do not thank God forever for my family, for my kids, for everything that I have got for you, for all of you, for this church, how God has blessed us. But it is easy to get arrogant. I think a lot of God's people think that they deserve all the blessings of God that they have. We do not deserve anything. We lose our perspective.

That is what the disciples did. Did you ever notice that? The disciples, Jesus was the greatest; He loved the poor. He was always with the poor. That is where He always hung out. It is one of the greatest things you will ever see in your Bible, but the disciples, they were with Him for three years. I can only imagine what it would be like to hang out with the Lord and be one of the chosen twelve. That will get to you after a while as far as thinking you are something special. I know how it is in the ministry. I know how it is today. I am sure that there were people that came up to one of the disciples and they said, "I hear that John is the guy to go to to ask the Lord something," and that apostle would say, "Well, that is not exactly true. I have been with the Lord longer than him. What do you need? Yes, I could handle that for you because you do not tell anybody, but I am really His right-hand man. Just come to me with what you need."

Can you not see it? Every time they get into trouble, it is because they lose their perspective over the people that Christ is trying to minister to. You had a woman in Matthew 15, and she had a legitimate burden. Her daughter was vexed with the devil, and it was tearing her apart. What is more heart-wrenching than to see a mom with a little girl or a little boy who is suffering, and the mom wants relief, and she knows the Man can get it, but she has got to go through a twelve-point program of apostles to get to the Lord Jesus? When she gets there, she is heartbroken, and the Lord says, "I am going to put her through a little test," and He does not give her everything she wants. So the next thing she does, she goes to the apostles. Instead of the apostles, the disciples say, "Lord, she has got a legitimate need. Now I know you are maybe trying to teach her something, and that is all good, but at least let us know how you want us to deal." No, not those guys. They came to the Lord and said, "Lord, would you send her away? She is crying after us. We are trying to go out here and do the work and the ministry, and she is walking behind us, wailing, begging us. It is looking bad. Can you not just get rid of her, send her away?"

One time He fed 5,000 people, and they were so engrossed in the Word of God that they wanted to hear more, but it became late in the day. They had nothing to eat, and they were all hungry. Disciples had been out shaking hands, signing autographed cards, and doing everything, signing Bibles. "Yes, I am the number two man, Peter. Here I am. Here is to the kingdom right here in my pocket." When we come down to the real nitty-gritty ministry of feeding them because they

were hungry, they just looked at the Lord and said, "We do not have anything, send them away. We got what we wanted out of them. Send them on their way."

Sometime a bunch of little children came to see the Lord Jesus. Disciples rebuked them because they had just got their new, freshly cleaned, starched white robes, the essence of their holiness. The little grubby, dirty hands of the kids were leaving fingerprints all over the white robes. They began to rebuke them in Matthew 19, and Jesus said, "What in the world are you doing? Let those kids come to Me. You know what, guys? I am going to tell you something: Except ye come to me like a little child, ye have no part of me. Dump the robes and get back to what you need to be doing." But you know what they were doing? Mark 9:34. That is what most of God's people do. They are sitting around in a Starbucks someplace, sitting around and having a little coffee time, and they are arguing about who was the greatest in the kingdom.

Sometime the scribes and the Pharisees saw Jesus with a bunch of sinners who needed help, and all this down there, and they asked the disciples, "Why does He always hang out with the sinners?" Jesus heard them and looked up and He said, "You know why, pal? Because the whole do not need a physician." It is a difference, folks, between a hands-on ministry and a hands-off ministry. In 2 Kings 4, Elijah sent his servants to do what God had called him to do, and it did not work. A lot of times, pastors and churches will send other people to do what they ought to be doing.

Every year around Thanksgiving, when I go to the Hy-Vee to get groceries, there is a big church in Lee's Summit, and they always have a big food drive truck. They catch you coming in and ask you if you will give a \$5 donation, and the food is going to Harvesters to feed the poor and all that. Please do not misunderstand me. Harvesters is a great organization, and they do a lot of good. I am not bemoaning the fact that somebody is doing food for it. I am really not. But huge churches, they do that every year. But never one time would the pastor lead his people down in the middle of all that to feed and give them the Gospel. See, it is easier to go home and feel good about yourself because you gave \$5 to give somebody hungry food as long as you do not have to take it down and be part of it. That is what it is.

May I be honest this morning? I am always an honest guy, but let me just read through the line for you. I am a great translator. You know why those kind of churches do not ever go down and invest in those kind of people? Because they do not have any money to give them, that is why. If you were a millionaire, they would be there on your doorstep. If you were a bank president, or you were this, or you had a big large corporation, you would be a deacon so fast you would not know what hit you. But to them, no bucks, no Buck Rogers, man. You do not have anything to give. You do not have any time to give you. That is a tragic thing to say, but it is true. One pastor stated, "We need to build bigger buildings so we can get more people, so we can raise more money."

Do you want to be happy and show mercy to the poor? Listen, I know this will be a shock to your spiritual system, but based on the Bible and the New Testament Gospels, if Christ were alive today on Earth, you know where He would be spending His time: right down at 13th and Cherry, down at Restart, down at the library, and going out with Will and down along the river

with Darren. The Lord would be very uncomfortable and feel very out of place in 98% of the huge mega-churches today. A couple of reasons:

5. First of all, He would have the wrong Bible. It would be hard for Him to follow along.
6. Second of all, He would hate the music.
7. Thirdly, He would be brokenhearted at the way His people look at the poor.

While all the congregations with their multimedia presentation, the praise band, the praise singer, sound system, sound boards, light shows, smoke shows, interpreting dancing, wine and cheese tasting parties, go on and deceive themselves into thinking that is real Christianity, He would simply slip out the door unnoticed and make His way down to those who had nothing. Nobody would even notice that He was gone. He would simply fulfill the great truth taught in Nehemiah 8:10.

Nehemiah 8:10

Then he said unto them, Go your way, eat the fat, and drink the sweet, and send portions unto them for whom nothing is prepared: for this day is holy unto our Lord: neither be ye sorry; for the joy of the LORD is your strength.

It is okay to get everything you get here. This is why we do not have a Sunday night service. Two times in a month, I want you to spend with your family. The other two, we are out doing, taking what we learn here and taking it out to the people. That is what we are supposed to do. It is all right to eat the fat and drink the sweet. But most of God's people never get anything to anybody else. I will tell you something. It says, "For this day is holy unto our Lord: neither be ye sorry; for the joy of the LORD is your strength." You will never be sorry when you send portions of what you have to those for whom nothing is prepared. Taking care of the poor.