

Proverbs 16:9-11

Sunday 5/29/2016

Last week, we looked at Proverbs, and we have been coming through it now for quite a while. Last week, we looked at one of the most practical verses in all of the Bible. All the verses in the Bible are incredible, and they all have their place and their meaning. They are all in levels of priority in our lives. But there are certain verses that just say something that is so profound and so true in one little sentence that it is unbelievable.

Certainly last week, Proverbs 16:8 is such a verse where it says:

Proverbs 16:8

Better is little with righteousness than great revenues without right.

It is certainly what I call a standalone verse that literally, as we talked about last week, literally dismantles 99% of Christianity today.

I. The False Concept of Grandeur

I want to show you today and give you an idea where this idea came from, this false concept that the bigger something is and the more expensive it costs, the more God must be in it when it comes to Christianity. Studying history has taught me many good lessons. An observation of history, and just a quick glance of ancient history, will reveal that all false religions, all religions that do not have the truth, that are trying to stay alive by other means than preaching the Word of God, you are going to find that all false religions of the past held the same idea.

When Solomon said that there is nothing new under the sun, he knew exactly what he was talking about. In history, you are going to find that the more grandiose you make something, the better it looked like it must be the real thing. An example of that would be the Roman Empire. We are called Christians, and in Acts 11, the Bible says they were first called Christians at Antioch. Most people do not know where the word came from. The word came from our enemies, Rome. The word Christ means, or Christian means, "little Christ."

The Roman Empire had such a disdain for Christianity. The reason why they did is because the Roman Empire had over 600 gods. You have the Acropolis where they had all of the gods on statues, and on every little hill, there was a bathtub half buried with a god in it. It was just incredible. They looked at Christianity and their grandiose concept of religion and belief, one Christianity that had one little God, and they thought that they were right and they were better because they were bigger.

You will find that in history, you have what has been commonly called the seven wonders of the ancient world, seven spectacular feats of man's ability to create something to literally glorify himself and what he believed in. Back around the second century BC, a guy by the name of Antipater of Sidon, a guy by the name of Philo, and a few other Greek geeks, sat down and looked after all of these great wonders, and they came up with a list of seven wonders of the ancient world.

1. The Great Pyramid of Giza.
2. The Hanging Gardens of Babylon.
3. The Statue of Zeus at Olympia.
4. The Temple of Artemis at Ephesus. (When you get over to Acts 19:35, it talks about the great goddess Diana. She is connected with that.)
5. The Great Mausoleum at Halicarnassus.
6. The Colossus of Rhodes to the sun god, Helios.
7. The Lighthouse of Alexandria.

All of these were great structures of incredible magnitude that made the list of the seven wonders of the ancient world. Every one of them was built by man to illustrate that his belief system, his false religion that he had, was better and best because of this colossal statue or monument that they made. You now see that, as I said, nothing new under the sun. Some things never change.

II. Modern Examples of "Bigger is Better"

Most of you do not know who Elmer Townes is. I am not sure he is even still alive. Elmer Townes was back in my day in the 60s and the 70s. He was connected somehow with the Baptist Bible College down in Springfield, maybe at one time anyhow. Back in that heyday, everybody was building humongous churches. He came out with a book that was called *The Ten Top Sunday Schools in America*. Elmer would travel around and visit all these churches. He did a great job. He would visit all these churches and he would take pictures. Then he would decide which was the greatest congregation in America, the top ten.

He put out a book, and everybody got in the church that morning, and a pastor standing there with Elmer up in the Baptistry. Somebody took a fisheye picture that just showed hundreds and hundreds of people. Every pastor on this planet was fighting to get into that book. Everybody wanted to have the top ten to be the biggest and the best. A little bit later on, a couple years later, he came out with the second ten best churches in America. Shortly after that, or a while after that, everything went to bottoms in Christianity. These churches that once were great, who wanted to get all kinds of people in but never wanted to do anything with the Bible, they now were empty. Elmer did not have enough material for a third book, so his third book was *The Ten Most Beautiful Sanctuaries in America* because the people were gone.

It is a false concept that when you build something huge and big that God must be within it. In this life, you have the seven wonders that are man-made to make religion, man's religious experience great. But also you have with God in His work down through history, found in the Bible, the seven wonders of the Bible. You see, the world has their seven wonders, and God has His seven wonders. Today, most Christians and very frankly most pastors are very educated. They could speak to the seven wonders of the ancient world. Very few of them could open up a Bible, and they are oblivious to the seven wonders of God in His Bible down through history.

