

Proverbs 19:3

Sunday 1/15/2017

I'd love to hear you do "Great Balls of Fire." I'd sing the parts for it. I like that other one too. I don't know who these guys are. I think it was Little Richard. What is that one he sings? "I got a girl named Daisy. She does what drives me crazy." Remember that song? Well, believe it or not, my one female lab, her name is Daisy. She's kind of hyper. She'll jump up and I'll grab her front paws and I'll sing that song to her. She just actually kind of jumps back and forth with it. You had to be there, I guess, but it was pretty exciting for me.

I. Review of Proverbs 19 Teachings

Today we're going to move on deeper into Proverbs chapter 19. So far, from last week and the time that we have spent in it, we've not gotten very far in it, but we have looked at four really important teachings that are found in this great chapter. This is one of these chapters that you don't want to hurry through. It's one of these chapters that you want to take your time and you want to squeeze everything out if you can, because there's so much in it.

The first time we looked at it, we really focused on the word integrity, didn't we, and how vital that is, and the word integrity, what it means, and how it really just is the key word for the Christian in our walk with God and our dealings with others. Then we saw last week the aspect of getting hasty in what we do, making choices, making decisions without all of the facts, or just getting in a hurry, and how it leads us into trouble—the aspect of really waiting on God and just letting God show you when to move and what to do.

Then we looked at adding some things to your faith, and I told you how that all your Christian life you basically are adding some stuff. One of the greatest things that I gave you, it's helped me over many, many, many years. It not only is good for your own self, but it helps you figure things out because many times in Christianity things happen. Things go south, things go sideways, and you stand there scratching your head, "Why in the world did this happen?" or "How does this happen?" There's never a complicated answer when it comes to anything in Christianity.

I think the greatest single asset about my own life and dealing with people, and people in general, and in relationship with God, is simply what I gave you last week: that God wants you to add some things to your faith. When you begin to add some things to your faith, the next thing God does, He takes the things that you add and He multiplies it into your life. You take the devil on the other hand, and what he does is he wants to subtract things from your life. As he subtracts things from your life, then he gets you to the point where God adds and multiplies, the devil's subtraction, and he divides. He takes you away from everything that God wants for you by subtracting it and then, at the end result, dividing you out of it. That's such a fundamental aspect. I would simply say that as long as you continue to add to your faith and you're doing those things and adding all those things that you need to add, you're going to be okay. When you start subtracting things or letting things go out of your life that you know are vital things, then you're going to wind up getting divided out.

Then we looked at the concept of being patient. I gave you five key areas that really are the foundational support for patience in our life:

1. Having structure in our life.
2. Self-discipline in our life.
3. Hard work that it takes to do things with the Bible.
4. A visible plan that you really know where you're trying to get and what you're trying to do.
5. A purpose in life, knowing why you want to get to where you go and how you're going to get there.

I think of all of those things in our lives, probably self-discipline is the most vital aspect that we could ever have in our lives. Today in Christianity, the way it is and the way people are, self-discipline is really a rare commodity today.

II. The Military Analogy and Leadership

Many of you guys have been in the military, and you certainly see it with the guys that are in the few on Wednesday night when we have it, but the core concept is and always has been a strict code of discipline. For the individual soldier who is a real soldier, who is going to be a soldier and wants to be one, it is self-discipline. You have to discipline yourself to some things. You can't just do whatever you want to do. There is a chain of command that you have to follow.

The military, much like Christianity, will have the same basic structure, and that's because fundamentally Christianity is a warfare and we're an army. We're to train that way; we're to fight that way. The Bible says in Ephesians 6 that we wrestle not against flesh and blood. We're not going to go up against Iraq or Russia or any of those guys, but we're going to go up against the spiritual battles of life. In truth of the matter, the spiritual battles of life are much more important than the physical battles of life. A hundred million years from now, the physical battles—World War I and World War II, the Civil War, the French and Indian War—it won't matter, but the spiritual battles that are won and lost will count for all of eternity.

Without a doubt, in the military, as in Christianity, the success or failure will be the leadership structure: people who are disciplined in themselves to that aspect and rise as leaders. I've found in dealing with people over the years that there are two kinds of leaders, and both of them are really great, but one is exceptional. You'll find people who are good leaders that they'll lead people and that they lead well and they're great in all that they do. They've disciplined themselves; they've structured themselves, and they're great leaders. Then you find people who, in my estimation, are leaders of leaders. In other words, they set the standard for leaders. They don't come along very often.

