

I. The Importance of Christian Success

If you have your Bibles this morning, I want to invite you to turn to the Book of Proverbs, Chapter 15. This is going to be a very practical message today. If you are someone who has just gotten saved, or a young Christian, or maybe even an older Christian who has been saved for a while but is just now getting plugged in, I think this message today is going to be a great help to you.

Proverbs 15:6-9 is a great section on success in Christianity. Nobody likes to be unsuccessful in anything that we do. We see it in the world so much that they have really gone overboard with it all. They come to the place where, when the kids play track or soccer or baseball or softball or basketball, they cannot stand for anybody to lose. So, they have to give a trophy to everybody to try to make everybody feel okay. They do that because in their mind they think that everybody wants to be successful. That is true.

However, one of the great things about life is the fact that when you are not successful in things, sometimes you can learn more from failing in some things than you can by accomplishing it. Life is a balance. But when it comes to Christianity, it has to be a success for you, and it can be a success for you. After all that God has done, after all that He has accomplished, after the Word of God that He has given us, and the Holy Spirit of God that came in the day of Pentecost, there is absolutely no reason for a child of God today not to be successful in their Christian relationship.

I want to show you the fundamental key to being successful as a Christian that I found in this great passage. Let me define success for a child of God first; I think that will help us, and then we will come back and build into it. A successful Christian will simply be a man or a woman who finds out what God wants them to do with their life and then spends the rest of their life doing it. Spiritual success is not attaining some great high spiritual level in your life. It is not just accomplishing things in your life; it is more than that. It is coming to the point in your life where you realize, in the world that we live in, that Christ did something for you, and He wants you to do something for Him. When you do that, and you faithfully do it all of your life, that is success when it comes to God.

I think the book of Nehemiah has always been a favorite of mine. Nehemiah is a very unique individual. When you look at the book of Nehemiah, you see exactly the root concept of success. You see when God's plan comes together. Here is a guy who is just following what he knows he is to do. He is just doing what he can do. He is just staying with it, following everything that he knows that he is to do. You see that through the course of that, when everything kind of lays itself out, you finally see Nehemiah being the right guy in the right place at the right time. That is what God wants for you. That is what God wants to accomplish in your life. That is the real success for you and for me as a child of God: finally coming to the place where you become the right man or woman at the right time, and God puts you in the right place, and then you do with that what you know to do.

Proverbs is a fundamental book about just two kinds of people when we talk about saved people. We know that; we have talked about it many, many times. You will find that these two kinds of people are in everyday life all around you. Every church has them. One will find out what God wants with their life and do it, and spend the rest of their life doing it. That will be the wise man. Then there will be those, on the other hand, who will never figure it out and never do anything for God. That is the foolish man.

II. Principles for a Successful Christian Life

Let us read our verses today and begin to see yet again principles. We know now that principles of the Word of God are the building blocks. They are what we build in our life, and we build on the foundation of the day that we got saved. I want to express today, as I always try to do, I always try to keep before you the importance of having a principled life. A life that is built on principles. Not operating on what you think, or what you read, or what you got off the internet, or what you feel in your emotions, or how you look at a certain circumstance, but always using the principles of the Word of God to dictate everything that we do.

Let us read Proverbs 15:6-9.

Proverbs 15:6-9

In the house of the righteous is much treasure: but in the revenues of the wicked is trouble. The lips of the wise disperse knowledge: but the heart of the foolish doeth not so. The sacrifice of the wicked is an abomination to the LORD: but the prayer of the upright is his delight. The way of the wicked is an abomination unto the LORD: but he loveth him that followeth after righteousness.

III. Spiritual Investment and Return

In our country today, we have a lot of issues. One of the major ongoing issues is our economy. It is always a problem, it is always a struggle. It does not matter what president gets in, there are always economic issues that are so fragile and can go south so quickly. People are afraid of the instability of our own financial system. You hear words like recession, you hear words like depression, you hear words like economic recovery. You hear a lot about investors and things that people have invested in losing a lot of money. It is seemingly, you know, you have a 401K or an IRA or mutual funds or saving bonds or annuities, and all of them have taken a hit. Most of them have not recovered from 10 or 12 years ago when the economy really went down; it put us into a bona fide recession. It seems to be a no-win situation.

Gas is high, and everybody complains about that. But when gas goes down, everybody was excited because gas went down to just a little over a dollar for a while. I think it is back up to a dollar and seventy something now, but for a while it was down almost under a dollar. Everybody is happy about that. Everybody thinks that is a great thing; "I can save some money." Well, for you older folks who understand how the economy works, when oil goes down that cheap, it affects the whole market. You may have gotten gas for a dollar or nineteen cents someplace, but

you probably lost \$12,000, \$15,000 on your investment. That is how it works. It is a no-win situation.

I get it, this is a young church. Look around, there are not too many old people here. We thank you for being old because you are the gray-headed wisdom of our church, but the bottom line is we are a young church. I say that to say this: most young people never think about retirement. They do not think that way. They do not think about the time in their life when they will not be able to work anymore. I know I did not when I was your age. I thought, "That is so far down the line, I do not have to worry about that. I am not going to save money now. I am going to buy this because I have so much time to spend to save money the rest of my life." So, it comes around at the end of their life for retirement, and they have nothing to fall back on. It is a tragedy sometimes. You take the couple now in their mid-20s and 30s, for them being 65 and 70 is a long way off. I want to tell you something: it is just around the corner. It will be here so fast you will not know what hit you. Your life, the Bible says, is like a vapor. It appeared for a while and then vanished away. It does not last long.

Back in 1935, FDR founded what we know as the Social Security system. It was a unique plan that they were going to take money out of your paycheck. The government was going to take it. They were going to invest it and then make a gigantic financial pool. Everybody is paying into it, and proportionally, as you got older and turned 65, then you got your money back based on that, so you would have something to live on. The problem was that it just did not work that way because the government made a lot of bad investments. They did not do everything they should have done. A lot of that money got appropriated for other things. They just said, "Oh, we have plenty of money. Oh, by the time you retire, we will pay it back." They took that money, and it never got paid back. Now, some of you who are sitting here under the sound of my voice who are paying into Social Security right now, the experts say by 2030 that it is going to be broke. No money in it. Fourteen years from now. The last two generations of most people today will have nothing to carry them through the later times of their life. They put nothing away for their future.