The false religions of this world will always build something spectacular to cover up the fact that inside are absolutely empty: no Bible, no truth. In medieval times, you go back and find that in Europe today you have some of the most incredibly beautiful Roman Catholic churches, the

Cathedral of Notre Dame, the great Cathedral of Cologne or Ulm, Germany. And they are absolutely spectacular. You see that back then when the towns were very small, they wanted the church to stand out. Wherever you were in the city, you could see the steeple and the spires of those great churches. Even today, those churches stand as some of the most incredible architecture that you have ever seen in your life. They wanted it to be that wherever you were in the city, or before you even got into the city, their church was the most prominent structure that towered over every other thing in the city.

You know, we have here at Old Paths Baptist Church what I would consider an incredible counseling ministry. We simply call it the people ministry. It is a bunch of men and women who for three or four years now have met on a monthly basis, and we specialize in the patterns of human nature. We started at the beginning of the Bible and have worked our way. I think we are in 2 Chronicles now or Ezra, Esther, somewhere in there. But we have come through, and in that time period, we have looked at the cause and the effect of every problem that a man has through examining through the types of concepts in the Bible, the stories in the Bible, every pattern of human nature of why man does what he does and gets into the situations that he does.

We charge nothing for our help. When you come in and sit down with somebody and they help you, there is no bill that you get. We do not take credit cards here. We do not charge anybody for anything that we give them out of the Word of God. I do that because honestly, folks, if I were to charge you for what we have, you could not afford it anyhow. I have had people think that when they find out that our counseling is free, they think that it must not be any good because there is no cost involved. The idea of \$100 an hour makes it better. These people have no idea that the price tag that was already paid on Calvary's Cross for you and for me to have the truth.

I want to tell you something. I do not know how many pastors, I do not know how many churches, and I know that many of them do. Many of them charge for giving you help when you come in. Most of them have a paid psychologist or psychiatrist on staff. Most of them have a Christian therapist. When you have problems, a pastor does not see you. A staff guy, a preacher does not see you. They will farm you out over to this guy, and you will go in there and tell him, and he will charge you \$60, \$70, \$80 an hour. How do you charge somebody for something God gave you freely? I have learned over the years, brother, that not all the crooks are in prison.

III. Man's Way vs. God's Way

Today, we want to look at Proverbs 16, and we are going to kind of blend last week from this week, hence the introduction there to bring you back up to remembrance. We are going to look at Proverbs 16:9-11. Let me read it for you.

Proverbs 16:9

A man's heart deviseth his way: but the LORD directeth his steps.

Proverbs 16:10

A divine sentence is in the lips of the king: his mouth transgresseth not in judgment.

Proverbs 16:11

A just weight and balance are the LORD'S: all the weights of the bag are his work.

Let us look at verse 9. We are going to look at these one at a time here.

Proverbs 16:9

A man's heart deviseth his way: but the LORD directeth his steps.

I have told you week after week, and I will continue to tell you, how absolutely simple the Bible is when it comes to the Christian life and our walk with God. We like to make it a lot more complicated than it really is. The truth of the matter is there are simply two directions in life. You either go man's way through the devices of his heart, or you are going to go God's way through the direction of Him inputting into your life. You can see in an instant how this verse goes right along with what we have been talking about the last couple weeks: the absolute incredible ability to discern what is of God and what is not of God in your life. You are going to see this even clearer today as we come on down through these verses.

The verse says that man's heart devises his way. That is a good word, the word "devises." I mean, it is not a good word, it is a bad word, but it is a good word to look at here. Proverbs 6:18 says that man's heart devises only wicked imaginations. Jeremiah 17:9 talks about man's heart being desperately wicked and deceitful above all things. It is never a good connotation in the Bible when it comes to man in most cases. In most cases, it is always a reference to us putting together a plan to do what we want to do versus what God wants us to do.

The verse is built around two great principles of life. First, Proverbs 19:21 where it says that there are many devices in a man's heart, but the counsel of the LORD, that shall stand. We all have things in our hearts and many devices. Those devices are in man's heart for one reason, and that is to get him around the clear teaching of the Word of God. He sees what the Bible says, she sees what the Bible says, they do not want to do what the Bible says, so they devise something in their own heart. Many times it is religious, many times it is good, many times it is not, but it circumvents the very principles of the Word of God.

Psalm 37:23 says the steps of a good man are ordered by the LORD. You either devise your own plan in life or you will follow the LORD's. Now look at the second part of that verse: "but the LORD directeth his steps." It is no mystery to probably any of you that when you got saved, God has a direction that He wants you to go in life, and that direction will get revealed through the steps that you take. That is really a good word, the word "steps": building a relationship with God one step at a time.