Leadership is great, and I love that when God takes you guys and develops you into leaders, but some of you He takes a little step further, and it's the fact that you're not only a leader of men, but you're a woman, but you're leaders of leaders. You set the example. People look to you. They look to your leadership. They want to follow your leadership. Some of you, there was a time when my phone would ring off the hook because people would call and ask me Bible questions about this, about that. I still get quite a few, but I don't get as many as I used to. You

know why? Because they call you now, some of you. The average pastor would get his feelings hurt about that. To me, I think it's the greatest asset that I could ever have is that you're out there. Some of you are out there being leaders of leaders. When you give the answer, I'm fully assured. I've heard enough of you do the answers to know that you're right on the money with what you give them. I guess in a good way or a bad way, I guess I've rubbed off on you one way or the other. I don't know how good that is or bad that is, but you do very well with what you do.

You would think that this would be true. Most people who don't really understand the military mindset, you would think that the real core value of leadership in the military would be the officers. But you know that's really not true. If you've been in the military at all, you know that the real core value of success will not be at the officer level, but rather the NCO level, the non-commissioned officers, the sergeants. There, in any army—I don't care if it's the Irish army, the Russian army, or the Chilean army, or the Romanian army—the meat on the bones of any army will always be the NCOs, the sergeants, the ones who are always there and always doing everything they do. Their expertise, they're experts because they've been a vet for so many years, and they're what really holds it all together.

The whole military concept is built around that structure. The youngest sergeant or the least of the sergeants is what they call a buck sergeant, and you see it all the time. He just got three stripes on, nothing underneath, just three stripes. He's called an E-5. Your buck sergeants, they'll be in charge in a military scenario. They'll be in charge of a squad, and that's probably 18 men or so, depending on how they do it. And then up from that, within the structure, you'll have eight or nine, ten or twelve squads within a platoon, and that platoon will be run by somebody that's an E-6 or an E-7. That means he's going to have three stripes up and either one underneath or two underneath. They call them rockers. And he'll have a platoon of a hundred guys, and then he'll have the E-6s, the E-5s underneath of him, and they'll all work together.

And then you'll have on a company level, and a company is made up of four platoons. So in a company level, you'll have what they call a first sergeant. Now he'll be an E-8, or in the Marine Corps, they're called a gunnery sergeant, gunneries, but they're called top sergeants in the Army. And he'll be an E-8, and he'll be over the whole company. And then as you go up through the structure, you have a number of squads that make up a platoon. You have four platoons that make up a company. And you have five or six companies that make up a battalion level. And that's how the structure goes. At the battalion level, you'll have a sergeant major. He'll be over everything. All the other sergeants are under him.

It's a structure where a division commander, who's probably a light colonel or maybe a colonel, even a great battalion commander, he never sees the battlefield. Most of those officers, they never have any contact with the men. Even a company commander, he may be on a battlefield, but he doesn't personally get involved with the men. He doesn't personally get involved in their daily lives. He may know who they are. That's why they all have name tags, so he can know who they are. But the officers basically sit at the top, and they get their orders from headquarters. And they never really know the men. They never get on their level. But the NCOs, on the other hand, they're the backbone of it all. They get the job done.

As I said, many times, you're going to find where Christianity is an army. And it would be easy to say that Christianity is like the army, but it's more proper to say that the army is like Christianity, because Christianity was around in God's mind long before any army ever showed up. We sing the songs in our hymnals. This is why we have the old hymns of the faith: "Onward Christian Soldiers," "Sound of Battle Cry," "A Pious Soldier," "Rub the Cross." We're told, Timothy was told, to endure hardness as a good soldier of Jesus Christ, that he was called to be a soldier. The Bible says that Jesus Christ is the Captain of our salvation. He's the officer. I don't look at myself, if I'm going to put this in a scenario that is like it's in a military, I don't look at myself as an officer. I look at myself as an NCO with the other NCOs that are the core of this church.

Ephesians chapter 6, it talks about putting on the whole armor of God. And I always looked at that, because I always ask myself, why did Paul use that analogy? The analogy that comes down through is the analogy of a first century Roman soldier, which was in occupation in Paul's day. Rome was running the world militarily. The greatest military army in the world. Up at Fort Leavenworth, they have a command college where they teach and bring all these guys in from all these other nations, majors and up, and they teach them combat command. They're at Fort Leavenworth. They have a very fantastic program. Do you realize that they still study tactics? And what they do is they study tactics. They teach these guys the tactics that have in the past that have been successful. And then these guys use these things in different scenarios. You realize that they still teach the tactics of the first Roman allegiance back in Christ's day. Their battle tactics. They still teach them at Fort Leavenworth because of the value of how great they were as a military force. Most people don't even know that. You'd think we would talk about modern stuff. And they do, but I'm telling them.

