

Revelation 3:14-22

Sunday 8/28/2016

I'd like to welcome everybody who is tuning in on YouTube this morning for our live broadcast. I hope that you get a blessing out of our time today in the Word of God. For those of you who I don't want to catch you completely unaware today, last Thursday night we showed a video of the funeral of Dr. Peter S. Ruckman. Dr. Ruckman was a tremendous influence in my life and the life of my father in the Lord, Mel. To the day he died, Mel always called Dr. Ruckman the Apostle Paul of his life. It's made such an impact on so many of you in learning the Bible and knowing that you did have an absolute Bible that many of you wanted to see that. So we just took a Thursday night and showed that. It was very sobering and one of the most profound things. When we were done, when I came up here, I had never felt the silence in your hearts like I did that last Thursday night. It was an incredible time.

I also told you that, and I have told you this before for a couple of years now, I have had a message that I wanted to preach. I think it's a message that I need to preach, but I just didn't have the right timing for it. Some things you just have to have the right time and place to be able to do it, and I knew that it would be best served after Dr. Ruckman went home to be with the Lord. I honestly don't know why I was planning on preaching Proverbs all the way up to a Wednesday, and then suddenly it just hit me, "You know what? We're going to do this Thursday night, why not preach this message Sunday morning?" So I decided that this is what I want to do.

We are a great young church. We have scores and scores of young couples and young singles. It's hard to find somebody that's even my age; there's a few of us scattered through here, but for the most part, the lifeblood of this church is sitting around you today. I think it's a message that I need to give you at least once in my life before I go home to be with the Lord. When I started to study the Bible, this was back in the early 1970s. When I started to really believe I had a Bible and study the Bible, I learned some things very quickly. I learned that not only did I need to learn about the Bible itself, but I needed to learn my roots, where I've come from. In the process of my 40-some years in the Word of God, I dedicated a solid 10 years of my life to going through church history. I have taught it probably seven or eight times in my lifetime. The last time we did it, it's going into a book that will probably run over five or six volumes. But I realized the importance for me of not just knowing the Bible, but understanding everything surrounding the Bible.

One of the things I learned early on as a young man is that you cannot separate the God of the Bible from the God of history. All history revolves around two elements that God has put in effect by which He's going to run His plan through. In the Old Testament, it was the nation of Israel. In the New Testament, it's the body of Christ, the church. You lose track of those two things, and you're lost in history, and this is what has happened today. I don't think in all of my studies and all of my years—and I have probably read every book that there was on church history—I devoured Philip Schaff's nine or ten, twelve volumes, whatever he had, absolutely worthless, but I went through them. Newell's two volumes on church history. Carnes' *The Understandable* or *The Biblical History of the New Testament Church*. Just so many of them. I read Will Durant's 20 volumes on *The History of Civilization*. He's an unsaved man; he was

a historian, but I found that even from unsaved people, once I believed my Bible, I found great perspective in things.

I think today, well, I know today, all I want to accomplish with you today is to give you a right perspective. That's all I want. I'm not here to change anybody's mind. If you don't believe the King James Bible is the Word of God, it doesn't bother me. I could care less. We have people come all the time, and they'll say, "Hey, do you mind if I..." I said, "I don't mind what you use. You do whatever you want to do. It's not my job to convince you of where the Word of God is. It's God's job, but my job is to give you a clear perspective." I've never in the history of the church have I ever seen Christianity at its lowest level.

I. The Prophesied Decline of Truth

The prophets in the Old Testament spoke about this time coming in the great prophetic books of the Old Testament.

Isaiah 59:4:

> None calleth for justice, nor any pleadeth for truth: they trust in vanity, and speak lies; they conceive mischief, and bring forth iniquity.

Hosea 4:1-3:

> Hear the word of the LORD, ye children of Israel: for the LORD hath a controversy with the inhabitants of the land, because there is no truth, nor mercy, nor knowledge of God in the land.

> By swearing, and lying, and killing, and stealing, and committing adultery, they break out, and blood toucheth blood.

> Therefore shall the land mourn, and every one that dwelleth therein shall languish, with the beasts of the field, and with the fowls of heaven; yea, the fishes of the sea also shall be taken away.

Micah 2:11:

> If a man walking in the spirit and falsehood do lie, saying, I will prophesy unto thee of wine and of strong drink; he shall even be the prophet of this people.

In the context, if you look at it, it's social drinking. The average church today teaches that social drinking is okay. Why? According to the Bible, because they're living under a spirit of falsehood. Somebody told them something that wasn't true.

Malachi 1:7-8:

> Ye offer polluted bread upon mine altar; and ye say, Wherein have we polluted thee? In that ye say, The table of the LORD is contemptible.

> And if ye offer the blind for sacrifice, is it not evil? and if ye offer the lame and sick, is it not evil? offer it now unto thy governor; will he be pleased with thee, or accept thy person? saith the LORD of hosts.

Malachi said there's a time coming when God's people would be given polluted bread, and their lives for service for God would be filled with polluted sacrifices.

Solomon, whom we're studying in the book of Proverbs, talked about a time coming when God's people wouldn't even understand God's judgments anymore.

Proverbs 28:5:

> Evil men understand not judgment: but they that seek the LORD understand all things.

How many of God's people that are saved could explain to you what the judgment seat of Christ is? How many times have you heard a preacher that got up and just took the paint off the walls about you standing before the judgment seat of Christ? How many of God's people even understand the concept of the great white throne judgment in Revelation 20? How many people know that in your Bible there are laid out for you seven distinct judgments? If you want to understand God's judgment in the Bible, that's where you have to start, but who knows that today?

Isaiah 5:20:

> Woe unto them that call evil good, and good evil; that put darkness for light, and light for darkness; that put bitter for sweet, and sweet for bitter!

Isaiah, the great prophet of God, said that there'd be a time coming when God's people, believe it or not, would begin to call evil good and good evil. It's incredible.

Hosea 8:12:

> I have written to him the great things of my law, but they were counted as a strange thing.

Hosea said that there was a time when God's people would look at the things of God, and he said that the great things of God in the Bible would simply become strange things to them.

Jeremiah 23:20:

> The anger of the LORD shall not return, until he have executed, and till he have performed the thoughts of his heart: in the latter days ye shall consider it perfectly.

Jeremiah 23:30:

> Therefore, behold, I am against the prophets, saith the LORD, that steal my words every one from his neighbour.

Jeremiah 23:20 says that God gave His people a perfect Word. Then verse 30 says that the prophets came in and stole it from them. All these verses here, whether you know it or not or even are aware of it or not, are being fulfilled or in play right before our very eyes today.

We live in a time period that John wrote about in Revelation 3:14-22, called the Laodicean church period. The word Laodicea means "rights of the people." It's a time where there's no truth, there's no knowledge of God, but Christians do not care about the rights of God. All they care about are their own rights and the rights of others. Let me just say something to you today, and I don't mean to be cruel or insensitive, but I want to be honest with you and give you a right perspective. The only right you and I have on this planet is to die and go to hell and burn for eternity. That's the only right we have. As a child of God, you don't have any rights. When Christ died on the cross, you were bought with a price. When you got saved, you gave it all up to Him. How did we ever get to this point in our Christianity?