You hear me tell you all the time when you young Christians come in here, and many of you are single and many of you desire to have a partner in life, and what a better place to find a guy or a gal in a place that everybody loves the Lord. I always tell people that when you first get saved or you first get into the Bible, you need to really be careful about relationships that you build. Because I want to tell you the truth, it is really almost impossible to build two relationships at the same time. When you are a young man or a young lady and you find a gal and you want to learn

the Bible, God is always going to get the short end of the stick because you can see him, you can see her, you can talk to them, you can visually look at them. God is a spirit, and you have to worship Him in spirit and truth. In your young Christian life, you are not ready yet to be able to take one or the other and do both at the same time.

It is a step process, one step at a time, like steps up a ladder, like steps up a staircase that will get you to a different level, a higher level. The Christian life may be like running a race in 1 Timothy 2:5, but when you start out, you have to do it one step at a time. We have discipleship here. Discipleship is basically your first steps after you get saved. There are 10 lessons. It is really the first 10 steps of your Christian life once you make the decision to get saved. You take those steps as the Holy Spirit of God shows you the right direction He wants you to go.

I do not know if you understand it or not, but John 16, we talk about the Holy Spirit of God, a lot of talk about the Holy Spirit of God today. John 16 is the definitive chapter in your Bible on the Holy Spirit of God. It lays out and explains exactly the seven functions of the Holy Spirit of God in your life and my life. In John 16:8, you will find the first three things the Holy Spirit of God does.

8. The first thing it says is that the Holy Spirit of God reproves of their sin. That means that the first thing the Holy Spirit of God does is tell you and me we are sinners.
9. The second thing in John 16:8, it reproves the world of righteousness. What does that mean? Well, the first thing it does is shows you are a sinner. The second thing it does is show you that God is a holy God and a righteous God.
10. The third thing that it does in John 16:8, reproves the world of judgment. So it shows you that you are a sinner. It shows you that God is righteousness and holy. And then it shows you the third thing that someday God is going to judge you.

Now those first three things the Holy Spirit of God does are all about salvation. And that will get you saved. Then the rest of the next four things take place after you are saved.

11. John 16:13, the fourth thing the Bible says that the Holy Spirit of God will lead and guide you into all truth.
12. John 16:13, He will show you prophecy.
13. John 16:14, that He glorifies Christ. He seeks no glory for Himself.
14. John 16:15, and here it comes ready or not, the Holy Spirit of God will show you what is of God and what is not of God.

It simply all comes down to me and you lining up our heart, our mind, our spirit to His way and not devising my own heart and going with God one step at a time. Again, many devices in a man's heart, but the counsel of the LORD, that shall stand.

You know, we live in a period in history where everything is moving at an incredible speed. Years and years and years ago, around the turn of the century, it took two to three weeks to cross the Atlantic on a large ocean liner. Now you can go from New York to Europe in six or seven hours. It was a time when we rode on horses, and now Henry Ford came up with an automobile. That automobile was not fast enough, so they had to get faster ones and faster ones and faster

ones, and now you have a car that will have a speedometer on it, go to 140 miles an hour. We want faster internet. You can get something that years ago the computers were slow and filled up room. Now you can have one on your phone, but it is not fast enough, and every two or three months they will come out with another faster way because people want everything fast today.

It used to be that you would send a letter to somebody. It took three days to get there, three days to get back. Now you just text somebody. It has got to be faster, or you call them on the phone. I remember when you used to go into a restaurant and sit down and eat around the family time, and you would have waiters that come to you, but society did not want that, so they came up with fast food, McDonald's, Hardee's, Burger King, and that was not fast enough, so they put a drive-through in so the fast food could be faster. You see commercials on TV: "Here is a faster way to lose weight." Walmart is supposed to be the alternative. They are going to a mall someplace, and so you have checkout. You have what? Ninety checkouts. Three of them are open, but you have 90 of them, and because the checkout was not fast enough, now they have a speed checkout, 20 items or less. That was not fast enough, so now you have a self-checkout where you can go check it out yourself. A lot of people that is not fast enough, so they just steal it. I mean, there is always somebody arrested at the Walmart and hauled out.

I go in one day to get water, and all of a sudden this front door blows open, and this guy comes shooting out running down here, and this fat cop is trying to catch him, and there is no way. Run, get down in his car, the guy gets down there, and he tries to block the car, the guy pulls out, and he is on the radio. Soon every police car, I mean all two of them, are chasing him down the road.

You know, there was a time, and do not take this wrong. I am looking around here so I do not want to offend anybody. When I was a kid, we all hated brand new blue jeans. They were stiff, they were thick, and it was not until your mom washed them about six months that they really got comfortable, faded out. But you know what? You go to the store today, you have Levi 504s, 503s, 6770s, 4043s. I mean, they are all different grades. You can choose your faded color. If that is not enough, you will pay \$75 for jeans where the knees are already ripped out, and you have holes up one side and down the other. Save your money. We have those down at Restart all the time.