Paul's sitting there writing the book of Ephesians talking about the armor of God and the warfare of the believer. And he's surrounded by first century Roman soldiers. And he knows that Rome has conquered the world. And I know what he's thinking. He's saying to himself, "If I could get God's people to be as self-disciplined and dedicated for the cause of Christ as the Roman soldiers are to the cause of Rome, we'd win the world for Christ." And he puts it in a spiritual application. He says they wrestle against flesh and blood, but we don't. Our warfare is a spiritual warfare. But we have to endure hardness. We have to have the same character qualities.

In Christianity, it will never be the pastor that holds it all together. And this is a fatal flaw that pastors make. I've been around pastors all my life and seen churches all my life. And pastors believe that they get the illusion that they're the one that holds it all together. That's the fatal flaw that pastors make. They think that they're the one who holds it all together. They may be the one that gets the vision from God. And they may be the one who starts the church and gets everything going and be the one that God uses. But it will never be the pastor that holds it all together. It will be the midline people like you who grasp the vision, who understand the calling, who self-discipline yourself to the point where you are structured in everything that you do. And then you take the vision of the church, and just like the NCOs of any military of any armies, you take it down on the levels and you give everybody what they need. And you are the ones who hold it all together.

No church is built around one man. I don't care how good he is. In Christianity, like I said, it will never be the pastor that holds it all together. He may stand at the top and he may take all the flock and he may at the judgment seat of Christ give an account for it all. But it'll be the mid-level NCOs, the men and the women who have been trained and know the Word of God and can carry out the mission because they know how it works. Those kind of people are invaluable. Those churches never get to that level because the pastor never sees it. He goes through his whole ministry under the delusion that it all has to be about him. He thinks that delegating things is okay as long as it's clean the toilets or do this or do that. For him to delegate ministerial things that are on his level would be terrifying to him because most of them are so insecure that they're afraid that you're going to do a better job. On my behalf, I expect you to do a better job. I expect you to be better with the Bible than I am. I expect you to be better with the people you work with than I am. And many of you are.

But you need to understand clearly what we do here. The pastor may get God's vision, but you are the core who have to carry it out, and it works together. We get our orders from the Word of God. We get our vision that God gives us. I lay it out to you. Just like any military company, you midline NCOs, you guys and gals who understand what we're doing, who have the vision of what we're doing. You take it. You hold it all together. What pastor can be everywhere at once and solve every problem? Nobody. Just like nobody in a military can do it. He has to have a cadre of men and women who understand the fundamentals, who are self-disciplined, who understand what we're trying to do, and then they take the same vision and they all work together to accomplish what needs to be done.

I love to read a lot of books on history. But I think my love for military history stems from the fact that I have learned so much about Christianity by studying great military campaigns. I have books that lay out the 10 greatest military campaigns in history, and I love to read them. But I also have a book that talks about the 10 or the 20 worst military disasters in history, and they're valuable to read too. I read the great biographies of great generals. Most of them are unsaved. But there's something about that mindset that you can translate into Christianity that got those guys through when nothing else would get them through. And in Christianity, there's going to be some times that you have to go through things that the average Christian will not be able to get through. And sometimes the only thing that will get you through it is your self-discipline and your stamina not to quit and stay with it all that went down through there.

Most of you young kids, the older people probably know this, but in 1944 we were in World War II. And we got in World War II in 1941. And Germany had an impenetrable fortress. They called it Fortress Europe. And we knew to defeat the Nazis that we were going to have to invade the continent of Europe. And we started in Africa, had some success there, moved up into Italy and Palermo and in Sicily, but that really wasn't the European continent per se. We had to land on the European continent at some point. And on June the 6th, 1944, which is commonly known D-Day, we landed on the continent of Europe in France.

If you've seen **Saving Private Ryan** or **Band of Brothers** or any of that, there's a lot of movies out about it, a lot of history on it. Most people today don't even understand the incredible price that was paid on that Normandy invasion on D-Day. It was incredible just to get a foothold

on Europe. Once we got our foothold in Europe, the war only went on for another year. And once we got in there and we just flooded the place with our troops, Germany collapsed pretty much. But they had done a lot to keep us out. They knew we were coming. The Normandy area was a lot of hedge groves, hedge groves that were like maybe 20, 30 feet high, big shrubby hedges. They were like patchwork. They had been there for hundreds of years. They were used centuries ago to lay off boundaries, but they grew. And now they're 30 feet tall and 40 feet wide and they're almost, every field is lined with hedge growth. It's a very impossible task to try to get through.