2 Chronicles 15:5:

> And in those times there was no peace to him that went out, nor to him that came in, but great vexations were upon all the inhabitants of the countries.

The problem is, it says, "Now for a long time God's people have been without a true God and without a teaching priest and without the law."

Haggai 2:3:

> Who is left among you that saw this house in her first glory? and how do ye see it now? is it not in your eyes in comparison of it as nothing?

This is my biggest dilemma. It should be the biggest dilemma of every pastor in this city, in this country. The problem with God's people today is they have no comparison of what God really did at one time and what He's not doing today. You have people who go to churches today that are humongous churches, and I'm not fighting anybody, I really don't care, but I'm making a point. I'm trying to give you a perspective. They'll go to these churches that have no Bible; it's all about money. They're bringing worldly music and all of the things that you have, and you get whatever you want because it's all about your rights. If you like good, hard preaching, they'll have a 9 o'clock traditional service. If you don't like good, strong preaching, they'll have a 10 o'clock contemporary service. If you don't like that, you come back at 11 and you'll get a modernistic service. It always ticked me off that if you really believe the Bible and you really love the Bible, you've got to get up the earliest.

Honestly, I'm not mad at anybody today. I probably will get a little passionate down through here, but that's just part of my charm, so just bear with me. I'm not mad at anybody today, and I'm not picking on anybody today. I'm here for one reason, preaching this message for one purpose for you, because I want my people to have a perspective. I want you to be able to understand, to the best of my ability, what once was so you have something to compare what you have today. These people, bless their heart, they go to these churches, they sit there, and they hear no Bible. You'll hear 20 minutes about the Bible and 40 minutes about, "We need money." You'll be mesmerized by some choir or some Christian rock band with the drums up there. Many of them, when they start the service, the lights go down, smoke comes out underneath the platform. If you close your eyes, you'd be in a Las Vegas nightclub show.

You know what the tragedy is? That's all they've ever known. If you talk to those people, they'd say, "Well, I go to so-and-so; it's the greatest church you've ever been in your life." They say that because, as Haggai said, they have nothing to compare it to. I feel sorry for you young couples and you young singles. I really do. You're growing up in a world where you've never seen a real revival. You're growing up in a world where most of you never heard a good hellfire, damnation, take-the-paint-off-the-wall preaching sermon. We live in a blasé Christianity that wants to make everybody happy. They don't want to have to be politically correct. They don't want to ever step on anybody's toes. You go back in a bookstore, you'll find some great books in the Bible, but we also have a shoe department, and we do sell steel-toed shoes.

I've said this before, I hate the time I was born in. The Christianity that I grew up in and I live in today, I have absolutely nothing but disdain for it. I was born in 1950. I would have much rather been born in the 17th century. I'd have much rather been born in the 1800s when the great revivals were sweeping across America, when a great missionary movement was going on. I'd much rather have been born in the 1800s. I'd much rather have been born in a time in the 1500s and the 1600s. You know why? You knew who was right and you knew who was wrong back then. There wasn't a lot of gray areas. You had those who loved God and the Word of God and those who hated God and the Word of God. There wasn't this much cloud in between that gets real confusing.

But I do thank God for this every day of my life. I thank God for the fact that He allowed me to be born in 1950, and because He did that, I actually got to grow up and see the end of the great Philadelphian preachers, the end of the great churches, and most importantly, I got to see the transition from men and churches who held the Word of God to be true, and now today have forsaken the Word of God to be true. That's the greatest thing, outside teaching me the Bible, that God ever gave me. He allowed me to see and understand the actual transition from the Philadelphian, at least the end of it, the very remnant of it, into what we have today. And I thank God for it every day.

II. The Church's Historical Tests and Baptist Identity

Through the course of church history, and church history runs from your Bible standpoint around 2,000 years. It starts in Acts 20 and obviously goes up to the present, doesn't end until the rapture of the church. But in that 2,000 years, the church has been tested and purged in what it has held to be the true teachings of the Word of God. We have lost the ability today as God's people to be able to trace our roots. In the book of Revelation, we know in the first three chapters that John broke down church history through the inspiration of the Holy Spirit of God so we could get it. He broke it down into seven distinct periods of history.

Down through history, we as Baptists—and let me just say a word about Baptists for a moment. I know today that there are a lot of people that are taking "Baptist" off the name of their church. We will not be doing that anytime soon. I realize that there are a lot of goofy Baptists. I'm under no delusion about that. But I've never worried about what somebody thought about what somebody was called. We keep the word "Baptist" here because, whether you know it or not—this is part of the perspective—we got our name. We're the only denomination down through,

listen to me, we are the only denomination down through the history of the church who got their name from their enemies because of the doctrine that we held to. We are called Baptists because we took a stand early on, and we're called "Pedobaptists"—"Pedo," children, "ana," against. We took our stand by taking a stand against a church that baptized babies for salvation. No other denomination, if you want to use that word, in the history of the church got its name because of the doctrine that it stood for. I cannot help it that Baptist churches are idiots. Whatever denomination you want to align yourself up to, you're going to have idiots there too. There is no idiot-free denomination, just like there's no idiot-free churches. People can be idiots. If you're going to change your name every 20 years because it fills up with idiots, you're going to run out of names long before you run out of idiots.

We as Baptists have held the seven fundamental doctrines that we have held to down through history. When you study the history of the New Testament church—this is perspective—when you study the history of the New Testament church, these seven truths have stood the test of time, and they've been handed down to me and to you through faithful men as the whole church was going into apostasy.

1. We believe in the resurrection of the Lord Jesus Christ. Without Him coming out of that tomb with a bodily resurrection, you're still in your sins. In the early church, Ephesus, that was the first test of the church. The church held to that belief, many began to depart from it, and the first thing that they had to deal with was, "Did He come out of that tomb?"
2. We move into Smyrna, 200 AD to 325 AD. Now the church was tested with a second great fundamental that we believe in. We believe that you get saved by the precious blood of the Lord Jesus Christ. We believe that your works will send you to hell. We believe church membership will send you to hell. We believe that the only way that you can ever get to heaven is through the blood of Jesus Christ on Calvary's cross. But in Pergamos, that church began to face, "Now baptism was the way you got saved." And the test of what we believe today went through the fire in the Pergamos church period.
3. Thyatira, 500 to 1000 AD. Now we begin to see the rise of the Catholic Church under Constantine. Now we begin to see the Dark Ages, and during this period of time, the church who believed in the visible return of the Lord Jesus Christ is now faced, and that great doctrine is shaken by many, many people who now believe in what we know today as amillennialism and postmillennialism.
4. In the Sardis church period, 1000 to 1500 AD, we see the rise of what we know today as the heresy of Calvinism. The heresy that God predestinated somebody to go to heaven and predestinated somebody to go to hell. "Jesus loves me, sorry about you, you're not one of the chosen few," that kind of stuff. And the church who believed that God's salvation was for everybody now had to deal with that issue.
5. And the Philadelphia church age, 1600 to 1900 AD. The church is yet again faced, and by the way, we believe that once you get saved, you belong to Jesus Christ eternally. Somebody once asked me, "Do you believe once saved, always saved?" I said, "Absolutely not." He says, "What do you mean?" I said, "I don't believe once saved, always saved. I believe once you get born again, you show me the process of getting unborn." We call it eternal security.