We want everything right now. Everything at our disposal. All of this produces a society that has no patience to wait for anything. I guess that is fine in society, and I have no problem with you buying the jeans with the holes in them. I cut mine off wearing for sure. I have no problem with that. I have no problem with the faster internet. I have no problem with fast food. I have no problem with any of that stuff. But I will tell you where fast will never work when it comes to building your relationship with the Lord. It is one step at a time. One step at a time.

IV. God's Divine Sentence and Absolute Truth

Now look at verse 10 in Proverbs.

Proverbs 16:10

A divine sentence is in the lips of the king: his mouth transgresseth not in judgment.

This verse is a reference to the Lord Jesus Christ Himself. There are two great things here based on a divine sentence.

15. God's judgments are absolute, and they are based on truth and not error. When He deals with a situation, in this case a person who goes after his own way in his own heart and not after the way of God, he gets judged. This judgment is not personal. God is not standing back looking, just waiting for you to screw up so He can drop the hammer on you. It is not a personal thing. It is not based on anger. It is not based on any human emotion. His judgment is based on righteous truth by a righteous God who has laid down the rules, and He deals with you in love, even though it may be a tough time or something that you go through.
16. A divine sentence. Your Bible is made up of 66 books, 1,189 chapters, 31,171 verses. They all come down to sentences, divine sentences. Every sentence, every word in that Bible is divine of God. It is given to us by God. Everything is just the way God wants us to have it. It is inspired by God. The Bible is God's absolute standard. His judgments are fixed. His word is truth, and there are no mistakes or no mixture of error in any of it. It is a divine sentence in the lips of the King.

Verse 10, in reference to verse 9, when we just looked at, God's way is the only way. His principles, we talk about His patterns, are not open to debate, not open to discussion. When God gave Moses the 10 commandments, they were not called the 10 suggestions. They were given to Moses by God, and God said, "This is what you do." I do not know where it started for sure, but it is certainly the theme of the Bible, this phrase that we see all the time, "It is my way or the highway." That originally had to come from God because that is the way it is with God. It is His way or the highway.

When God tells you this is a truth, this is an absolute truth, He has already looked at it and realizes that not following it, what it is going to lead to. He understands that if you do not do what He tells you to do, where you are going to wind up. Now you see the same thing with a lot of you parents with a lot of your kids. You have lived life, you know going down this road is not a good road. They do not see it, do not want to see it. They want to go down the road that they want to go down to. You try to talk with them, plead with them, fight with them, argue with them. Why do you do that? Do you do that because you just like to argue or you want to take from them a good time? No, you have lived long enough to know that the end result of the road they are going on is going to be a disaster. You are just trying to avert it. They probably will not listen to you unless you have really built a relationship with them you should, but that is what we do.

God's way is His way, His principles, His patterns. They are not open for our debating with Him or discussing them. They are absolute. God knows that if you go another way by your own devices of your own heart where your life is going to wind up. But you know human nature. Boy, in people ministry, we have learned the patterns of human nature. We as human beings, we always think, we always think that we know better than any authority over us. We just do. You see it all through the Bible. How many times do you think God told Adam and Eve about the perfect party that He had for the perfect situation He had for them? He told them about the two trees. I know you got it just one time in the Bible, but they heard that. They knew that. In spite of

that, they went and did what they wanted to do. You know why? Because they just thought they knew more about it than God did.

I find Bible scholars who want to correct the Bible. You are kidding me. You are going to correct the Word of God? You, a human being? So you can tell other people God did not mean that word there. He really meant this word, but I am close enough to God or I am maybe God, so I will correct His Word for you. You are kidding me, right? You know why man does that? He thinks He is above God. He thinks He knows more about it than the authority of the Word of God. How about Abraham? God just said, "Hey look, I am going to give you a seed." But when his wife came in and said, "Take Hagar," he thought he knew more about it than God did. And where did that end for him? In a mess. Look at David. Look at Solomon. Look at Paul. Paul was told three times not to go down to Jerusalem. God sent him three visions and dreams and people that said, "Do not go down to Jerusalem." Paul thought he knew more about it than God did.

It is so true. There are many of God's people in churches today who think they know more about it than when the pastor preaches. There are parents, your kids, your kids growing up, your kids think you know more about life than you do. In school, we always thought we knew more than the teacher did. At work. Right now, tomorrow, Monday, Tuesday, we need to go back to work. Last week, you know what? There are people at work that think they know more about the place than the boss does. You spent \$200 for a GPS that does everything for you. And when this woman with this god-awful voice comes on and keeps telling you which way to go, we paid \$200 for it. There it is. And yet we think we know a shortcut. Even nature is incredible when it comes to authority. When it comes to God and His absolute direction in our life, we think we know better. Just like our GPS, we wind up in Denver when we wanted to go to St. Louis, spiritually speaking.

V. The Bag of Life: Balance and Navigation

Now look at verse 11.