It comes down to a lack of looking ahead. It comes down to a lack of basically understanding, a lack of self-discipline, a lack of planning, a lack of being good stewards of what you already have. Most people do not like to plan for the future. I mean, I hate to be a guy who sells cemetery plots. They have it now where you can go into the funeral home, pick your casket out. I guess you can lay in it to see if it is comfortable if you want, get the color you want, pay the thing. Everything up front, it is all taken care of. You go down the road and you see a billboard where they have this. I have probably never trusted funeral directors; there is something weird about them. When I was in the military, I got a gig where I traveled all around. I played the trumpet, and I was the only guy who played funerals. I got to spend a lot of time with funeral directors. I could tell you some horror stories about funeral directors, but I will not. It is a wild thing, but you go down there and they have this cheesy-looking guy on there with a serene picture behind it. He says underneath there, "Leave well." In other words, when you die, die well, leave well. Do not leave any bills for anybody else. Make sure you are comfortable in dying. Get a plot with a nice view, all that goofy stuff. The bottom line is that it hitches off the fact that we want to live well. I would hate to try to be somebody who sold that because people do not want to plan ahead.

A guy who does investment planning probably does not get his clients when they are 30, 40 years old. I do not know if one of you young couples in here has an appointment with an investment broker that is going to help you make good investments. We just do not think that way. Most people, they just think that simply if I had more money, if I got a better job, if I won the lottery, if I got more money, it would solve all of my problems. Of course, that is not true either. Having more money will not solve your problem because the real problem is most of us do not have good responsibility with the money we have because we do not make good investments.

I think a great example of this is Donald Trump. I am not political; I could care less about any of those guys. But I like to watch people and learn from them. I try to learn from everybody. Donald Trump is one of the most interesting guys that you are ever going to study. In a lot of ways, he pictures what your life and my life should be that I am going to preach on this morning. Donald Trump, here is a guy who started out with a million dollars. I think his dad gave him a million dollars. That sounds like a lot of money, but a million dollars is not a lot of money today. It really is not when you buy a house for \$200,000 and a car for \$160,000. It can go very quick. But he had a million dollars. What he did, he made good investments. When he made good investments, he invested in the right things, and he took that million dollars, and now he is worth somewhere around \$700 to \$800 million by making good investments.

I heard him say, in the last couple of debates, and I like to watch the debates because I like to use that as a scrutiny to read character and read between the lines. It is just an interesting thing to do. I heard him say in one of the last debates concerning his business success, he stood up there and very proudly he said, "When it comes to my businesses, the reason why I am successful is I am a very principled man." When he said that, I took note because I know the principles he is talking about are not the same principles I am talking about this morning. But the point is clear that he made a success in his business by making good investments. He made good investments because he followed a set of principles that was in his own life on where he made investments and where he did not.

In a spiritual sense, the Bible says in Proverbs 15:6, "In the house of the righteous is much treasure, but the revenue of the wicked is trouble." We are going to look at two key words today and what they mean. One of them is going to be the revenue of your life, the other one is going to be the treasure of your life. Because the verse is true. Donald did exactly what every one of us should be doing, except he did it in the business world. You and I ought to be doing it in the spiritual world that we live in: simply taking what you have that God has given you and making good investments with it for God.

Spiritually speaking, to begin to understand this whole format, God made the initial investment in all of us. He came down on the cross; He died. He made it possible for you and I to have eternal life. He gave us His Son, the investment that He made in us with His own Son, and through that came your salvation today. After God made that initial investment, He expects you and me to do something with that investment. It is like Donald's dad giving him a million dollars. I do not think his dad expected Donald just to go out and blow it and take trips and buy this and buy that. I think he expected Donald to do something with the million dollars that he gave him. When God came down and sent His Son on the cross and He saved you, He made an investment

of at least a million dollars in your life through that salvation. It cost God something for you to have the investment that God gave you.

I have never understood God's people who take and understand that it costs something for God to give us our salvation, but then we go through life thinking that it should not cost us anything now that we do have that salvation. He made the investment in you, the investment in me, that you would take that investment and make good choices with it. He wants a revenue back from you. He wants a return back on His investment. If Donald Trump's dad were still alive and Donald would have wasted the money on riotous living and buying every frivolous thing and wound up broke today, his dad would have been greatly disappointed. I do not know if his dad is still alive or not, but I bet if he was alive, from a worldly standpoint, he would be very proud because he is looking at the million dollars he gave him now at an \$800 million revenue return.

We stand here or sit here this morning after receiving the investment that God has given to us and never thinking about the return on that investment, thinking ahead to a time in your life when you can enjoy the benefits of your good spiritual investments that you made. The investments you have made keep working for you long after you cannot. If you get a 401k and you let it in there all your life, and now you are 70 years old and you cannot work anymore, but you have done good things, you made good investments, you have two or three or four million dollars in investments in there, you can put that into a plan where you could never touch the principal. You live off the interest, and you can live the rest of your life. You planned ahead for a time that you could be successful and keep on living when you could not work anymore.

I want to tell you something, in every one of your lives and my life as a Christian, you may be in your springtime of your life right now, especially you, because you are only what, 20, 21, honey? Good to see you today. You are still in the springtime of your life. You are young, you have vibrance, you have everything going for you. What you do not understand is there is coming a time in your life, even though you are in the springtime or the summer of your life, winter is coming. There is coming a time when you are not going to jump as high as you used to, run as fast as you used to, work the hours you used to work, and it will come a time in your life when you cannot maybe do any of that anymore. You better have something to fall back on. Spiritually speaking, there will be a time in your life where you cannot do what you do for God right now. This is why the Bible said, Paul told young Timothy, "Let no man despise thy youth." He said, "Be thou an example of the believer," because he knew that right now is the greatest time for you to ever do and make that investment. When you get older, you cannot get around as much. You get complications from chronic problems of health, and it keeps you from doing what you need to do. Right now is the prime time of your life. This is why God, in my mind, totally understands why He gave us such a young church and seasoned it with good, older men and women who can help the younger ones.

Do you think the devil does not know that? I drive by John Knox Village about two or three times a week. I do not know for sure on this, but I will probably be safe in saying this: I do not think there has ever been a drug bust in John Knox Village. I have been over there a couple of times visiting people, walking down those halls. There is no blaring rock music coming out of their rooms like it is in your dorms where you go to school. You might hear a little Willie Nelson

creeping under the door a little bit. You know why? You know why they do not have those problems? Because they do not pose a threat to the devil anymore. He is not after them like he is after you. They made whatever investments they are going to make. You are in a place in your life where you now, right now, need to be really thinking about the investment He made in you, the revenue that you give back to Him.

You have heard me say many, many times that, looking at the picture of Christianity, you have Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John first coming in Christ. He comes, dies on the cross. The Bible says in Hebrews that when He came out of that tomb, He defeated the devil. He now has the key to death and hell; the devil has completely lost at that point. Right there on the spot, when it is finally fixed, the devil is gone, everything is out of place. He has everything going. He decides to go back to heaven and leave you and me down here with this mess. Do you know why He did that? Because He put something in play by making an investment that He expected you and me to pick up and bring a return on that investment and finish for Him what He did not finish when He was here.