But in that great time period of the church, they had to face the issue: "Are you eternally secure or are you not?"

6. Now we come to Laodicea, around 1900 AD up to the time period that you and I live in today, and where the seven great doctrines that the church stood for, that we stand for—the resurrection of Christ, the deity of Christ, baptism not for salvation, premillennialism, predestination being a heresy, and the doctrine of eternal security. Now in the Laodicean church, the last church before Revelation 4, the rapture of Jesus Christ takes place, this church is faced with the last issue. It's the issue of the authority of the Word of God. Do you have the exact perfect words of God in your hand today? That's the only question. That's the only question. Do you have the absolute perfect Word of God that you can read, that you can hold in your hand, and you can believe this is the Word of God?

It's hard to believe for me, some of you young kids. Do you know, some of you older people, would you have believed that 30 years ago that today we'd be having serious conversations and believing that two men getting married and two women getting married are okay? 30 years ago, would you ever thought that would have happened? 30 years ago, would you ever thought that the White House would be lit up in rainbow colors? I grew up in the 50s and the 60s and the 70s and the 80s. We never dreamed, I'm telling you kids, we never dreamed. We never dreamed there'd be a day when two men would walk down the aisle hand in hand and kiss and pronounce whatever. We never dreamed there'd be a day when a man thought he was a woman and a woman thought she was a man, and they would go through everything they did and change their sex. I wouldn't have believed it. If back in the 50s and the 60s, Bruce Jenner, or Bruce Jeanette, or whatever her name is, or its name is now, the only magazine she could have got on was *Field and Stream*. And yet I'll tell you, who would have believed that the Church of Jesus Christ would have come to the place where we now believe that when God wrote His Bible, He didn't know what He was doing, and now it takes man to correct what God wrote? Who would have believed that? You know why people believe that? Because they have no perspective. You know why people believe that? Because they never say, "You know why I don't believe that? I believe that because God allowed me by the grace of God, praise the Lord, to grow up and see the difference between the two." My biggest dilemma is how to get that to you.

2 Timothy 3:1-5:

- > *This know also, that in the last days perilous times shall come.*
- > *For men shall be lovers of their own selves, covetous, boasters, proud, blasphemers, disobedient to parents, unthankful, unholy,*
- > *Without natural affection, trucebreakers, false accusers, incontinent, fierce, despisers of those that are good,*
- > *Traitors, heady, highminded, lovers of pleasures more than lovers of God;*
- > *Having a form of godliness, but denying the power thereof: from such turn away.*

Paul told Timothy that there would be a time coming in the New Testament Church where God's people would have a form of godliness, but they deny the power thereof.

2 Timothy 4:3:

> *For the time will come when they will not endure sound doctrine; but after their own lusts shall they heap to themselves teachers, having itching ears;*

He told him that there would be a time when man, God's people, would not endure sound doctrine. He said there would be a great falling away in the last days, that there would be men who would be "ever learning." Boy, ain't that true. But never able to come to the truth.

Amos 8:11:

> *Behold, the days come, saith the Lord GOD, that I will send a famine in the land, not a famine of bread, nor a thirst for water, but of hearing the words of the LORD:*

Amos told about a famine coming. There wasn't a famine of bread and water, but it was a famine of the hearing of the Word of the Lord. All down through the church, all down through the history of the New Testament Church, men and women just like you believed that they had a Bible that was inerrant with the Bible. They believed that they had the exact Word of God just the way God wanted them to have it and didn't need man fooling with it. Their enemies believed it so much that they made it a capital offense, punishable by death, for anybody like you to have the Bible that you're holding in your lap today. You got caught with that Bible, it was a capital offense. Those people were persecuted beyond belief. Without a doubt, then as now, the Bible is the most loved book, yet it is the most hated book the world has ever seen.

III. The 20th Century Attacks on the Bible

Today is going to be about a perspective. I want to take the passing of Dr. Peter S. Ruckman and I want to put it into perspective for you. You saw the video Thursday night, and I want to put it into perspective from God's standpoint. I want to make it very clear, this is not some lifting up Ruckman to the point that this is just a perspective. He was a man just like you and I are. He had his faults just like you and I do. Do I agree with everything he did? Absolutely not. Just like I don't agree with everything that a lot of guys did down through church history. Just like a lot of people don't agree with everything that I do the way that I do it. That's not the point. The point is, he was God's man when God needed somebody to do what needed to be done as the church was going into apostasy.

I knew Dr. Ruckman for over 45 years. I preached with him many, many times. He always loved to talk about Germany. I always had an interest in World War II, which was his war, and I would pick him up at the hotel and drive him over to where we were preaching, and we'd talk about the great German aces of World War II: the Erich Hartmans, the Adolf Gallands. His favorite was "Pips" Priller. There's a reason behind it. He actually told me one time, he says, "You know what?" He says, "You're looking at those guys' faces, and he says, I really believe that some of those guys, based on where Germany was before Hitler came to power, were really saved people." He loved Erich Hartmann, most decorated ace in the Luftwaffe. We would talk back and forth, and I understood. I understood his strengths and I understood his weaknesses. I'll say it again, let me be clear: he's just a man. There's nothing supernatural about him as a man. He did

dumb things in his life, said dumb things in his life, just like we all do. For me and this church, I simply want to set the record straight and give you the proper perspective about some things. I want you to see and understand how that God through history has always had a progression, a series of events and of men to get you your Bible. A long line of them.

Here's the problem. Dr. Ruckman is in the time frame that we live in. We look at him and we see his frailties, but we look at somebody like Martin Luther and we think he's a great hero of the faith. Martin Luther had his problems just like he did. We all have our issues. It's about rising above the issues and allowing God to use you. I want to talk to you about that today. I want to build this story around the last attack on the church of Laodicea, Revelation 3, and the attack on the Word of God. I'm going to limit it to the beginning of the 21st century. I want to talk about two key men who fought that battle for you and me to have a Bible. Then I want to talk about why there'll be no more men like that. I want you to clearly understand where I'm coming from today. I'm going to take my time. I'm going to be very methodical. I'm going to lay out everything. Here again, I'm just giving you the facts. I have no personal axe to grind about anything or anybody. I could care less. I'm giving you what you could go into any public library, take the time, and dig up the material and come to the same conclusion. I'm putting the church of Laodicea into perspective.