Proverbs 16:11

A just weight and balance are the LORD'S: all the weights of the bag are his work.

This is a great verse. I will tell you, there are some great concepts and words to study out of Proverbs. The concept of a bag. The concept of a good balance. Proverbs 11:1 says, "A false balance is abomination to the LORD: but a just weight is his delight." Deuteronomy 25:17 says, "Thou shalt not have in thy bag divers weights, a great and a small."

Going back to verse 9, here is the illustration and here is the principle that we are looking at. Let me lay it out for you. First of all, life is about two ways. Only two ways in life. Your way, which you devise in your own heart, and that will get you out of balance. God's way, where the LORD directs you through the Holy Spirit of God step by step, that will give you perfect balance. Here is how it works, getting all the verses together. Verse 10 says God's way and judgments are true. We will feel the effect of them when we do it our way and get out of balance. We will get a divine sentence against us, a righteous judgment.

Verse 11 says life is a journey, and as you journey through life, you pick up things and put them into a bag, a pack, a rucksack. You see here in our own church, which is a great example. Here is Maddie's pack. You have a pack. They are all through here. Everything she knows about the Bible and God and she holds true and loves is in that pack. She carries it on her back. You guys carry yours in. Everything you ever learned about God and know about God, if it is in your Bible and in your notebooks, it is in the bag, the bag that you carry. You see kids go into school all the time, and they are carrying backpacks with them. Everything that they are learning in school that they are picking up from school and their teachers is in that pack, in that bag.

In life, we are carrying a bag this morning. In that bag is everything we have ever learned, good and bad. When in that bag, it is all or the majority of it is good things, you have a good balance. In that bag, when everything you have got in there for the most part is bad things, then you are out of balance. When you fill up that bag with the things of the world, now your world gets out of balance. Your mind, your spirit, your attitude about everything. It causes you to stumble and fall. Out of balance will always get you off course with God and your walk with Him.

Way back when, when I was in the army, we went through a two-week survival school down in Florida in the Everglades. The bleachers down there, where they would lecture you, were right in the swamp. You always wanted to try to get there and try to get the upper places on the bleachers because you are only sitting in about that much water. If you were on the first one, you were sitting here. At all times, I mean the worst swamp in Florida, I mean there are snakes, there are bugs, there are, I mean there are things crawling over your feet, you cannot see what it is, the water is muddy, and some guy out there is lecturing to you how to survive.

They taught us how that when you get lost and you have no idea where you are, they taught us how to navigate. It really was one of the best classes I have ever had in life. I still remember, in fact, I do not to this day, I do not go someplace and I am straight, that I am not just automatically looking for these things. But here is what they said you never do. He says you never start walking and follow your sense of direction, which is the first thing every human being has. You know why? Going back to human nature. We think we know more about it than anybody else. So here we are, no landmarks, out in the desert, out in someplace, barren, and we want to get back to where we can get to safety. So what do we do? We follow our gut, we follow our instinct. He says you never, never do that. You never just start walking and follow your sense of direction because you will wind up walking in a complete circle, and you will go right back to where you started.

The reason being, right now in your body and my body, we are out of balance. If you are right-handed, your right hand is stronger than your left. Your right leg is stronger than your left. If you are left-handed, your left hand is stronger and your left leg is stronger than your right. So every time, you do not see it, you do not even come into play. But every time you take a step, if this is your strong leg, you are a half an inch off straight. You keep walking for 10 miles, 20 miles, 30 miles, you will keep pulling to the right, and pretty soon you will come right back into a circle and cross your tracks again because you are out of balance. You cannot navigate that way. You cannot trust yourself that way. You need a fixed position to work from either on the horizon or from the sun and the stars. The sun rises in the east and sets in the west. So you know where the

sun is up, you are heading east. You know when it is going down this way, it is west. You can get north and south based off of that, or at nighttime, you understand the stars. And you follow, you navigate that way.

Now, it is the same thing in your journey in life. You cannot follow your instincts. You cannot just pick up things in life that you think look good and put into your bag. You need to have your life fixed on something that is unmovable. The Bible will be our compass to direct you and your steps through life. You never trust your own judgment. You will just come right around in a circle in life, and it will be a dead end. How many times have you and I seen men and women who would not listen to anything the preacher said, would not listen to anything about the Bible, and yet their life is just seemingly one endless disaster after another? You know why? Because they are devising in their own heart. They are going after their own way, and they are out of balance.