God had a plan to reach the world, still does, with the Gospel. I have told you before, He does that through families. Moms and dads investing in their families who in turn invest in the Word of God, who invest into the world in ministry. When we finally get to Proverbs chapter 31 and you see this virtuous woman, that whole chapter is nothing more about a woman who has made the right investments in her family, her children, and every aspect of her life. Just the investments. God made the capital investment up front for you and for me. Now we are to take, as wise investors, the Holy Spirit of God, the Word of God, and through our life bring a return on God's original investment. Make a profit, so to speak, spiritually.

You notice how God always puts His spiritual blessings and riches in the form of human resources? That is so you and I will identify with them. He says in 1 Corinthians chapter 3 that after you get saved, you lay the foundation, you build on it gold, silver, precious stones. He said in Malachi chapter 3 that the people that you win to Christ are jewels, valuable jewels that go in a crown. In Luke 16:11, He talks about the riches of this world, but then He talks about the true riches. Here in Proverbs 15:6, He says "revenue." That is money that comes in. That is a profit that you make, and "treasure."

Now let me explain to you how it works. This is going to help you if you are a young Christian today. When you got saved, the Bible says in Romans 12:3 that God gave you a measure of faith. It says over in Ephesians 4:7 that He gave you a measure of grace. What does that mean? It means that when you got saved, God just gave you enough grace and gave you enough faith to believe what you needed to believe about getting saved. You do not have enough faith yet to go out and be a missionary. You do not have enough grace yet to go out and deal with people. You do not have enough grace or enough understanding of things to go back and deal with your own family and tell them what happened. He gave you grace and He gave you faith by a measure, a measure of it. Just enough that you could see, understand, and believe about you. From that point on, that is the initial investment that He put in you. You now begin to take that measure of grace, measure of faith, and you develop it.

You go through Discipleship One, and you learn a little bit more about God and the Bible. Your faith and your grace grows a little bit. You go through Discipleship Two, and the same thing happens. You start moving to another spiritual level. God took that measure of faith and grace that He gave you, and now you are doing something with it. You are investing in the Bible in a most basic way, but already it is bringing a return. You grow for a while, and you find over there in 2 Peter 1:5 that there are seven things. Once you are saved, there are seven things you are to add to your faith. Most of God's people who claim to love God, claim to read the Bible, claim to be spiritual, they could not even tell you what those seven things are. But those seven things bring a return. Those seven things, when you look at each one of them, go through the Bible, play them out, put them together, apply them to your life, that is an investment. That is an investment. Because you and I are to take that measure of faith and grace and invest it. We grow it, we expand it. Hebrews 5:4 says that you exercise it, you develop it.

You all know the parable of Luke chapter 19 where God came down and He gave every man a pound. He says, "I am going to come back and I want to see what you did with that pound." He comes back to one guy, and the one guy says, "I took that pound and I made good investments, and now I have 10 pounds." Somebody else says, "I took that pound you gave me and I made some good investments. I have five pounds back for you, Lord." Then He comes to the third guy, and the third guy says, "Oh, I still have the original pound you gave me. I never did anything with it." That is most of God's people. Most of God's people never do anything with the initial investment that God invests in them. Then they wonder why they do not really understand what God is doing in their life.

IV. The Concept of Stewardship

When you get saved, we here at this church fundamentally help you make good investments. A couple of weeks ago, I was joking with you at the end of the sermon. It was not really joking; it is true. I told you how that as a pastor, I am an insurance salesman. I sell you the best insurance policy to cover any problems you will ever have. But I am also, as a pastor, an investment broker. I will help you make the right investments of your life and what God has given you to, in turn, like Donald Trump, take your initial investment and turn it into a millennial treasure. Take the initial investment that God gave you, that million dollars like Trump had, and turn it into \$800 million. That is my job. Now, some of you do not like that. Some of you do not like to be told, "That is not a very good investment." But it is what I want to do. My job is to help you make the best investment of your life that God has given you.

In the Bible, the concept of stewardship is a tremendous study, totally unknown today. In the Old Testament, the great example and model of stewardship will be a guy by the name of Eliezer, Abraham's chief steward. You will find him mentioned in Genesis chapter 15, and you will find him in action in Genesis chapter 24. Tremendous study. The concept of stewardship will be a man to whom the master of the house entrusts his riches and expects him to take care of it, to make investments on it, but to always be responsible for it. You know that is exactly what God did when He saved you. He gave you the riches and glory in Christ Jesus. You need to be God's steward of that. God gave you a trust. He entrusted to us His riches through Christ Jesus. That is

what God has done with you and me, and we are to be good stewards of all that God has given us. It is Eliezer in the Old Testament, but in the New Testament, the model for stewardship will be the book of Titus.

In Titus 1:7, it says,

Titus 1:7

For a bishop must be blameless, as the steward of God; not selfwilled, not soon angry, not given to wine, no striker, not given to filthy lucre;

In the New Testament, for a Christian who has charge of all God has to make the right investments, there are going to be listed in the Bible for you seven different stewardships. There are seven different stewardships in the Bible. I do not know how many times I have asked pious Christians, "Are you a good steward with God?" "Oh, yes, I am." "What are the seven stewardships that He laid out in the Bible?" "Do not have a clue." How do you be a good steward when you do not even know what the seven stewardship concepts are, and none of them have anything to do with money?

You have pastors in this city and around this country who are in churches, pastoring churches, and the people of those churches have trusted their spiritual growth and their spiritual well-being of themselves, their families, their spiritual growth to this guy. He does not have a clue what spiritual stewardship is. Churches today, I do not know if you notice it or not, churches today are failing by the hundreds. I have never seen a time when God changes His mind so much. It is almost an epidemic of church failures today. Every pastor, when it fails, it is always the people's fault. It is like a husband when he loses his marriage, it is always the wife's fault. In both cases, that is not true. If a church fails, it is not the people's fault. If the church fails, it is the pastor's fault. In a marriage, if the marriage fails, it is not the wife's fault, it is the husband's fault. Because those are two leadership roles, and as I have said a hundred million thousand billion times, everything rises and falls on leadership, especially in a church.

We had a guy one time in our church. I think right now he is on his sixth church, and they have all flopped. They have all failed. He just cannot get it. He cannot see it. It is one of these things that, God called him here, and then God got it wrong. So God uncalled him there and then called him someplace else. Then God got it wrong again and called him back and called him someplace else. I wish God could just get it straight. Now, does anybody here think the problem is God? No. Well, at least one of you does not, and I appreciate that. You know why that is the way it is? Stewardship. A failure in their ability to be a good steward over the things that God has given them. I am telling you, it affects you in every aspect of your life. They have no idea what they are doing. They could not build a church if their life depended on it. I know, "Well, you do not know how tough it is where I am at." How tough can it be when God is in it? If God called you there, did He call you there only to be there when it was not tough? Or did He call you there to invest your life through the good and the bad? If I had come to Kansas City and started this church and only did it because there were only going to be good things, and the first time something nasty happened, I would change my mind, I would not be here today. When it comes to pastoring a church, you buy it. You buy the field. You buy it with your life. You buy it with

everything you have. No matter whether it goes good or it goes bad or whatever it goes, if that is where God has called you, stay with what God has called you to do.