The book of Colossians is a great book. I've told you before that John writes to seven churches. Paul writes to seven churches. It's an uncanny thing that you can actually match the seven churches that Paul writes to to the ones that John writes to. In the church of Laodicea, there's no question about it, the New Testament book that Paul writes is the book of Colossians. Colossians is mentioned five times in that book, Laodicea. Of course, Colossae was a city about 11 or 12 miles south of Laodicea. When he comes down through that book, he does something that John doesn't do in Revelation. He gives you an insight into the Laodicean church period that you really don't find anywhere else in the Bible. He breaks that book of Colossians down into three basic formats.

In Colossians 1, he spends the whole chapter redefining who Christ is because in the Laodicean church age, we've lost who Christ really is. In Colossians 2, he takes the task and he begins to lay out what are the four fundamental problems with the Laodicean church.

You know what he says they are?

- > 1.) *Philosophy*
- > 2.) *Vain deceit*
- > 3.) *The tradition of men*
- > 4.) *The rudiments of the world*

Boy, can you not see that? The third section, the last two chapters, Colossians 3 and 4, basically he gives me my responses as the New Testament Christian, believing the Bible, understanding where I'm standing in history, my relationship, how to deal with it. The 20th century, Laodicean

church, is the final phase of God's plan. So we see the final attack to stop it. It's no wonder that right before the coming of the Lord Jesus Christ, the great attack would be on the Bible itself.

I want to begin by taking you through the three attacks on the church to take your Bible from you in the 20th century. I want you to begin to see and understand it. I want you to begin to see that in the 20th century, we're moving toward the final act of what God is doing before the Lord comes back. You can break the 20th century down into three functions, or really four. By the beginning of the 1900s, you begin to see the Zionist movement. World War I, then World War II, where the Zionist movement started when World War I came into being. World War I got the land ready for the Jew. World War II got the Jew ready for the land. What happened in 1948? The nation of Israel became a nation again. God's final phase is the 20th century. It's no wonder to me why the devil launched his final attack on the authority of the Word of God because he wants to take the Bible from you, and if he takes the Bible from you, you'll never find your way. You'll never know what's going on.

As God is enacting His plan to get the Zionist movement, and then to get the World War I, to get the land of Europe changed, and then World War II, the Jew changed, and then takes them back in 1948, you think the devil missed that? You may have missed it, but the devil didn't miss it. He's fast at work wanting to do with this last church what he's been able to undo with all these other churches: take your Bible from you. You know why he could never take the Bible from the other six periods of church history? Because those people paid a price of great persecution for what they had. The devil learned, if he learned anything in 6,000 years of history, you know what he learned? He learned that if you want to take the Bible from you, don't persecute you, just give you everything you want. Give you the affluence of two cars in every garage, two chickens in every pot, everything you want. Go into a grocery store or a mall, ladies, 6,000 shades of lipstick for one pair of lips. He knew that America would trade the Bible for things, and he was right.

Now, the first thing that he did would be called in history neo-evangelicalism. You'll find that in America, from 1700 up to the middle of the 1900s, God brought about seven great awakenings because the pattern is that once God does something, the devil always comes in to undo it. Where God brought in seven awakenings, seven revivals, then the devil brought in seven American heresies to counter that. The last great awakening, the last seventh awakening, took place right about the time I was born. I had nothing to do with it, but around that time period. But in 1900, you saw the first attack of neo-evangelicalism. It comes into the late 1800s into the 1900s. It's called the evangelical movement today. Get this, perspective. Most Baptist churches that take "Baptist" off their name are moving into this mindset. They're moving into the—they took the word "neo" off. The word "neo" means new. So in around 1900, for the people who didn't know their Bible, it was something new. For us who know the Bible, we know what? Nothing new under the sun. There is no such thing as neo-new evangelicalism. Evangelicalism, the word itself, means "stand by the truth," "stand on the doctrines." All the Baptist churches today that are moving and taking "Baptist" off their name, they're looking around this country at the evangelical churches that are basically non-denominational. They want to be like them because that's where the movement is today. The evangelical movement is a reconstruction of theology. Their whole mindset is taking the Bible out of the hand of the common man and putting it back

in scholarship, higher education. That's a shift from hard Bible doctrine that would separate us from other beliefs to a weak, watered-down Christianity that gets along with everybody, and there is no fundamental doctrine.

The second movement was what is called neo-orthodoxy. The word "orthodoxy" means "believe the doctrines of the Bible," orthodox. When we talk about the Orthodox Jews, we're talking about the old-time style Jews. But this is a new orthodoxy. It starts coming in the 1910s and the 1920s. It gets its root from the religious liberalism that's found in Europe. Now, their format is completely different, yet it goes hand in hand. Today, you're seeing a blending of the two. Neo-orthodoxy has changed the Bible to meet changing society. Now society changes, the church changes. They call this progression. When society wants to accept women preachers, then adjust your church to it. Forget what the Bible says. When same-sex marriages become popular and everybody wants to do it, then change your church preaching to go along with that. They preach the social gospel, "Do unto others before they do it to you," or something like that. In both cases, neither movement holds to an absolute final authority called the Word of God that exists anywhere in history. Here's where today you'll find your three services: go to the traditional service, go to the contemporary, go to the modern. Here's where you'll find a mixed bag in Baptist churches. This is where they'll bring in, as Colossians 2 said, the traditions of men, the rudiments of the world, Christian rock band. As a Christian, I believe in rock and roll, I really do. My feet are on the Rock and my name's on the roll, and that's all the farther I go with it. The only rock for a Christian is that Book, not some goofy band that if you close your eyes, you could be anywhere in any nightclub in America. Not some smoke-filled cabaret of a church where the lights go down and the music comes up, and it's all an essential experience instead of the Book ripping into your soul.

Now the third will be the charismatic movement. The charismatic movement starts about 1900. It starts out in Los Angeles at the Azusa Street Mission and then almost at the same time in Topeka, Kansas, at Bethel Bible College. The word "charismatic" means "gifted." It's a total and complete breakdown of any relationship or relative truth about God, and now everything is based on your feeling and not on the truth of the Word of God. Now these three attacks, by moving into the 20th century, begin to take their toll.

IV. God Raises Up J. Frank Norris

I need to give you a perspective on Baptists in the 1900s. First of all, let me say this: from 1900 to about 1950, there was no independence. There was no fundamentalist movement. You need to first understand that. In America, you had three basic groups of Baptists. The largest group was the Southern Baptist Convention. By 1950, they had 32,000 churches in America. They had seven major seminaries. They had 32 senior colleges, 21 junior colleges, and they funded and hosted 39 hospitals. The second group during this period of time would be the American Baptists. By the 1950s, they had 7,000 churches in America, 10 major seminaries, 24 senior colleges, and five junior colleges. And then the third group during this time was called the General Association of Baptists, and they made up all the other Baptists. That's the only three groups you had. Obviously, within those three groups, you had a remnant in all three groups, but

these are the dynamics, these are the associations that the Baptist churches were under at 1900 up through it. There is no fundamentalist, there is no conservatives, there's nothing. All these, by the time we get into the 20s, have been affected by the neo-evangelicalism and the neo-orthodoxy and have begun to fall into disarray.