In navigation, it is much like it is in life. Most people do not know this, but if you are navigating by a compass or you are navigating to a fixed point and you are using a compass or the stars, there are two Norths, and most people are not even aware of that. There are two Norths you can follow, but in life there are two ways you can follow. One is magnetic North, and that will be with your compass. Magnetic North is based on the North Pole. That is based on the magma down inside the center of the earth, where hell is at by the way, and it creates this great magnet force at the poles that your compass will always point toward the North Pole. But the problem with that is that magnetic North changes. Just like the false religions of this world that you think are going to get you to heaven, but they are always changing. There are times within a year that magnetic North can be as much as 27 to 30 miles off. Do you realize how a 30-mile mistake in a 3,000-mile journey will throw you off? Well, you would pass the whole city of New York and never even see it.

Magnetic North is movable. It is like the world. It shifts. It shifts based on the magma core of the earth. No, no, you never can trust in a critical situation magnetic North. There will be times that you will be in the desert surrounded with mountains, and there is so much iron ore or uranium in those mountains, your compass will just spin. Magnetic North will get you in a direction of North, but it will not get you to true North because true North, which is the other North, is not based on anything on this world. It is based on the stars, and we know who made the stars, do not we? And they are fixed. They are dead on.

Now, you as a Christian, you want to get your proper coordinates in life so know which way you are going. You want to get your dead reckoning based on a fixed position. Go to Psalm 75:6-7, or Job 26:7, or Psalm 48:2. There you will find the Christian's true position on everything on this earth. Job 38:8, 38:30, I think it is, it talks about the ordinances of heaven. There are seven of them. You want a complete coordinate set up and a complete directional set up of everything in life? Follow those ordinances. So as a child of God, you go with God's direction in life, and that direction will be a fixed true North, not based on the world's North, which will throw you off, but fixed on the stars. Polaris, one degree off of Polaris is dead true North, which is the fine for you in the Bible. Up past Alpha Turkana, the great dragon in the sea, Isaiah 27:1, and as a child of God, you always keep your coordinates fixed. You always know your direction is steady and

never movable. It does not shift with the world like magnetic North. It stays absolutely true because it is true North, and you will never get off track.

They told me down there in Florida, if you can do it, do it two ways. Do it by the stars during the day or at night, and today keep your eyes fixed on the horizon. You know what? That was 40 some years ago in my life, and I will tell you today, my Christian life is based on the same things I learned down there at that Air Force base in the middle of Okefenokee swamps. You know what my Christian life is every day? Keep my course fixed on the stars and always keep looking for Him coming on the horizon. That is how you do it. That is how you do it.

VI. The Contents of Your Bag

Next thing, now look at this word "bag." That is a great study in the Bible. In the Bible, you will find a bag, different ways to study. It is incredible. I have a sermon I preach. I never preach it to you guys, but I have a sermon I preach on the three things for us that God keeps. It is a great sermon, quite incredible sermon, not because I preach it, but just because it is the way it is found in the Bible. There are three things that God keeps for you, and most of God's people have no idea.

17. First of all, Psalm 56:8, the Bible says that God has a bottle for your tears. Now, do you realize that? At the judgment seat of Christ, you know what God is going to do? He is going to reach up and take that bottle down, and you know, He is going to turn that bottle upside down, and every tear drop that comes out is going to open up and speak to what it was shed for. How about a bottle that is completely empty? How about a bottle when the tears come out? You cried over some sitcom. You cried over the bachelorette when she got dumped. You cried over this, and you cried over that. What if when your bottle, there are no tears that have been wept for lost people or people who are struggling with the things of God? God has a bottle for your tears.
18. Second thing is in Malachi 3:16, the Bible says God has a book for your thoughts. You think the Holy Spirit of God living inside you is just, you know, just kind of there for a show? Uh-uh. He has a notebook. He is writing every thought you had down.
19. The third thing over there in Job 14:17, and this is where I want to get to, the Bible says that He has a bag for my transgressions.

Job 14:17

My transgression is sealed up in a bag, and thou sewest up mine iniquity.

That is the greatest news I ever heard in my life. God took all of my transgressions the day I got saved. God took all of my iniquity, and He put them in a bag, and He sealed them up. You know what? If you went to heaven right now, you could not find that bag to open it up if you wanted to. These people that worry about losing their salvation. You know what? You know why you cannot lose it? Because it is up there in a bag. It is sealed. Now, if you could get up there in heaven and rummage around like you do at a garage sale and find your bag and open it up, then you would have some problems. You are not ever going to find it. He took your filthiness, your ungodliness, my filthiness, my ungodliness, and He opened up the bag, and He put them in that

bag, and then He sealed that bag. I guarantee you, He dumped it up in heaven in the deepest part of the sea of the Great Deep, and nobody will ever bring them up again. God has a bottle for your tears. He has a book for your thoughts. He has a bag for your transgressions. That is a good way to study it.