There were causeways that came from the beach that went inland that the Germans could put down reinforcements on. There were select cities like Carentan, which was a vital thing that had to be taken. And without those things being taken, the Normandy invasion would have been a disaster. The night before that they hit Omaha Beach, Utah Beach, Sword, and Gold Beach, two airborne divisions, about 10, 15,000 men jumped that night way behind the lines of Normandy Beach. It was the 101st Airborne and it was the 82nd Airborne, 15,000 men. Each of them had a specific goal that they had to do. The 82nd was going to secure the causeways that they couldn't get reinforcements down. The 101st was to take the city of Carentan. They all had objectives that they had trained for and planned for for months before the invasion took place.

Like anything in warfare, the moment the ramp goes down or the moment the green light goes on and you're out the door, it all falls apart. And they had specific drop zones that they were to be dropped in. There wasn't one airborne division that made the drop zones. Some of them were dropped 30 miles from the drop zones. Some of them were dropped, the Germans had opened up the dikes and filled up the swamps or the dry land between the hedge groves and made three feet of water with just a cause road. Many paratroopers, hundreds of them drowned in their heavy equipment in two or three feet of water. It could have been a disaster. If the 101st and the 82nd Airborne would not have gotten their mission done, the invasion would have been a farce. It would have been a total disaster. We'd have never got a foothold on Europe.

And they were scattered everywhere. Many of their officers could not find their group. There were 82nd guys with 101st guys, 101st guys with 82nd. Nobody could find anybody. When they come over to Fortress Europe, the flak was so bad and those C-47s were supposed to slow down to about 80 miles an hour so the guys could get out. But because they were being shot at from the ground and it looked like turkeys, they pushed their engines ahead and they were traveling 120 miles an hour when those boys went out of those planes. It ripped their equipment off, it ripped their helmets off, many of them lost their weapons. And they were in such a hurry to get out of there that they turned on the green lights long before they hit the drop zone. Some of them turned on their green lights when they were over the English Channel and the boys parachuted and died in the Channel.

Needless to say that they were scattered everywhere. And there was no organization, no officers, nobody to pull them together. But the 82nd and the 101st that night accomplished every goal that they had. They took Carentan the next day. They secured both causeways and they held the Germans from ever getting reinforcements back. And it stands as a marvel today to the testimony of those elite troops because even though they did not have their officers, even though they did

not have their command of chain of command had been broken and they were scattered all over the place and there were 82nd and the 101st guys together and vice versa, they had the self-discipline to understand what their mission was. And what they did was, wherever they found pockets of their men, they organized, they knew what their objective was and without the officers to lead them, they led themselves, they picked up more guys. It didn't matter if they were 82nd or 101st, they knew what they had to do. And the 101st took Carentan the next day. The 82nd and the 101st took those causeways, held those causeways and the Normandy invasion was a success. All because of self-discipline. All because of men who understood that they had a job to do and the outcome of the war depended on that.

They had been trained better than anybody else. They looked at themselves as an elite status of being better than just ground troops. They put their lives in danger more than anybody else, jumping in the middle of the night behind enemy lines. Many of them were shot down. One group, the 505th 82nd Airborne Division got missed their drop zone and the pilot saw, and actually there were guys called pathfinders who had dropped in four or five hours before them, four or five guys in the middle of enemy territory who were supposed to light the drop zone so they could find them. The 505th of the 82nd Airborne, the pilot saw lights up ahead and thought it was and he dumped out this whole load of about 300 men of the 505th under the little town of Sainte-Mère-Église. That was a German strong point. Those Germans literally shot those boys down in their parachutes. You can still see books and stories of a guy, his name was Roger Steele, whose parachute caught on the steeple of the church and he hung there while he watched all of his buddies. He played like he was dead, but they shot them down in their parachutes, lost all of those guys, missed the drop zone.

But it was their elite status that they knew who they were. It was the elite status that they knew what they had to do. It was the fact that they knew their mission and the fact that they did not have the officers there to tell them, they had the NCOs and the NCOs saved the day. And in any church, in any ministry, whatever we do, what will hold it all together, what will keep it all together will be the midline corps men and women of this church who understand the mission, who understand the vision, who do not get sidetracked with all the goofy stuff that's out there in the world and in Christianity. And your job and your focus is to accomplish the mission. And it's one of the greatest stories. Self-discipline and self-motivation are key in Christianity. And you see what needs to be done. There's no one there to tell you what needs to be done. And you get it done.

NCOs, they train. They educate. They rebuke. They admonish. They warn. They're hands-on with somebody trying to help them. They encourage. And they develop the new recruit into leaders. And many of them not only become leaders, they become leaders of leaders.