When I was at camp, I preached to our kids out of Ezekiel 22 the fact that God looks for a man. God looks for a man that'll stand before Him, that'll stand in the gap, that'll make up the hedge. That was all the way back in the time in Israel's history where they were deep into apostasy, and God was looking for a man that would stand for Him in that day with His Word. By 1920, we see that all three Baptist groups, for the most part, were completely destroyed. In the midst of the apostasy, now you've got to understand this, the Southern Baptist Convention had the most seminaries that were teaching preachers. By the 1920s, they're teaching that the story of Adam and Eve are fables. Young men and young ladies that are going to be the next generations of pastors are going to a seminary that is teaching that Noah's flood wasn't really true. They're teaching, believe it or not, in the Southern Baptist seminaries, Darwin's evolution. They're teaching German rationalism and German humanism. The Southern Baptist Convention by the 1920s, and all the rest of them to boot, had fallen into apostasy. None of them believed at this point, other than a remnant. None of the major denominational men who were leading Christianity and setting the mindset for the young men and the young ladies, just like you, none of them believed anymore that the Bible was even true. Even more than we have today when you say, "Well, the Bible is true, but it's way over here something." They didn't believe anything about the Bible, and it destroyed the Southern Baptist Convention. To this day, the Southern Baptist Convention has split out of this number of years ago. Now they have a conservative side and a liberal side. Never, never to this day.

In the midst of this total apostasy of the Southern Baptist Convention, God reached down and raised up a man called J. Frank Norris. J. Frank Norris lived from 1877 to 1952. He died in 1952; I was two years old. This man single-handedly took on the whole Christian world over the issue of the authority of the Word of God. He was saved at an early age, baptized in a little creek down in Dixon, Alabama. He graduated from the Great Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, Baylor University in Louisville, Kentucky. He was the fair-haired boy of the Southern Baptist Convention for a while. Then he took a stand one day on what was being taught in the colleges. He took a stand one day that God's people did have an absolute standard in the Word of God in a King James 1611 Authorized Version, and he caused the biggest fight. This man, I'm telling you, Norris lived one of the most turbulent and uproarious lives that ever a man lived on this planet. He was the most fearless individual for God since Martin Luther, and you've got to understand all of this corruption in all of these Baptist denominational bosses, and here it comes. Here's your roots.

Around 1920, he split with the Southern Baptist Convention. He goes and he begins to take a bunch of young men that came with him. Young men that were in these things that, just like all down through history, they saw the corruption, but they had nowhere to go. Nobody took a stand. When he breaks with the Southern Baptist Convention, there was a bunch of young men and young ladies who believed they had a Bible, but they're caught in the trap of this apostasy, and

God raised him up to be the light, and he led them out. He starts two of the largest Baptist churches on the North American continent: one in Fort Worth, Texas, and the other up in Detroit, Michigan. When he breaks, he is given the title of being the father of the independent movement. Independent. We hear it all the time today. "What kind of church are you? Are you an independent Baptist church?" I don't like the term anymore. People say, "Are you an independent?" I said, "No, we're dependent. We're dependent on God for everything." That's the problem with Baptist churches; you're too independent today. But it's an original concept. Independent Baptist church was independent from the Southern Baptist Convention. Fundamentalist. The word is a talking point today. It means nothing today. Nobody even knows what it means. In the day when he broke from that, the term fundamentalist got created because they were going back to the fundamentals: the King James 1611 Authorized Version. You've got to get a perspective.

He starts a Bible college for young men and young ladies, and in big bold letters across the front of that building, it took up like four city blocks, he put in big neon light, "The only school in America teaching and preaching the King James 1611 Authorized Version as God's Word." He was hated. He was threatened with murder. He was an incredible individual. I'm telling you. I understand that for these guys to do what they had to do, you had to be off your rocker to some degree. These guys are incredible. He would get up in his sermon and he would put into the newspaper—he lived in Fort Worth, Texas—he says, "Sunday, I mean, there's a lot of corruption going on in the cities with the mayor and the police and all this stuff back in that day." He would put in the newspaper on Sunday morning, "I'm going to lay out the seven greatest demon-possessed corrupt politicians in this city." And he'd get up on Sunday morning and name names, give out telephone numbers. They hated him. He was fearless.

There was a guy by the name of C. H. C. Meehan. He was the mayor of Fort Worth. He hated him. He was in corruption with booze and prostitution and all of the things, just total corruption, and Norris was on him all the time. He paid a hit man, Dexter Chaps, to go and kill Norris. This man called Norris on the phone, says, "I'm coming over and blowing off your blankety-blank head." Norris said, "I'm here till four o'clock." Guy kicked down the church door, opened up Norris's office. Norris outdrew him and shot him dead in his office. Now that's some kind of guy. H. C. Meehan was killed in a terrible, horrible traffic wreck one night in a drunken stupor with two girls in his car that was not his wife. I don't remember what happened, but it was a terrible accident, and he went through the front windshield of the car, smashed his head all over a brick wall. J. Frank Norris went down to the crime scene or the accident scene, picked up a piece of his brain and put it in a jar, put it on the pulpit on Sunday morning, and preached on the hell of alcohol. Now what do you do with that? He was something.

When God wanted to get you your Bible and cut through the apostasy and the demonic work of Satan in the Southern Baptist Convention of destroying churches, He needed an atomic sledgehammer who could take them all on and hold the line so you and I could have a Bible someday. Was he always politically correct? Absolutely not. Did he do everything right? Certainly not. J. Frank Norris was a man of brute force. He inflicted brute trauma. He broke the back of the apostasy, and he trained up men who were our spiritual great-grandfathers and

grandfathers. He gave birth to the fundamentalist movement. He gave birth to the independent movement. He brought Christianity back to an absolute Bible that you and I can have. All of the great preachers of the 50s and the 60s and the 70s who built Baptist churches that won this country to Christ came from him.

I come out of the Canton Baptist Temple. Canton Baptist Temple was started by Harold Henniger in 1954. Harold Henniger built one of the largest churches in Canton, Ohio. One of J. Frank Norris' boys. Akron Baptist Temple, J. Frank Norris' boys. Kansas City Baptist Temple, Wendell Zimmerman, one of J. Frank Norris' boys. High Street and Cherry Street down in Springfield, Dr. Cavan, Dr. Dowell, Norris' boys. Temple Baptist up in Detroit, Norris' church. Landmark in Cincinnati with Dr. Rawlings, Norris. Toledo Baptist Church, Tom Malone, Norris. All across this country, hundreds of them. He starts the World Fellowship of Bible Believers. All the men that are in them: Wendell Zimmerman, Harold Henniger, Mel Sobaka, Beecham Vick, John Rawlings, Reggie Woodworth, Dallas Billington, Bob Gray, Dr. Cavan, Dr. Dowell, Cecil Hodges, Lewis Eminger, Bill Sears, Victor Sears, Jack Kyle, Jerry Falwell, R.G. Lee, B.R. Lakin, Howard Sears, Bob Hughes, Noel Smith, and thousands like them. I heard every one of those guys preach. I watched them stand in that pulpit, and I watched them without the big screens, without the flowery pictures showed behind there while you're singing your songs. I watched those old soldiers of the Philadelphia church age take that Book right there and paint a picture that when they preached on hell, they preached it so hot you could feel the heat. When they preached on heaven, you thought the roof rolled out and heaven came down and glory filled my soul. What they preached was a Book that they had that they believed that will paint all the pictures you need. Those are my grandfathers in the Lord. I grew up in that. That's what Habakkuk is saying. I saw it. I saw those men. I heard them stand in that pulpit and lay out the Word of God. I saw their churches. I saw great revivals where when they gave the invitation, scores of people came down broken.