Problems in Titus 1:7, they are self-willed. God did not call them. They created their own scenario. They talk about God doing it right up to the point where they flop. Everybody else around who has a little idea about the Bible knows that, "You know what? God was not in it from the beginning." So when you get saved, God makes that crucial investment in you. The question here today is, what have you done with that investment? What are your plans? God made an investment in you. Let me ask you a question: what kind of investment have you made in Him? You and me right now ought to make a return, a revenue on that investment, that stewardship. If you have been saved five or ten years, I will give you five years just to get it all figured out. It would be safe to say that right now, today, this moment, good or bad, you are exactly what you have made your investment in. It is the same way with your children. Your children are in church today or they are not in church today based on your investment. It is just that simple. It is the same way with your marriage. Your marriage is either great today or it is not good today, and it all comes down on the investment that you made. It will be what you invested in it.

One of the constants, one of the absolutes of life, and it is so true: you only get out of something what you are willing to put into it.

V. Investing in the Word of God

When I was into astronomy, and I have been interested in astronomy all my life, a number of years ago I really got the bug to take really good astronomical pictures. I would see guys that would post them on the website and look at the books, and I just had such a desire, I wanted to be able to do that. Technically, with the advancement of today, and most people do not even know this, you can do today in your backyard with the equipment that they have and the technology that is available, you can do in your backyard with a regular backyard telescope what they could not do with a 200-inch Mount Palomar 40 years ago. That is impressive. I said to myself, "I am going to do this. I want to learn this." But man, was it a learning curve. You just do not get a camera and put it on your telescope and voila. I saw some of those pictures of galaxies that when you take a picture on it, that shutter on that camera has to stay open a half hour, maybe an hour, even longer.

My great elusive object that I remember seeing it through a telescope, and it was incredible through a telescope, but it was incredibly hard to photograph. It was a galaxy called NGC 4565. Do not let the terminology fool you. It is a National Galactic Catalog. There are so many galaxies out there that they could not, they had to put them in a format. This galaxy was, if science is correct, probably not, but they tell us that it is 860 billion light years away. Can you fathom that? If you are looking at it through a telescope and you are seeing it, it is 860 billion light years away. Let me give you a perspective: if it would blow up and disintegrate in an instant while you are looking at it, you would still see it for 860 billion years in the future because it would take that long for the light to get to you. That is incredible.

When you start taking pictures, you have got to fight the weather, you have got to fight the Earth's rotation, you have got to fight the moon, the clouds, you have got to fight your focus, temperature change, guiding gear issues, fatigue, polar alignment, dew, cold, stray light. There are about 10 things that have got to happen all at the same time to get a decent picture. I will tell you something. Here is what you have got to do. You have a telescope, you put the camera in, it runs through your computer. Every telescope that is a good telescope will have a drive system on it that you line it up to the North Star, and it will track. It tracks good if you are looking in it. But boy, you put a critical camera in on a critical object, and there is no perfect gear. So that thing is going to drag and blur all over the place. So now you have got to mount another telescope on the back of that telescope, put a very high-powered eyepiece in it with the crosshairs. You have got to find a star out here after you get it centered in the middle of your telescope. The chip you are working with is probably as big as an eraser on a pencil, maybe smaller. To find one little object in outer space and find it on that little chip, it is almost impossible. Then you have got to keep it there. It is drifting off and drifting here. So now what you have got to do is you have got to get in a comfortable position, bend that scope on the back through it, find a star, get it right in the middle, and then for an hour, keep your little hand control that gives a little signal to the motors and just every time it starts to drift. You have got to keep it right on that crosshair. Sometimes you are freezing. Sometimes it has been so cold out there, my shutter froze open on the camera, it was so cold. The mosquitoes are getting, and one little sneeze, one little bump, and you have lost it all. I have taken a 45-minute exposure, got it up to 44 minutes and 30 seconds, and then was so excited, bumped it with my knee, end of story. Done. It is incredibly hard.

I literally practiced hundreds of hours. I would never put a camera in it. I would go out on a cloudy night so if I could just see one star, I would practice guiding. I would practice focusing. I would do everything that I could know to do. It was the hardest learning curve I have ever taken in my life. I took pictures of the planets, and they see my pictures and they say, "Wow, that is really impressive." You know what it took to get that picture? The Earth's atmosphere changes by the millisecond. It will be clear for a second, and the next instant it will be blurry. So you have got to focus it up, set it up, get it lined up, and then you have got to take about two to 300 pictures, one, two, three, every two or three seconds, and then you have got to sort through all of them to find the ones where the atmosphere is steady down enough to get a good picture. It is an incredible learning curve, but I wanted to do it so bad.

- My Mars. Polar caps on it. I am Mars in the middle. That was 300 photographs I had to do.
- Here is my Saturn. You never saw anything that the Mount Palomar did, and I did that in my driveway in Raytown. All of these just set up in a driveway. But it was a learning experience to learn how to do that. My neighbors thought I was crazy, but I do not care.
- This is one that we all know, the great red dragon of Revelation chapter 13. I had to get this one because the Bible says that the Antichrist is connected with the loosing of the bands of Orion, and in Revelation chapter 12 and 13, he is called the red dragon. You put a camera open air on the belt of Orion that is going to open up and look what you find right there in the middle of that belt, the great red dragon. Had to have that one.
- My NGC 4565. An incredible edge-on spiral galaxy. 860 billion light years away. That was 40 minutes in the freezing cold, just holding that little thing there, just taking a picture. If you

notice up here, if you look at it, I not only got that one, but I got an even farther distant galaxy way back here. Who knows how far that is? I named that one Bob's galaxy. But I only got that based on what I was willing to invest into the time to learn how to do it.

Everything in life that is worth doing is going to be a learning curve. In that particular case, it took a total and complete giving of everything I had to invest because I wanted to get that kind of quality of picture, that kind of return. Now, in a spiritual sense, it is the same way. It is the same way with the Bible. You know why you do not get anything out of the Bible? Because you do not put anything in the Bible. For some of you who have been saved for a long time, some of you really got it down. Some of you have not even begun yet. It is an investment. No single investment will be more important to you than your total investment in the Word of God. A hundred percent of what I do for you and this church is to help you with that investment.

Last Thursday night, or a couple of Thursday nights ago, it was not last Thursday night, I walked you through the curriculum of how to put the Bible together for you. Some of you will take that and do something with it. Some of you will not do a thing with it. You know why? Because, and then you will complain about the fact that, "Man, I have been saved 20, 30 years, and I do not know the Bible." Whose fault is that? If I was like you, I would be still whining around looking at all those pictures and saying, "Man, I want to take pictures like that." You know how I got to take pictures like that? I did what it took to learn the learning curve and made the investment, voila. You know how you learn the Bible? There is a learning curve. You make the investment the right way, the right investments, get it done, and you learn it. It is just that simple. You only get out of something what you are willing to put into it.