Now, that has been the structure here, the way that we build people. And I made no apology for it. I told you last week that we build people. We don't mass produce people. We build them one person at a time. And the core of cadre who have the ability to lead and to teach and to build. Most churches make a fatal mistake. And I've seen it all my life. This is why they have so many problems. They want to grow numerically. But I've learned over the years that growing numerically is a bad thing if your base of core people are not growing out to support your

vertical ascent. And of course, most of them have a very small base of people. They try to build a very large church which goes up. And then it becomes top-heavy. And you have no base to support it. A church can only grow upward as its base grows laterally outward. And that base will be the NCOs. It'll be the core people who understand what we're doing, who buy into what we're doing, and who are part of what we're doing.

Somebody said one time, there are people who, in every church, there are three kinds of people:

- There are those people who make things happen.
- There's people who know what's happening.
- And there's people who don't have a clue what's happening.

And that is so true. And so we see that great example coming through there.

III. The Foolishness of Man

Now today, I want to look at Proverbs 19:3. And I want to talk about another great verse here. It says, "The foolishness of man perverteth his way, and his heart freteth against the Lord." Now the Bible says the foolishness of a man perverteth his way. Now this is one of the best clear-cut, understandable verses that will ever show you why things are the way they are in people's lives today, God's people. And it's like last week, that great verse on being hasty in what we do, and how it always causes trouble, great practical material. And I want to look at the first four words here for just a moment. But before we do that, Delano, would you ask God's blessing on the service this morning for me right there?

Prayer:

Thank you, Father, for the peace of your God, for the peace of all your faith, for the peace of God, for the opening of your word, and giving us the message, for giving us what you laid on in part. And I would pray that we can change this morning for it, so that we can be more like you, and be more like you. Amen.

"The foolishness of man." What a great thing that is to study in the Bible. Now I know that all of us are foolish sometimes. I know I certainly am. But let me show you what the Bible says about our foolishness, the concept of the foolishness of man.

First of all, when Paul was dealing over there in 1 Corinthians chapter 2, verses 6 through 11 with the church of Corinth, there's a church that was trying to build itself on worldly wisdom. And Paul told them over there in 1 Corinthians 2:6-7:

1 Corinthians 2:6-7 Howbeit we speak wisdom among them that are perfect: yet not the wisdom of this world, nor of the princes of this world, that come to nought: But we speak the wisdom of God in a mystery, even the hidden wisdom, which God ordained before the world unto our glory:

He says, "You know what, you guys have a church, but you're operating under a worldly wisdom. You're not building it on the Bible. You're building it on man's concepts and everything that he's trying to do." And he says, "What you need to get is verse 7, is the hidden wisdom that's in the Bible. What we reveal to you through the Holy Spirit of God."

I've watched Christianity from about 1970. And it's so true, about every 4 or 5 years, maybe every 10 years, some guy out there comes up with a different way to build a church. And pastors today are so unbelievably inept when it comes to understanding how to build a church, they look for any new thing that will give success to them. We had an evangelist one time that was going around and he would talk about the fact that wherever he went, that he would have 600, 700 people saved. And he was so popular that he got to the point where he wouldn't go preach any place that couldn't guarantee him a thousand people to show up because he was too valuable to waste his time on less than a thousand people. And pastors were standing in line to get him. You know why? Because he was a new gimmick. He had a sermon and a message that brought a lot of people in.

I remember one time he spoke at a church that I was with and he got up that night in the pulpit and he talked about the fact that he had just come from a church in Cleveland, Ohio and they had 600 people saved. And everybody in the church went crazy. Well, I'm glad 600 people got saved, but I'm a little more intuitive than that. So I called that church that next week and I said, "I heard you had so-and-so there. He was at our church this week and I heard you had a great revival." And she said, "Yeah, I heard you had 600 people saved in that week, a long revival." She said, "Absolutely. It was the most fantastic thing that we ever had seen." And I said, "Good. That's really good." I said, "Let me ask you a question. This last Sunday, how many of them got baptized?" They really might have had a long baptism service. None of them got baptized. So I'm glad 600 people get saved. But you know what? Churches sometimes get so interested in getting them saved, they don't carry them through the rest of the way. So I know that baptism doesn't save you. I understand that. But I am going to tell you this. In every New Testament church, when a person got saved in the book of Acts, he joined the New Testament church and he got baptized. Baptism may not save you, but it's a vital part of your Christian life, of the first steps of your public identification. I mean, I would think if you had 600 true conversions, at least one or two would want to get baptized.