Now, you take that word "bag." You carry stuff in bags. That word is a great word study within the Bible. You go on vacation. You go on a trip. I guarantee you, you folks came down here from Lincoln. You packed a bag. Our guys come to church. They pack a bag. As I said, as you journey through life, you pick up things and you put them in a bag. Some good things, some bad things, things that you really need. And then there will be some things that you just think you really need. You meet the dream of your life, female. You meet Mr. Right in your life. You bring them into me, and I sit down and talk with them, and they leave, and we discuss it, and you say, "Well, what do you think? You think I should follow them?" I say to you, "Well, I do not know. I got a lot of baggage." See where it goes? How much baggage do you have today? We had a lady in our church one time who was married nine times. That is some baggage. That is a lot of baggage.

You see, when you have a life of keeping good things and not picking up bad things, then you have a good balance in the load you carry through life. One of the things that discipleship does that is so important in every church is it not only gives you the first 10 steps, but you know what it does? I always tell you that it is a lot like you being a border guard or a customs agent. When you go down, when you come from another country and you fly into New York or you go, you have to go through customs. If they are doing their job, they will bring you into a thing up there, and a customs agent will make you open up your suitcase, and he will go through. If there are certain things you cannot bring in, there are certain things you buy, you have to pay a duty on over here. Or there are certain things that are illegal. You cannot bring some plants in. You cannot bring any animals in. You cannot bring any bugs in. So they will go through everything, and they will say, "Okay, you can go through. Oh no, you have to get rid of this. You have to get rid of that."

You know what? In discipleship, some of God's people come into this church, and they have been in bad churches or stupid churches or gotten some bad teaching someplace. You know what has to be done? Somebody has to go through their baggage. That is what discipleship does. First one, salvation, eternal security. You can keep this. Cannot keep this. We talk about baptism. We talk about the Word of God. We talk about the Holy Spirit of God. We talk about the first 10 steps of Christianity in its most basic form. That thing serves a purpose to go through where you have been in life. Find out what is in your bag. Find out if you have got some bad doctrines. You have got some bad teaching. Try to help you out. Get through it. That is exactly what happens.

When you have a bag that you carry through life that is out of balance, at the end of your life, you know what? It is worthless. It is empty. It is for spiritual things. It is full of worldly stuff. Completely out of balance. Going through your bag and looking, asking yourself, what is in my bag today? What is the content of my bag that I am carrying through life? Is it good? Is it souls? Is it verse cards? Is it principles? Is it a prayer life? Is it patterns? Is it family? Is it kids serving the Lord together? Is it spiritual fatness? Is it blessings beyond belief? Are you an oasis in a desert of this world?

Jesus said in Matthew 11:29, "Take my yoke upon you." He says, "My burden is light." You know why? Because it is balanced. I want to tell you something. A balanced load is always easier to carry than an unbalanced load. When you go out to KCI and you are going to fly someplace, you know what they do? They want to get the best fuel economy. They want to get the best at everything. So they balance out the plane. They know how much luggage they have got. They will space you in the plane that will balance the plane. Could you imagine trying to take off with everybody in the front? You are trying to land with everybody in the back? No, they disperse you. They balance it out.

In early World War I, when the U-boats were just getting started and they had to crash dive. They did not have the technology we have got today. They had about 60 guys on those little German U-boats, and when they had to crash dive, everybody had to run to the front. Put weight in the nose so they would go down. When they wanted to come up, everybody had to run to the back. Is what you have got in your bag good stuff or is it bad? Is it strife? Bad marriages, bitterness, anger, fighting with your kids all the time, battling with your spouse, anxiety, depression, disappointment, failure in life, heartache, tragedy.

Hey, I have seen some of God's people get disgruntled and go to church after church after church, and they cannot find any satisfaction or peace anywhere. They will go for two or three months, then they are off to another church. They will go through four or five churches, and they will blame their issues on everything and everybody, and they will never figure out that they see and face the real problems every morning when they look in the mirror. It is them, and they are out of balance, and I want to tell you something. The older you get, the worse you get because the weight that you keep adding on to try to carry gets so out of balance, and it gets so heavy. "Honey, does this dress make me look big?" "No, dear, but wow, do you have a big bag?" So many marriages just like that. She looks great, but boy, is there a lot of baggage. Is there a lot of baggage? I am telling you.

VII. The Bag with Holes

The book of Haggai, one of my favorite books in the Bible. Now here is another concept of a bag. I want you to see some of them today. The book of Haggai, its context is Ezra and Nehemiah. After they go back from the 70 years captivity and begin to rebuild the city of God, the temple of God, and they begin to build and then they stop building. When Haggai writes, the temple of God has now stood idle for 16 years. The word of God is lying dormant. Nobody is doing anything. Haggai, the prophet of God, shows up and takes them to task on not finishing the work that God had started with them 16 years ago. You see, the people have procrastinated in their obligation to build the temple of God. Haggai is an incredible picture of modern-day Christianity, filled with men and women who started building their temple with God and then they just quit.