Like church. There are people who come to every church, go to all churches, they go to church, but they are never part of the church. They never do anything. Then they say, "Well, I am bored, I am depressed." I had somebody say one time, "Well, you know what, I am not going back to church, Bob." I said, "Why is that?" He said, "Well, I just do not get anything out of church." I said, "Do you know why?" "Well, why?" "Because you never put anything into church. You have not done anything. There are 300 people here who do something and get something out of it, and you do not. They are wrong, and you are right." It comes down to whatever investment you are willing to put in. No prayer group, no volleyball, no social activities. No Super Bowl party, no camp, no nothing. I am not saying you have got to be in all of that, but what I am saying is, there is enough going on here. Any time three people get out, a party breaks out. The church is to be the center of your life. Everything you should do should wrap around that. But you want to get out of it what you put into it.

Just say, "Where are your friends?" "Well, I do not have any friends." Proverbs 18:24 says, "He that hath friends must show himself friendly." You want some friends? I will show you how to get them. "Hi, I am Bob Alexander. Will you be my friend?" Your marriage, I have got to be honest with you. How did some of you ever get married? Honestly, if you treated each other before marriage the way you do now, how would you ever get married? I will tell you what happened. It always happens. When you are courting and you want to make a good impression, you cross all your T's and dot all your I's because you want to get that person. You do all the kind of things that you are supposed to do. You open the door for them. You are very courteous to

them. You take a lot of stuff. If you say, "Honey, where would you like to go tonight?" She says, "Oh, I do not care." "Well, I would like to go here." That is the last place you want to go. You know what you do? You go. Because you are trying to make an investment in the thing.

My wife and I were driving down the road just the other day, and we pulled up to a light, and there was a car in front of us, and it looked like a large guy sitting there driving, and then all of a sudden they moved apart, and there was a guy and a girl. She looks over at me and she says, "We used to do that." I looked over at her and said, "I have not moved." That is your point. You know what happened? You were willing to make the investment before you got married, but after you got married, you just quit making an investment. Conquered. Or won. A good marriage is just continually refining your investment. That is all it is.

That is also true of your relationship with God. 99% of God's people give God what is left over their life, the scraps. Then they wonder why it does not work for them. Some of God's people know more about their habits and their patterns of their dogs than they do about God. If you have a dog and you are close to that dog, that dog, he does not communicate. Dogs have certain barks that mean certain things. When somebody comes to the house that they do not know who it is, that is one bark. Somebody comes to the house that they really like and know who it is, that is another bark. If you are lucky, you have a dog who will bark when he has got to go out. I can tell upstairs in the morning when I get up and I sit down for breakfast and my dog starts to bark, I know that I can tell whether it is just them goofing around or there is some serious business they need to be taken care of. My dog never barks throughout the night, never does. If my dog starts barking at night, I know there is a problem. You see, we get to the place where we invest our life in things like that so much that we can discern the very barks of our dogs, but we cannot discern the voice of God when He tries to tell us something. Investment. You get out what you put into it.

Proverbs 14:24 says, "The crown of the wise is their riches, but the foolish is the fool is folly."

VI. Dispersing Knowledge and Avoiding Worthless Investments

Let me tell you something else about making good investments. In the world of investments, to get a good return, you have got to do what they call diversify. You do not put all your assets on one stock. Spiritually speaking, it is the same thing. When you learn the Bible, you do not just leave it there. You have got to put it out. You have got to do something with it. You have got to apply it. Then you have got to give it out to others. Then you get involved in ministry where you can start to use what you know; that is diversity. You just do not do one thing. You exercise yourself. You become diverse in many things, and you become good at a lot of things. The kind of Christian that God wants you to be is the kind of Christian that you can get to the place in your life when God has a scenario here. I call it the eunuch scenario. He had an old Ethiopian eunuch out there on the backside of the desert that needed the truth. God knew He had a man, Philip, that He could pick up and drop in that scenario and never worry twice about Philip not knowing exactly what to say and what to do. That is what He wants with you.

You go to work tomorrow, you think you are going to a job. He has all kinds of scenarios He would love to put you in. There are all kinds of people there that are struggling. They are probably watching your life and know you are a Christian. You say, "Why God, why does not God match the two of us up?" Because He does not want to confuse the guy any more than he already is. Because you do not know what you are talking about. You need to get some investments that will pay long-range dividends long after you are gone.

You all go through our little discipleship programs here. I have never told anybody this. I wrote those 35, 40 years ago. To date, to my knowledge, anyhow, those discipleship lessons are in 16 different languages in 20 different countries. Hundreds of churches across this country use them. They do not even know who wrote them. There is no name on it. Nobody takes the credit for it. Let God be the glory. I do not have a right to take credit for that. You know why? It was the investment that He made in me that I just gave back to Him. That was my investment. But I will tell you, that is a long-range investment that when I cannot do the work anymore, the work is going to keep going on with it. 24/7, while I sleep, in Africa, Korea, Japan, China, Romania, Hungary, Ukraine, Russia, Philippines, Mexico, Latin America, South America, Australia, all the time somebody is using them. Those lessons will go on long after I preach my last sermon. But you see, that was an investment. I said, "Lord, I am going to write these lessons for my people." Some of you older folks were in the first class way back in the basement over there when I first taught those lessons. Do not need to comment that I had hair then. I have hair now. I do not know what you are talking about. But you were there. God said, "You know what? I am going to take that investment that you made in those people, and I am going to bring a return for Myself." That investment that I made 40 years ago, the Bible says in Isaiah 55:11 that the Word of God will not return void, and it will not. That keeps bringing a return, is paid off as a return for the Lord over and over and over again.

I have had guys that have taken those lessons, recopied them, put their name on them like they put them out. Somebody said one time, "Isn't this your lesson?" I said, "Yeah, it is." He said, "Well, so-and-so put his name on it." I said, "Okay." "Aren't you upset?" "Why? You think God does not know who did it? What am I worried about who gets the credit down here for it? If you can put your name on it and God can get the honor and glory out of it, go get it." Now, one of my books is copyrighted. I have had people take that book, "How to Study the Bible." "Can I copy it off and pass it out?" "Absolutely." For me, copyright means copyright whatever you want and do it. It is not about who gets the honor and glory for it.

I was at a conference years ago with a bunch of pastors, and it was a discipleship conference, and I was going to preach there. We had a luncheon, and I am sitting there with all these pastors, and the head pastor with my buddy sitting over here, and a pastor's wife sitting over here. We are having a pleasant conversation. She is a very nice lady, about mid-age, nice-looking lady, dressed very well, very typical pastor's wife. She is a bum. Anyway, we are talking back and forth, and she says, "Oh, it is so nice to meet you." I said, "Well, it is nice to meet you." She said, "Are you here for the conference?" I said, "Yeah, I am speaking here one of the nights." She said, "Oh, that is wonderful." She said, "I think that discipleship is so absolutely crucial, and they are all using my discipleship material. I am going to preach on the whole," and she looks at me and she says,

"Do you use it?" I said, "Isn't it wonderful? Do you use it?" I said, "Yeah, it is pretty good. It is okay. It is okay." She looked at me and she says, "You must have wished that you wrote it." I did not have the heart to tell her, "I did write it, lady." Who cares? Who cares?