Every four or five, maybe 10 years, back in the sixties and the seventies, they taught guys this. They said, "If you want to build a church, here's what you do: Start a Christian school. Because the public schools are so bad that the parents just don't want to put their kids in it. And if you start a Christian school, they're going to think their kids are going to get everything that is going to be good and it's going to be wonderful." And he says, "You'll have them flock to your school." Now, the next thing is, do you charge them a tuition? And then if they join your church, then you give them a break on the tuition. And it's a surefire way to start to build a church. You realize that almost every church in this country, little churches like this, our size, were coming up with schools, Christian schools. They were the worst thing you ever saw in your life. I mean, some of the people were unqualified that taught them and they cared nothing about the kids. It was a gimmick that was taught to young pastors that if you want to build a church, start a Christian school and then they'll flock in. And then you get everybody to come to your church. And that's how you build it. You realize that those schools are all gone today. There was one over here in Independence that lasted. It's been gone now for years. They used to have me come over and speak gospel and the star stuff. In the early years, it was a thing where they were a Christian school and they had kids there. And as the time went on and they couldn't pay the bills, you

know what they did? They decided that Mormons and Seventh-day Adventists were just as good and Christian as other people. So they started to let them come to the Christian school. See what you got to do.

In the 90s, it was get a gigantic music program, get a choir, have them sing cantatas, do all kinds of great things, have all kinds of great pageants and plays. In the 2000s, it was, "Okay, so what we're going to do now is we're going to have three church services and we're going to have one church service that's going to be traditional. That'll be in the morning. That'll be for the old folks. Then we're going to have one as contemporary. We'll have that at 11 o'clock. That'll be for you. And then we'll have a modern one at one o'clock. And that's where we'll let it all hang out." In other words, that's how you build a church. Give people what they want. I tell you something, you can write this down if you'd like. When it comes to building a church, you never give people what they want. If I gave you what you want, we'd have dancing girls up here today. There'd be a different use for these poles. If I gave you what you wanted, you never give God's people in any church what they want. You give them what they need. And we've lost that. We've lost that whole concept today. And it's because of the fact that we want to build a church. See, I'm not interested in building a church, per se, though I am building one. I'm interested in preaching the truth. If you preach the truth, the church will build itself. And it may not build as fast as other people think it needs to be built, but I never cared how fast it got built. I don't care how fast the thing is or how big the thing is. What I look at is, what's the NCO base like? That's the key. That's the key.

And today, now it's the thing where, you build a beautiful big church with all the amenities in it, and all of the health spas and the restaurants and everything, and people will come to that church. I remember back in my days that there were great rivalries between churches within this city, who was bigger and better, and more people were going because it was spacious and because of this. I've seen them build great things and great edifices and great churches and all that people, and they think that that's going to bring more people in. And of course, as Oswald Chambers said years ago, just because you get a crowd doesn't mean you have a church.

David is a great picture of us in so many ways. And he was never under any illusion that there was time in his life that he was a fool. And there's never any illusion in my life that there isn't time that I'm a fool. There isn't any illusion in my life that there's time that you're not a fool too. But he said in Psalms 38:1-5:

Psalms 38:1-5O LORD, rebuke me not in thy wrath: neither chasten me in thy hot displeasure. For thine arrows stick fast in me, and thy hand presseth me sore. There is no soundness in my flesh because of thine anger; neither is there any rest in my bones because of my sin. For mine iniquities are gone over mine head: as an heavy burden they are too heavy for me. My wounds stink and are corrupt because of my foolishness.

See that? Foolishness will cause you all kinds of issues.

- Verses 1 and 2, God's upset with him.
- Verse 3, there's no soundness in his flesh. There's no rest in his bones.
- Verse 4, his iniquity is over his head like a heavy burden.

- His wounds stink and are corrupt all because of his foolishness.

So when you look at it, you're listed out. There's no soundness. There's no rest. There's no peace. The problems are way over his head. He's outnumbered and he seems like he can't ever get his head above water. If that isn't a picture of God's people today, I don't know what is. That's what foolishness will do for you.

Then he said in Psalm 69:5, he also knew that God kept track of his foolishness.

Psalms 69:50 God, thou knowest my foolishness; and my sins are not hid from thee.

He understood that God had a record of our foolishness. Now here's a life that gets overwhelmed with the things from the old life. How many God's people today are absolutely underwater, and they can't seem to get anywhere with God or their own Christian life all because of these things right here? Their foolishness has led to them being overwhelmed with the things of life that they hardly can even function.

The word foolishness, we've talked about it before, is defined in the book of Proverbs. It's one who:

- Despises wisdom (Proverbs 1:7)
- Slanders (Proverbs 10:18)
- Mocks (Proverbs 14:9)
- Resists punishment for correction (Proverbs 17:10)
- Whose eyes are the ends of the earth (Proverbs 17:24)
- Who meddles in other people's business (Proverbs 20:3)
- Who keeps returning to his sin over and over and over again (Proverbs 26:16)
- And all of it's in his own head and his own mind (Proverbs 28:26)

And that's a progressive study through the book of Proverbs. Now foolishness will always indicate something that is worthless in our life, and the essence of non-productivity in its approach whenever we do. It's vain in its effect on us and always wrong in the sight of God.