Haggai 1:2

Thus speaketh the LORD of hosts, saying, This people say, The time is not come, the time that the LORD'S house should be built.

Haggai 1:3

Then came the word of the LORD by Haggai the prophet, saying,

Haggai 1:4

Is it time for you, O ye, to dwell in your cieled houses, and this house lie waste?

Haggai 1:5

Now therefore thus saith the LORD of hosts; Consider your ways.

Now look at that. Do you see that? If that is not a picture of what God is doing today in modern-day Christianity, I do not know what is. Do you see that thing? Verse 2 says, the people are saying, "Oh, it is not time for me to build anything for God yet." Verse 4, Haggai says, "Oh yeah, it is." There is the battle right there. What God wants you to do and build in your life or what you think you want to do and build in your life. There it is. God had a plan for them to build the temple of God. Absolutely key to Israel's success. God has a plan for you and for me building our temple. One step at a time that is absolutely key for our success.

Not only did they stop building the temple, but now they are taking the same material that God provided to build His house, and they are building their own houses with them. He says in verse 5, "Consider your ways." You know what their problem is? Their problem is the problem of classic human nature. They think they knew more about building than God did. At this time, Israel is as broke, as busted as they ever will be. At this time, Israel is as empty spiritually as they ever will be. Their bag is filled with iniquity and all the junk of this world. God makes reference to the bag that they are picking up stuff and putting in their lives, their bag that carried them through life.

Haggai 1:6

Ye have sown much, and bring in little; ye eat, but ye have not enough; ye drink, but ye are not filled with drink; ye clothe you, but there is none warm; and he that earneth wages puteth it into a bag with holes.

Haggai 1:7

Thus saith the LORD of hosts; Consider your ways.

There is your life at the end going your way. You see they never have enough. They cannot get enough. They cannot drink enough. They earn wages going through life, and they put it in a bag that they are going to carry through life, but the bag is full of holes. At the end of their life, they are empty. When you go your way and put the stuff in your bag in this world, at the end of your life, you are empty. A bag with holes. Everything fell out. Now it is 60, 70, 80, you have nothing. You have to face all the uncertainty now. You have to face an eternity without God now. You have to look and experience and face everything that is out there both physically and spiritually.

Proverbs 16:11 says, "A just weight and balance are the LORD'S: all the weights of the bag are his work." You bet they are. When we get out of balance, do your own thing, then there is your

work. There are your works. Your bag might be worth it, it has got 100 holes in it because there will leave you empty and destitute just like Israel in the book of Haggai.

The Bible says in Psalm 37:23, "The steps of a good man are ordered by the LORD." I want to tell you something. God always pays for what He orders. Whether it is in your life, whether it is in a church, whether it is whatever you do in your Christian life. If God ordered it in your life, then God will pay for it. If God ordered it, then He will sustain it. If God ordered it, then He will make the provision for it. When He does not, then we have to pick up the tab ourselves. Brother, it can be a costly tab sometimes.

Life is so simple. The Christian life is so simple. A life of your way with our devices, what we want to do, picking up through life, sticking all the stuff in a bag that we think is so valuable. Your heart devising our own way over God's direction for His steps in our life. At the end of our lives, looking into the bag and saying, "Wow, it is empty." The anticipation of how many people anticipated all of their life to get their retirement. They could not wait. They worked hard, and they wanted to get retirement. They went to 65 and then to 66 and then to 67. Finally, somewhere in there they retired. When they retired, the illusion evaporated that life was going to be wonderful now because they are empty. They have problems in their health, they have problems in their family, they have problems in their finances. All the things, all the illusion that they were going all through life, they were putting in their bag, "Get this, get this, get this. Oh, when I retire, I am going to have it all." And then when retirement came, you looked in the bag, and you picked it up, and you looked at the hole, the bottom was gone, and you are empty.

There is no replacing in your life and my life the steps that are ordered by God for you. There is no replacing the Holy Spirit of God leading and guiding you into all truth. There is no replacement for the Holy Spirit of God walking along your side, showing you in life what is of God and what is not of God so you do not get a lot of dumb stuff in your bag. Haggai said to Israel, I say to you, "What is in your bag today? Consider your ways." God's direction in our life, He gives us all we need to do the job. Our devised plan takes all He gives us, and we just use it for ourselves. When we do, then God has a divine sentence, and He has to deal with us. God says, "It is time to build your temple, Israel." Israel said, "Ah, it is not time for me." Life is really simple, folks. You go through life with a bag, you pick up the good stuff and put it in, it balances out, and you carry it through life. You pick up the bad stuff, put it in, it weighs you down to the point where it just grinds you to death. It is either your way or it is going to be God's way.