V. The Rise of Peter S. Ruckman

Norris dies in 1952. As always in history, the cycle of history, the erosion begins to set in. The devil does his work. He always does. By the 1970s and the 1980s, these churches began to leave the Book and go back to scholarship. The devil always would do his work through the higher education of the neo-orthodox mindset and the evangelical crowd. Just 30 years after Norris was off the scene, over half of his boys now pastoring had turned their churches over to other men. Some of them are still pastoring, but all of them began to depart from the Word of God. We began to see what was called in my day the era of the great Bible College movement. Everybody had a Bible College. They had one down in Springfield. Jack Hyles had one. Everybody had one. Jerry Falwell started one. Everybody had one. It was the thing to do. Everybody was competing. What the churches did is they lost sight of the fact that God's institution to teach you and train you with the Bible has never been and never will be a Bible College. God's program is a local New Testament church. God's program is a pastor who believes the Book, who loves the Book, who loves his people, who will take the time and realize that my job is one job: that is to take the rest of my life and invest it in you to learn that Book. That's all I've got to do. Now you made it easier for me. Shoot, I'm about ready to retire. You made it easy for me. Now there are 40, 50, 60

of you, men and women, 80 of you, who now are taking other people and doing the same thing. Now I don't have to go to Lincoln. I have teams that can go to Lincoln. I have men and women who know that Bible as good as I do that can sit down with anybody with any problem through the people ministry and all the other things we've done. You can deal with it because the job of a pastor is not to build a building. The job of a pastor is to build people. You build buildings to the glory of man. You build Christians to the glory of God.

As the devil moved into these churches to bring in through higher education and destroy the faith of thousands of young men, the future generations of this church, God needed someone extra special to take on single-handedly. Where in J. Frank Norris, God needed a hardline brute force of a nuclear explosion, now He needed a specialist. He needed a man with an education and understanding of Greek and Hebrew that no other man on planet Earth could ever have. He needed a man who had six earned degrees, two PhDs at least. A man with the ability to read 800 words a minute with a photographic memory, could remember everything he ever read. Who read a book a day for the 70 years that I knew him. A man who could read the Bible, who read the Bible through over 300 times and have the keenest mind on the English Bible more than any other individual in the 20th century. A man who was so educated, who understood the intimate Greek and Hebrew better than anybody, he had probably the greatest mind and the greatest education of anybody on this planet. Yet his greatest gift was flaunting it in the face of the educated crowd and giving the Bible to a common man. A man with Greek and Hebrew that could outlast anybody on this planet, who could stand toe to toe with any four or five Bible scholars, at least four to five to one, and just rip them to pieces. He did it by saying, "I learned everything that I know. I believe everything I believe simply to give you your Bible and tell you to have a relationship with God. I'll learn your Bible, you don't need it. God gave it to me to handle the guys who want to take it from you." And boy, he did.

God found it in a young second lieutenant from a long line of military families. You saw the video Thursday night, Peter S. Ruckman. Pete picks up a man who, after Norris, faces the battle of the last part of the 20th century on the authority of God's Word. He's battling a Christianity that no longer believes God could write a book and preserve it. A group that is so dishonest when it comes to God and His Word in history, but God gives them a real thorn in their flesh, and they hated him. They hated him like Norris. They hated him like Martin Luther. They hated him like Erasmus. They hated him like they hated Tyndale, and they hated him like Wycliffe. You never come from a long line of hated men who stood for that Book. Pete gets saved, March 19th, 1949, by an evangelist pastor by the name of U. Powell. Yes, one of Norris' boys. Ruckman, as Norris was, was God's man to hold the line with the Word of God.

I talked about the sixth great awakening. The seventh great awakening in the history of the church revolves around three men: J. Frank Norris, Pete Ruckman, Billy Graham. Most people do not understand the early connection between Dr. Ruckman and Billy Graham. They went to the same college together. There was a time when Graham wanted him to come and be part of his evangelistic deal because of his ability to draw. But they got split and separated because of the way that Graham was going to deny the Word of God and Ruckman was going to stay true to the Word of God. But he pays the price. He's lied about. He's hated. They claim that he's unsaved

and he's demon possessed. You'd go on the website and type in his name, at least 80 pages would come up of negative stuff. I've seen guys take pictures of a strip club or a bar, take his picture and Photoshop it and put it in there and put it on the internet. He's called every name in the book. But there never was a man more ready and competent for the fight. I've heard him refer to himself over and over again over the years that I knew him that he was just God's junkyard dog. And boy, he was. His response to all the criticism, all the lies, all of this, all of that, all that was said was classic. He just looked at that and he said, "No quarter asked, no quarter given." And he tore them apart. Behind his back, they crucified him. Face to face in a debate, he ripped them to shreds. I have watched the debates where the men who thought they were going to prove to the world where he and he just fillets them. I've seen the debates. It's over in the first 30 seconds. He's had a standing offer for over 50 years that anybody that disagrees with him, they will fly him down to Pensacola, put him up in a hotel, pay their food, and give them a whole hour. And then he'll take the second hour. I wonder how many of these big shot guys ever took him up on it.

You see, when God needed a man of blunt force trauma and smashed a Southern Baptist Convention, He found it in Norris. But when God needed a man to take on the intellectual mind of the day, He found it in Ruckman. They both are loved and hated. It's just that simple. To this milk toast, effeminate, cowardly Christian, Christianity raised on the devil's Bible, he was a three-headed monster. But to a true Bible believer, he's the last in a long line of men who took the stand on the Book, so you and I could have the Word of God. Was he perfect? Absolutely not. He was just a man, but he's God's man. Isn't it wonderful that God has a way to work through all our imperfections to use us anyhow? I want to tell you something. Don't you know for you to take on the whole world and take a stand and not have it affect you emotionally or not have you hiding in the corner someplace? If the things were said about you and me that were said about him, we'd be over in the corner slobbering down our face, not afraid to look at anybody. To be able to take a stand against the whole assembled world of Christianity, you've got to be weird a little bit.