Proverbs 24:9 The thought of foolishness is sin: and the scorner is an abomination to men.

Now that's a great verse because it not only says that the thought of foolishness is sin, but it shows you the end result of your foolishness: you start out as a fool, get away from the Word of God, you start out getting into foolishness in the Christian life, and the end is going to be, now you're going to be scornful to the winnings of God. That's how it works. Hold on to that verse. We'll be back there in a minute.

IV. Perverting One's Way

Now Proverbs 19:3 says that man's foolishness will pervert his way. Now that's the key word there, is the word way. Christianity is a very simple concept. It never amazes me how the people want to make Christianity, their lives, so complicated. They have issues in their life and they want to make it so complicated. They'll go to their psychiatrist, he only even makes it more complicated. They'll go to their psychiatrist, they'll go to their therapist, they'll go to this, they

only make it even more complicated. It's not complicated. We always want to make it more complicated than it is so we can live within our fabricated gray areas that we all like to make up.

Christianity in its simplest basic form is simply two things: You're either going to go God's way or you're going to go your way. And the end corresponding result is going to be based on simply that. You're either going to go your way and become a fool and get you into all kinds of problems, or you're going to go God's ways and get the wisdom. God's way will be based on the principles and the promises and the models and the patterns found in the Bible. Our way will be our forsaking those principles and going our own way and yet proclaiming that, hey, we're still okay.

The example of a child of God gets saved and begins to grow and then they get into the Bible and God starts to add some things into their life and then something happens. They fall into another influence, something happens in their life with the Word of God and pretty soon now they go into reverse. And where God was adding things, now the devil is subtracting those things and where God wanted to multiply them and keep them on, now the devil is subtracting those things and in time he divides them out. Just that simple. It's just that simple.

We talk about the way. Genesis 24:27: "I being in the way, the Lord led." That isn't you getting in the way of God, that's you getting in God's way, the way He's going.

Psalms 1:1 Blessed is the man that walketh not in the counsel of the ungodly, nor standeth in the way of sinners, nor sitteth in the seat of the scornful.

There again, taking counsel from the ungodly will get you walking with the ungodly and then as the process goes, you'll be in the way of sinners and the last thing in that thing is simply you're now sitting in the seat of the scornful. Where you once loved the Bible, you loved church, now you're scornful, everything that God did. Why? Got in the wrong way. That's all.

Psalms 27:11 Teach me thy way, O LORD, and lead me in a plain path, because of mine enemies.

It's a plain path. Not a complicated path. It's a plain path. It's easy to see. We make it complicated because it is too plain.

Psalms 36:4 He deviseth mischief upon his bed; he setteth himself in a way that is not good; he abhorreth not evil.

You're either going to go your way or God's way. It's just that simple.

Psalms 37:1-7 Fret not thyself because of evildoers, neither be thou envious against the workers of iniquity. For they shall soon be cut down like the grass, and wither as the green herb. Trust in the LORD, and do good; so shalt thou dwell in the land, and verily thou shalt be fed. Delight thyself also in the LORD; and he shall give thee the desires of thine heart. Commit thy way unto the LORD; trust also in him; and he shall bring it to pass. And he shall bring forth thy righteousness as the light, and thy judgment as the noonday. Rest in the LORD, and wait patiently for him: fret not thyself because of him who prospereth in his way, because of the man who bringeth wicked devices to pass.

Now that is the stepping stone of your Christian life. The key goal in your Christian life today, wherever you want to get to in your life, ought to be able to be rest in the Lord. That ought to be where you want to get. This is showing you the process. First of all, you quit worrying about the world out there because He's greater than they are. The first thing you've got to do is trust in the Lord. That will be defined for you in Proverbs 3:5-6. That's you leaning on His understanding instead of your own. The second thing you have to do is delight yourself in the things of God. You're delighting yourself in the wrong things. And then the real key before any rest will ever come to your life, you have to get to this third part, and that is in verse 5, you have to commit your way to His way. At some point in your life, if you don't commit your way to His way, there'll never be the rest of God in your life, because it will always be your way. It will always be your way.

And along with that, God's way, just to define a little finer for you, God's way will always be about the things that He loves. Our way. This is so simple. God's way will always be about the things that He loves. Our way will always be about the things that we love. And in the Bible, there are seven things that God loves. And in the Bible, there are seven things that God hates. How in the world do we ever get to a Christianity that thinks we can go God's way without ever understanding what He loves and what He hates? Because the truth of the matter is that when you don't find out the seven things that God loves, and you start loving the things that you love, I guarantee you there are probably the seven things that He hates.