People in ministry last week, we had a great time. We were over there in 1 Chronicles chapter 29, David's great charge to Solomon. I showed him three different patterns to that great charge. Incredible. I showed him probably one of the greatest verses on ministry and your investment and getting the credit or who gets the credit for what you do. David told Solomon in 1 Chronicles 29:14, he said this: "But who am I, and what is my people, that we should be able to offer so willingly after this sort?" talking about giving himself to God. Here is what he said: "Who am I? And I should be able to offer so willingly after this sort, like it is a big deal or something." Then he says this: "For all things come of thee, and of thine own have we given thee." You are not giving anything to God that He had not already given to you. It is not yours. You find something in the Bible. "Oh, look what I..." If God's Holy Spirit would open up that book and showed it to you, you would be blind as a bat, backing in backwards. Somebody says, "Well, look at my book. I wrote this great thing." You did not do a thing. All you did was take what God gave you, do something with it that you should have given back to Him. All we do when we give back to God, our investment is simply based on what He first gave to us through His investment. Now, how do you take credit for something like that? You do not. It all belongs to Him. It all came from Him, and it all goes back to Him. That is why we are in Revelation. The crowns you get, it looks like the indicator is that someday after it is all over, we go into that throne room, and all the crowns that God gave us for our labor down here, we just throw them down at His feet. Clearly just demonstrating that you would not have those crowns if it was not for Him. It all came from Him, so it all goes back to Him.

VII. True Sacrifice Versus Abomination

Now look at the next verse, Proverbs 15:7.

Proverbs 15:7

The lips of the wise disperse knowledge: but the heart of the foolish doeth not so.

In the world of making investments, you have another thing that you want to understand. It is called insider trading. It is illegal. This is what got Martha Stewart in trouble. Insider trading is somebody tells you from the inside what stock is going to do so you know how to bid on it, and you get a leg up on everybody else because you have inside information, and it is against the law. But as a Christian, as a Christian leader, as a teacher of the Bible, dealing with people, we do that all the time. We give people inside information on the best investments that they are supposed to make with their lives. That is what we do. You see, you think you are in a church service today. Well, you are wrong. You are in a seminar on how to make a billion dollars just working with what you have by dispersing knowledge, by putting it out, by doing something with it. I will advise you based on the spiritual stock indicator, the Word of God, which ones will get you the most return for the Lord on your investment. I will give you some insider trading. You need to be

in a church that will give you the best opportunity to make the best return on the investment that God has given you, getting firsthand information.

I have known people who will stay in a dead church forever. When they know it is dead, nothing is going on. They are not learning anything, and they are going nowhere, and they know they need to get out. They will every day of their life waste and miss the opportunity of the investment of a sure-fire opportunity. They remind me of people who hold and keep buying stock for TWA. Trans World Airlines went out of business 25, 30 years ago. But they remind me of people that want to keep stock and keep buying worthless stock because they have some sentimental attachment to a worthless investment. Now, you take that investment you got and you tell somebody else about it. You take that investment you got and you get some place where they can give you the best information on the inside you can get to make the right investments that God wants you to make. Do not be like the guy in Luke chapter 19 after all the investment that God gave him, he only comes back with the same investment.

Look at Proverbs 15:8. This is a good one.

Proverbs 15:8

The sacrifice of the wicked is an abomination to the LORD: but the prayer of the upright is his delight.

Here is the heart of it all, and here is the bottom line. It goes without saying that a real investment for a child of God and what he does will be in the sacrifices that he makes in his life for God. Most people, Christians, do not even understand what a real sacrifice is. It is defined for you in 1 Samuel chapter 15 and 2 Samuel chapter 24. Those are the definitive passages on what a real biblical sacrifice is. The verse says sacrifices that are an abomination to God. That is simply somebody making the wrong investments with the wrong things. Human nature, saved man, unsaved man, he just has a passion for taking the true things of God and turning them into the things of the world. The greatest religious hypocrisy that you will ever find is never more manifest than when the wicked begin to sacrifice to God in the wrong way. They will take the concepts of a sacrifice and turn it into a sacrament, and it becomes an abomination before God.

They will abstain from eating meat on Friday like some great sacrifice when in truth the whole concept of not eating meat on Friday does not go back to the church, it goes back to the pagans with Freya, the god of fertility. Friday is named after her, the fish being the fish god, fertile with a lot of eggs, and it is an abomination to God. So God fixes it so He just has sharks eat Catholics on Friday. Works out pretty good. The abomination of thinking a prayer band, rock band, or a worship service is really something biblical of God, but it is just through the world. God's people today could not define true biblical worship if their life depended on it. It is thinking that baby dedication day really means something to God, like taking your baby in, bringing it up the front, having everybody pray over it, going to make sure your child turns out right. I will tell you what, instead of having baby dedication, we ought to have parent dedication. That is what we ought to have. But you cannot get anybody to come when you do that because all their parents are going to have to hit the altar and get right with God. The little babies, it is nice, it is fuzzy, they are cute, they cry, everybody says, "Oh, isn't that cute."

Baby dedications are only outdone by little babies walking down in a wedding. I am just going to tell you, dumbest thing on the planet, and I know it is cute. I am standing up there before the bride comes down to send these little kids down. You know about a rehearsal, the kids are not going to do it. They are throwing flowers, doing all this thing, and you have, literally, you have a coach, you have a mom or somebody here sitting down there, and they actually, I have seen them get on their knees in the middle of the thing and try to coax them down. I am standing up here, I think they are going to say, "Man, if you turn around this way on your knees, you will probably get right with God." They are coaxing them down, kids do not want to come. Then the day of the wedding, it is a disaster. Kids start to cry, some down-season aunt, somebody they have not seen runs over there, and everybody thinks it is cute. Okay, it is cute. Let us get on with the wedding. Walking Dead is on at 8 o'clock, and I need to get home. Babies are cute, so you bring a lot of people down. You have got to understand, I know where baby dedication started. It started in Baptist churches because they cared nothing about the babies. They wanted to have a trick play up the middle to get new parents to come because what parent would not want their kid to go to heaven and be right with God? So you trick them into thinking that if you come to baby dedication and we dedicate your baby to God, you have got an edge on God now. You are stupid. You can dedicate that baby a hundred thousand times. If mom and dad are not going to be dedicated, you are not going anywhere. That is why they never had me preach baby dedication, so you can probably understand now why.