I was in a pastor's office a number of years ago. He liked to play with Dr. Ruckman. I never cared because Dr. Ruckman was always smarter than he was. In the end, Ruckman won. I won't tell you how it came out. It's another story, a personal one-on-one story, I'll tell you. A man called me into his office. The pastor had just written Pete a letter. He knew that I was friends with Pete, and he always liked to rub it in my face because I was a nobody in that time. He showed me the letter and he says, "Tell me what you think of this. I'm sending this off to your buddy, Pete." And I read the letter, and it was something like this, "Dear Brother Ruckman, I love you in the Lord. I pray for you every day," which was a total lie. He says, "I am so concerned about the damage you're doing to Christianity." He says, "I'm afraid that your stand on the Bible was doing more to divide Christianity than any other thing that has ever been done." I saw the letter. I gave it back to him. He said, "What do you think?" And I said, "Well, amen. Praise the God. Somebody's got the guts to stand up and split this mess because, preacher, that's what it is. You're talking about a man who's standing up and taking a stand like Luther, like J. Frank Norris, a man that when you guys believe God didn't know what He was talking about, here's a man that says He did. If that's the case, Christianity needs to be split like Norris split it, like Luther split it." I mean, I don't get these guys. His followers are called Ruckmanites. Wear the badge with honor.

History always repeats itself, my dear friend. The only thing that men ever learn from history is men never learn anything from history. In the second century, in the early church, you had a heretic by the name of Cyprian, a North African, a heretic. He began to teach, and churches began to go this way. He began to teach and lay out the fact that the church was the mother of us all. Salvation was only found in the church. During that period of time, there was probably a number of them, but one who got recorded, a guy, a little guy by the name of Novatian. Novatian was a pastor. He stood up and said, "You're out of your mind. The church is not the mother of us all. New Jerusalem is the mother of us all. There's no salvation found in the church. That's heresy. We're splitting with you, and we're going to take a stand and stay with the Bible." You know what they called him? A church splitter. You know what they called him back in 180, 200 A.D.? The greatest enemy to Christianity. Sound familiar? You know what he did? He took a stand when the body of Christianity was going the wrong way. You're in good company.

About that same time, Origen, you remember him, he started the teaching to begin to creep into the church that Jesus Christ wasn't God, that He was a begotten God, that Jesus Christ was not really God, that He was a begotten God. If you have any other Bible this morning other than the King James Bible, look at John 1:18.

John 1:18:

> No man hath seen God at any time; the only begotten Son, which is in the bosom of the Father, he hath declared him.

Your King James Bible says that Jesus Christ was God's only begotten Son. If you've got any other Bible today in John 1:18 that says, "No man has seen God any time, the only begotten God," your NIV, ASV takes out the deity of Christ in that verse. You know why? Because Origen corrected it, that's why. And these young guys saw that. Back here, this young guy by the name of Montanus, the pastor, he says, "We're not going to buy that." They split. They went their own way, took people with them. We know what they called them? Church splitter. Yeah, he split all right over the absolute deity of the Lord Jesus Christ.

Around 300 AD, meet your true line, get your perspective right. Justin Martyr, a heretic, says that man gets born again through baptism. The church started to go that way. The word "Catholic" now as a universal concept of salvation began to come in. People now were saying, "This is a Catholic church. This is a Catholic church." The pastor by the name of Donatus says, "You are out of your mind. The true church is the church of Jesus Christ." And he split. And he led a bunch of people with him. And they called his followers Donatists. When Luther split in the Reformation, the Reformation was the opening of the door for the gospel to come to the United States, that you could have the Word of God that you have in your life through the preaching that you've heard. Martin Luther, one man, they said to Luther one time, "Luther, don't you know the whole world's against you?" He says, "Then I'm against the whole world." They called his followers Lutherans. In Czechoslovakia in the 1400s, all of the country of Czechoslovakia, almost without exception, had come to a saving knowledge of Jesus Christ through the preaching of one man, John Hus, who broke the back of the Roman Catholic church in Central Europe and

preached the gospel of Jesus Christ, went against everything, called his followers Hussites. When Norris did his thing, they called his followers Norrisites. You're in a good crowd.

VI. Our Stand and Legacy

Let me just say something to you here, just to show that you've got your perspective. This church is a Baptist church. We won't be taking the name off anytime soon. We hold that God wrote a perfect Bible and preserved it for the common man to read and learn the truth of God. We teach and believe that Bible is a King James 1611 Authorized Version, the only one. We make no apology for our stand. We have something that you don't have, but I'm willing to share it with you. We have an understanding of who we are in our roots. We understand where we've come from. I understand where I've come from. I've come from a long line of men who held the line on that Book that came straight from Norris, my and your spiritual great, great grandfather. That biblical line can be traced right back through church history to Antioch in Acts 11 and 12.

We believe, now get this, we believe and teach that the original Greek and Hebrew are absolutely worthless. We believe that the original Greek and Hebrew, that God has nothing, absolutely no interest in them. I can prove it to you in five minutes or less, probably 30 seconds or less, and you will not have a leg to stand on. I know we're looked at as hillbillies, unlearned, unpolished, unprofessional.

Acts 4:13:

> Now when they saw the boldness of Peter and John, and perceived that they were unlearned and ignorant men, they marvelled; and they took knowledge of them, that they had been with Jesus.

You'll call us that, call me that right up to Thursday night. I may not be a Ruckman or I may not be a Norris, but I will do till he gets here when it comes to that Book. I saw it. I saw the difference. I understand the difference.

I'm telling you, now this Laodicean church, Revelation 3:14-22, a church that is rich, it's increased with goods. Just look all around you. They're building monuments, millions and millions of dollars into buildings with McDonald's and coffee shops and gymnasiums. They've got all the rudiments of the world. The only thing they don't have is a Bible. A church that has need of nothing. And the Bible says, "and knowest not that thou art wretched, and miserable, and poor, and blind, and naked."

My perspective is simply this: We'll take our stand alongside the Novatians, the Montanists, the Donatists, the Manichaeans, the Cathari, the Albigensians. We'll take our stand along with John Hus and the Paulicians and the Waldensians from Peter Waldo. We'll stand in our day like Norris and Ruckman did in their day. We'll cry out to anybody who's looking for the truth that you have a Bible. That's God's Word. That is without error. That God inspired and He preserved, and you can have it. The absolute perfect Word of God.

Now here's the reality of your situation. Like it or not, agree with it or not, you and I simply would not have the Bible today that we have if it wasn't for these two men that God raised up to

keep it for us when we couldn't keep it for ourselves. The last great awakening in America was these men. Now they're gone. There will not be any more men like them. It's over. There were seven great awakenings in this country when God infused Himself from 1700 when Unitarianism came over and destroyed what Whitfield and Edwards were doing, right up through Billy Sunday, right up through the Civil War, right up through Billy Sunday, right up to the 50s when God began to do what He did to make sure you have a Bible. There'll not be an eighth great awakening. Well, there will. But the eighth great awakening, my friend, will be the rapture of the church. This time when God calls the church awake, it'll stay awake. You see, all down through those great awakenings, it was for one purpose: for God to give His people the Word of God. Every one of them let it go by the wayside. Eight in the Bible is new beginning. So when you get the Lord Jesus Christ in the great awakening and the rapture of the church, you're getting the incarnate Word which will never turn away and will be with us forever. It's in your heart right now. You're going to spend an eternity with Him when He comes back.