He says the sacrifice of the wicked are abomination. I often think what God thinks. When we take the birth of Christ and all these churches make December 25th the day He was born. I often think how God must think when we have Easter and everybody puts the lilies around the church and everybody has all the little things that they do. They get up there and they are saying, "Out from the grave He arose," and they have an Easter pageant over here. I wonder how God looks at that when He knows that December 25th was never the birthday of Jesus Christ. It is the birthday of Baal. Easter is Ashtar, the god of fertility. It is pagan. It has never been part of Christianity. But they just, and God just looks at that, and sometimes I think, what does He even think about us? Now I understand. You come here on Christmas, there will not be a Christmas message. I am sorry. You come here on Easter, it is a letter from hell, as close as I can get to Easter. But you know what? I understand it is part of our society. I do. You can find some people who buy it all the way into it. They will have the nativity scenes, they will have Christmas trees in the church, they will have everything and all. They will have the nativity scenes out front. They will go rent some goat someplace from somebody and put out in the front and have people standing out there in the cold, and people will drive by and they think they are really making a statement for God. No, you just look stupid. But I get it. You have people who go far over here, and then you have the other people, "Whoop, I do not celebrate Christmas, I do not have a Christmas tree." I get it, I get it, I get it. I take the biblical approach. I know exactly from the Bible how you approach Christmas and Easter. Acts 21, 1 Corinthians 8. It is so clear in the Bible why you have to be and deal with these things. But people are who they are.

I mean, ask yourself why in Acts 16:3, the New Testament is done. The New Testament is finished. Put away, Colossians chapter 2 says. But now you have Timothy, and Paul goes with the Jews in the New Testament, the apostle to the church, and he has Timothy circumcised under

the Old Testament law when we are in the New Testament. So here that went up. Then you go over to Galatians 2 where he is right back down in Jerusalem with the Jews, and he has Titus this time, who is a Gentile, and he will not let him get circumcised. You figure out why those two and come and talk to me, you will have some credibility when it comes to the Bible. Other than that, burn your Baal pole. The Bible gives you models how to deal with these things.

How about the sacrifice of building buildings instead of building people? Pastors will spend millions and millions and millions of dollars building gigantic buildings and never invest one thing into the people that they have. In many Baptist churches in this city, if you want to go to a special class like we have people ministry or like when we had the institute, not only do you give your tithe to that church, but if you want to get something special at a special class or special teaching, you have got to pay for it. Well, you know why you have got to pay for it? So they can pay for the Taj Mahal that they built. I wonder how God looks at that. I wonder how God must feel when man offers up his sacrifice for his own salvation when God's Son already made it. I wonder how good God looks at Cain's fruit stand religion.

Proverbs 15:8

The sacrifice of the wicked is an abomination to the LORD.

Hebrews 10:11-12 And every priest standeth daily ministering and offering oftentimes the same sacrifices, which can never take away sins: But this man, after he had offered one sacrifice for sins for ever, sat down on the right hand of God;

I will say it again, the definitive passage on biblical sacrifice is 1 Samuel 15 and 2 Samuel 24.

VIII. Following After Righteousness

Now look at Proverbs 15:9.

Proverbs 15:9

The way of the wicked is an abomination unto the LORD: but he loveth him that followeth after righteousness.

In the context here, the way of the wicked will be in a reference to the sacrifices in the last verse. So it is real simple. For you and for me, always follow the light that God gives you. Always follow after righteousness. Bob Jones Sr. said, "It is never right to do wrong to get the chance to do right." He said, "Do good till the stars fall out." Always follow the light that God gives you when it is biblical, and it will lead you to the right place. Never get a preconceived idea about God, Christ, and the Bible that you are not able to throw it out when you see in the Word of God that it is not the way it is.

I think of Philip and the Ethiopian eunuch again. Acts chapter 8. That eunuch was coming to Jerusalem. He had heard in his land that the temple of God under Solomon was in Jerusalem, and if you wanted to have a relationship with God, that is where you went. Now here is the key: that is going to get you nowhere. In Acts chapter 8, going to Jerusalem to worship is going to land you straight in the lake of fire. But this guy is following all the light that he had. When you

follow the light that you have and you are honest about it, God is obligated to get you the truth about where He wants you to do and what He wants you to go. So He reaches out here and He pulls Philip. I have always thought that was interesting. Philip was an evangelist, and he is over in Samaria in the early part of Acts chapter 8. The great revival is going on in Samaria. Thousands of people are coming to Christ, and he is the preacher. Yet God thought nothing of lifting him out of that revival and sending him right over there to that Ethiopian eunuch on the backside of the desert.

You know, I have known preachers of evangelists that will not go to a church that cannot guarantee them 5,000 people because their ministry is so valuable that they cannot spend it on less than 5,000 people. I would not have you come over and clean up the dog doo-doo in the back of my yard. If you did, I would not give you a shovel. Use some of your sermons to pick it up with. They go hand in hand. Get my point. You know what? Philip did not say, "Lord, okay. Over in Gaza? One guy? Okay, I got it, Lord, but you do not understand. I have a priest tonight. Lord, maybe you have not checked your statistics, but we have had thousands of people saved, and it is because of me. Now I do not mean to tell you your business, but either you want a revival here or you do not. Honestly, I do not understand why you would pull me out of here for one guy over here where you can save a thousand. I am the main guy here. They are coming to hear me." You did not get any of that. God says, "Philip, over here." Philip said, "Yes, sir." And Philip went.

When he went to that Ethiopian eunuch, he is sitting on that old chariot trying to figure it all out. He was on his way to Jerusalem. Now he got a little glitch in his getup here. He is sitting down there. He found Isaiah chapter 53, and he is reading about some guy who shed his blood for him, and he cannot figure it out. He is following the light that God gave him. When you follow righteousness, the light that God gives you, He is obligated to get you to the truth. You know why? That is why almost every one of you is here today. You wanted the truth. You wanted it. You had a desperate desire in your heart to get it. At that point, God put somebody in your life to get you where you could get the truth.

When he goes to that Ethiopian eunuch, he says, "Whom am I reading about here?" The Bible says that he began at the same scripture and preached unto him Jesus. You know what he said? He said, "Look, pal, going to Jerusalem is a waste of time. That does not work anymore. Wrong dispensation. There is one now come that the prophet is talking about that died on the cross for you, and you have got to put your faith and trust in Him." You know what that Ethiopian eunuch did? He believed on Jesus. He did not say, "Oh, I do not know. I had my heart set on going to Jerusalem. I do not know. That Bible college I went to back there, they said Jerusalem was the place to go. I do not know. My translation does not read it that way. I do not know. I better pray about this." He followed the light that he had, and he did not care. Listen, here it is: he did not care if it was Jerusalem. He did not care if it was Jesus. He just wanted the truth. "I do not care. If you have got to be baptized to go to heaven, I am in. If you have got to do this to go to heaven, I am in. I do not care what it is. I do not have any preconceived ideas about anything I want to believe about the Bible. I just want the truth. You show me the truth, you give me the truth, I will dump everything else for the truth." That is what that old guy did. He did not care about

Jerusalem anymore. He did not care about the temple. He wanted the truth. When people want the truth, you do not get an argument about the truth.

Apollos, Acts chapter 19. Here is a case in point. He was baptized under John's baptism to the nation of Israel, in John the Baptist. So his salvation technically was through the baptism of the repentance of Israel. But that is over now. That salvation is not going to get you anywhere but in hell. So he comes into a New Testament church run by a husband and wife pastor team of Aquila and Priscilla. Nice congregation of people. They are all talking about the Lord and everything. He said, "My name is Apollos, and I would like to give a testimony of my salvation." They said, "Brother, we would love to have you." He stands up. It does not say what he said, but I will tell you what he said. He said, "You know what? I was a sinner just like all of you." "Amen. Praise the Lord, brother." "Yeah, I was. And I tell you, I needed something to change in my life." "Amen, brother. Go ahead, Apollos. Let us have it. Talk to us, boy." He is up there and he is saying, "I will tell you what, one day in my life I went down there by the river." "Oh, down by the river. Down by the river." "So yeah, that is a good one. That is how we gather at the river. That would be a great song someday." So he is down there, and he is saying, "And John the Baptist was preaching, and I went down there." He said, "If I would get the baptism of repentance, I could be saved." And I was baptized. And the old church went, "Oh." Aquila and Priscilla said, "Here, Apollos. That does not work anymore. That was the wrong dispensation. Israel rejected. We are in the church age now. Paul's now. Now if you want to go to heaven, you cannot get baptized by going to heaven. Get to heaven by being baptized. You have got to trust the Lord Jesus Christ as your own personal Savior." The Bible says they showed the way of God unto him more perfectly. More perfectly. What did he do? "Oh, no, man. You cannot deny my experience. I was baptized. Oh, no, no, no, no. John the Baptist was greater. Nobody greater than him and anybody. Oh, no, I am sticking with that." He did not care. He did exactly what Aquila and Priscilla did. He shows up in the next chapter, the rest of this chapter, like everybody else, saved, born again, and on his way to heaven. You know why? He did not care what it was. John's baptism or the cross of Calvary. He too just wanted the truth. You want the truth? That is how you get it. You follow the light that God gives you.

In Acts 16, the Philippian jailer, he is a Roman. He is a Roman. That is another good point about Paul. Paul was the greatest Christian ever lived. He was a Roman by citizenship, the most pagan, godless people on the planet. He used the fact that he was a Roman. He never discounted him being a Roman. How do you justify the fact that he was a Christian, yet he was still proud and boasted about being a Roman? Figure that one out, take about 15 years, come and talk to me about that one too. This Philippian jailer, he is a Roman. Paul is in jail. The gate, the door comes open, and he thinks he is going to be in trouble. He is going to kill himself. Paul said, "Do thyself no harm." He went over to here and he says, "Let me show you something." And he won him to Christ. Here is a Roman who believed in 500 gods of the Roman Empire. He believed in everything that was adverse to Christianity. But that night when he saw the truth of God, he fell on his knees. He trusted Jesus Christ as his own personal Savior, and he never looked back to the world. He wanted the truth. You only get the truth one way: by following the light that God gives you. Because God loveth him that followeth after righteousness.

If you cannot make that some nebulous, "Oh, my right, that righteousness is Jesus Christ." And Jesus Christ is only expounded through the New Testament local church. I want to be a New Testament local church that is biblically based, Bible-based, and lays it out biblically. Study Christ. Document who He was. Document what He did. Document what He said. Get His life into a New Testament context. Study the three natures of the Lord Jesus Christ. You want to have a relationship with Him? You want to go after, follow after righteousness? Study Him as the Son of God. Study Him as the Son of Man. Study Him as the Word of God. You want to really understand what He is all about? What is the difference between the first coming of Christ and the second coming of Christ? You really want to get an understanding of it? Following after righteousness? He has got eight bodies throughout the Bible. The Lord Jesus Christ does. Eight distinct bodies. Find out what they are. You want to know Him? You want to follow Him? Make sure you are following the right body at the right time. The man or woman who follows righteousness consistently will attain it.

The greatest example of that is Martin Luther. Martin Luther was a Roman Catholic priest back in the 1500s. He had a desire to know God, and he did everything that the Catholic Church told him to do. He whipped himself. He beat himself. He did penance. He did the rosary. He did everything that they said. He used to crawl up the cathedral steps, over 300 steps, on his knees till they were bloody, trying to make amends for his sins to a holy God. Everything the church told him to do, it did not take it away. But he had a desire in his heart. He knew there was something more to it. One day he opened up a Bible. What a dirty trick to play on the church. In Romans 1:17, God opened up that great spotlight out of heaven and gave him the light that he needed when He said, "Martin, the just, the just, the just shall live by faith." No more crawling on your knees. No more goofy stuff you think. No more the righteous, Lord Jesus Christ and the light that God gives you.

Romans 10:4 For Christ is the end of the law for righteousness to every one that believeth.

Romans 10:9-10 That if thou shalt confess with thy mouth the Lord Jesus, and shalt believe in thine heart that God hath raised him from the dead, thou shalt be saved. For with the heart man believeth unto righteousness; and with the mouth confession is made unto salvation.

IX. The Cost and Return of God's Investment

Christian life is real simple, folks. God made an investment in you. Some of you do not even know what it cost in that investment. Some of you have never taken the time to read Job chapter 30, Isaiah chapter 51. You have never taken the time to read Isaiah 53. You have never taken the time to see the investment, what it cost God. We actually think after what it cost God that we are going to live our Christian life and then we complain because it does cost us something. You are out of your mind. You are insane. If stupidity was a crime, you would be doing 25 years to life. To actually think after the investment that God made in you and me and what it cost Him that we now can take salvation and just be free and it not cost us nothing. We live our lives without making no investment at all. God, I hate the 20th and the 21st century God's people.

Taking that investment, every one of you, taking that investment, recognizing the price that was paid, and then understand that the real success for you as the child of God is simply nothing more than the rest of your life taking that initial investment and reinvesting it and bringing revenue and return. You are going to either bring a revenue for God or you are going to bring a revenue for the wicked. My job here is to help you do that. My job here, I came to terms a long time ago that people that want help, I will help. The people that will not want help, hey, I love you, but you do what you want to do. You dink around with the Bible all you want. It is fine. I have no problem with it, but I am interested in men and women who want to take and make an investment of their life back to God. That is all this church is about. It is all I am about. I want to help you make the very best investments in your life that you never have to worry about when you get old and you cannot serve God anymore, and you do not have some investments out there that are working for you when you cannot work for yourself anymore for the Lord. It starts with your children and then everything else that you put out there.