I just want to set the record straight. First and foremost, I did this out of a heart of gratitude. Mel Sobaka was my father in the Lord. Many of you knew him. All of you loved him. I wouldn't have what I have and be what I am today, if I'm anything, without him in my life, basically adopting me after my dad died and taking me in. He used to tell me the story of how when he was going to Kent State University and he just got saved, he struggled with, "Was there a Bible?" He was beginning to hear all of the great things that were coming out that wanted to take his Bible from him. He said to me many, many times, "You know what? It wasn't until that old Krauthead German sat me down and I said, 'I was so frustrated, I just screamed at him, Do I have a Bible?' And he screamed back, 'Boy, do you ever!'" He said he was the Apostle Paul in my life because he gave me my Bible, and Mel gave me my Bible, and I've given you your Bible. That's how it works.

I told the kids yesterday, Pete used to come to camp. This is back in the 70s. I just got right with God. Mel lived out at the camp. He had a house out there as the whole camping season. Senior high week is when Ruckman came to preach, and it was all we waited all year for senior high week for Ruckman to come. He'd preach three times a day. But at night, him and Mel would sit in Mel's living room. You've got to remember the house is all one story. They had a screened-in porch with windows that opened up, and then you could walk in and out through two different actions. Him and Mel would sit in there and they'd talk. Me and about four or five other guys would sneak down, sneak into that screened-in porch area and sit by that window. I heard some of the most incredible things. They loved each other. They knew each other, and there was a time when they just unloaded with each other. I heard them talk about what they thought when the Lord was coming back. I heard them talk about the struggles. I watched Pete Ruckman break down one night and cry. His wife deserted him after he got saved. He stayed single for like 20-some years. He was an evangelist. He broke down and cried one night. He told Mel, he said, "I don't know why, I don't know why they're doing this to me. I don't know why they do it to me." He said, "I go to preach some place down south, and this particular university finds out that I'm there. In the middle of the night, they'll send call girls over to my room to try to get me to fall. A single man living in abstinence, and they send call girls to my room, a Bible college." All because they hated the Book that he stood for. He never fell.

I learned more in those screened-in porch times than I could ever, ever, ever hope to ever, ever learn. I learned his weaknesses, his strengths. I heard the great things that they talked about. I heard about the men that were doing great things. I heard him talk on a level that he just didn't talk to people on. I saw and understood the real man and the real heart and a real love for that Book. I was telling the kids yesterday, I forget a lot of things. I lose my car keys four or five times a day. I've got 35 pairs of glasses. That's because I can always see one pair someplace. But I never forget. In all my forgetfulness—and I forget a lot—I forget if I give the dog the pill in the morning. Then when I know the dog is staggering sideways, that I did give her the pill in the morning and gave her another one. I'll take my medicine at night, go downstairs, come back up, and then have a brain malfunction, "Did I take my medicine?" But I'm going to never forget. I have never forgotten what I heard people talk about what God has done in their life.

I went back to Mel's funeral several years ago. Some of the old guys that were in that screened-in porch, I got talking to them, and I said, "Remember when we used to sneak down at camp and get into that porch and listen to Mel and Ruckman talking?" And you know what? They had forgotten all about it. They didn't remember it. I walked away from that thinking to myself, "That was probably the most valuable, maybe it's just me, that was the most valuable information I could ever have about anything or anybody about my Bible." People don't remember. People lose track. People lose time. They just, they don't focus on those things. I saw my life in those early years as probably the greatest learning lesson a man could ever have. I learned early on, I actually got to see it transition from here to here. I understand the perspective of where this country went in the 20th century and how God raised up a J. Frank Norris. Then He raised up a Peter S. Ruckman. Then He raised up churches that today there'll be no more Ruckmans. There'll be no more J. Frank Norris. There'll be no more great awakenings.

My prayer, my prayer every day for me and for you, that I'll always find the courage and the grace to be in this superficial, educated world of Christianity made up of philosophy, vain deceit, traditions of man, and the rudiments of the world. I just pray that me and you and this church will find the strength and the courage and the grace to simply be in this day God's junkyard dog. Look at the opposition out there who wants to take your Bible from you. Look at the opposition out there that hates the Word of God, that Christianity—and I can't even get my head around it—a Christianity that now stands and says you don't have the Word of God. My philosophy will be his philosophy: No quarter asked, none given. Taking our stand on the Word of God.

You see, this is my dilemma. How do I convey that to you? How do I get you to see what it once was and what it became and why you have what you have and now what we are to do with it? How do I compete with all the things that you've got in the world? How do I compete with your kids, with your video games, your sports? How do I compete with you young couples, with all the things that you have in your world that you want to do with? How do I compete with you middle-aged people who have your world and your career? How do I compete with the older folks that are thinking about retirement and thinking about how do you compete and get them to see that those men down through the 20th century paid the price not for you and me to sit here and do nothing with it, but to do something with it?

I thank God for all the men and the women that do so much here, my family and all of you who are my sons and daughters in the Lord. You freed me up in my time and these last days of my life, which hopefully will be more than tomorrow, you freed me up to do what I feel God has called me to do most. That is to leave you a legacy that you do have a Bible, and it works, and it's real. If you will simply build every area of your life on that Book, you too can be the man or the woman God wants you to be and take your stand alongside the great line of men and women who held faithful to that Book.

Let's pray. Father, we do thank You and praise You for the Lord Jesus. Thank You for today. Thank You for the men and the women that have come out. Thank You, Lord, for this church. I thank You, Father, for my privilege to be the pastor here. Lord, this church is all about these folks, these people. Lord, it's about the men and the women, the moms and the dads, the young couples, the families that You brought here that want the truth, and they'll not be satisfied with anything else. They're sick and tired of the showboat Christianity of the three-ring circuses with the pastor, the clown in the middle. But Lord, they want the truth. They want a church that stands on the Book, that preaches the Book, that believes the Book, that they can bring their family to and get their sons and daughters and their grandkids grounded deep in the Book of the Word of God. Thank You, Father, for the privilege. Even though I hate this world and I hate this time that I'm born in, Lord, I thank You for the privilege of allowing me to see the difference between the two and help me, as feeble as I am, as frail as I am, as unworthy as I am, help me to stand in the shadow of these great men, to just hold a small light up in these last days, to take these young kids and these moms and dads that You've entrusted to me and help them, give them a perspective of who they are, where they've come from, and what our job is to get done in these last days before the final great awakening of the Lord Jesus Christ coming into my heart takes place. Thank You for today. Thank You for Thursday. Thank You for everything You do for us. In Jesus' name, in the name of Jesus, we ask it. Amen.