V. Fretting Against the Lord

And that verse says, "the foolishness of the man perverted his way." Now look at the last part of that verse. Get it all together. "The foolishness of the man perverted his way, and his heart freteth against the Lord." Now let me explain the word freteth here. Now fret is a word that's used differently in the Bible sometimes. It's used differently today. We don't ever use it the way that it's being used here. Now this is not fretting over something, but this is fretting against the Lord. I want to read it very carefully. And the verse here, it means to gripe, to complain, to murmur against God and the things of God. And so he's showing here that when you get your way, it gets perverted, then you start fretting against the Lord. You start complaining. You start getting upset with God, the people of God, the things of God. It doesn't go your way, you get an attitude about it.

And of course last week we saw the seven things that you're to add to your faith. The end of the results when you don't do that is you get blind. You can't see, spiritually blind. You can't see you're far off and you lose sight of what God is doing. And then when you get to that point, you know what you do? When you get saved, God gives you a box of crayons. When I went to grade school, we all wanted a big box of crayons that had 88 colors in it with a sharpener in the back. You had that and a new pair of jeans, you were in. When you get saved, God gives you that big box of 88 color crayons. I got to tell you right now, there are not 88 colors. There's only seven colors. So they come up with 88 to make you think like you got a lot going on. And they're all chartreuse, they're blues, four or five different colors of blues and all that. But you know what? When you got saved, God gave you 88 crayons, all different colors. Oh, what lovely pictures you

can do. I remember as a kid coloring, looking at all those colors, my imagination when I wanted to color this, maybe it was a landscape, maybe it was this, maybe it was a car, maybe it was a person. Being able to take all the different colors and just color them all that. That's the way God wants you to go through life. He wants you to have a box of crayons with 88 colors in it that you paint life with the most vivid colors that you could ever paint.

When you get your way perverted and you start fretting against the Lord, you take out of that box of 88 crayons a black one. And you color everything in life with that one color. Everything in life is shaded dark gray or black. The things that God does, oh, you lost all the joyous colors, it's all black now. It's all dark. That's your favorite color. It's a thing where everything in life, you now just paint that color. You come over to your house and go into your downstairs, it's black walls, black sofa, turn the lights on, it's a black light. Everything in life gets that color. You go through your Christian life with one color that you paint everything in life with. You know why? Because your way is perverted. And you're fretting now against the things of God. Where you haven't had the joy, joy, joy down in your heart, you don't like anything. And you just color everything with that color. And the verse is the classic commentary on human nature.

Here comes the Bible again. The Bible says in Philippians 2:14:

Philippians 2:14 Do all things without murmurings and disputings:

You and I aren't to murmur about things. Put that on your 3x5 card. It says do all things without murmuring. I got a Greek lexicon here and in the Greek that "all things" means, you know what it means? All things. When a child of God is in God's way, he has the ability to adapt. He has the ability to be flexible. He has the ability to be in circumstances compatible. And he has the ability through in tough circumstances to be durable. Because God's way will give him patience and he'll understand that things in the world don't always revolve around you and me the way we'd like to. And overall, what he sees is it isn't about him. It's about the cause of Christ. And when we lose sight of the cause of Christ, because we only got the one color crayon and paint everything that affects us because we've lost our way. And we start fretting about everything, then you've long since lost the concept of the cause of Christ.

You know, in the Bible there are two great men that illustrate this. One of them is Elijah and the other one, Jonah. You know, Elijah was the greatest prophet of God in the Bible. In fact, him and Moses were the two great guys the whole testament built around. Moses represents the law and Elijah represents the prophets. In Revelation 11, the tribulation period, those are the two guys that come back. He was one of the greatest prophets that Israel ever had. But he goes up against Ahab and Jezebel one time in his life, and it's a negative experience, and he falls apart. He reacts instead of responds. He forgets his biblical principles. He does the same thing. He gets out of God's way and starts going his way based on his fear. You know where he goes? Runs right into the wilderness. And when he got down in the wilderness, you know what he did? He started complaining about everything in his life. He forgot about the 400 prophets of Baal that he made fun of and said, "Put the water on the sacrifice," and just made a sham of the whole thing. He forgot all that. He forgot all the great things that God done in his life. Let me tell you something. When you get out of God's way and you dump your colored crayons and you get a black one,

you're going to forget everything that God did for you because you're going to be the most important thing in your life. And you're just going to color everything with that one color. How boring that is.

Now he starts to murmur and complain. His way is now perverted from God's way. And when you come through that great chapter, you find that God gives you not only the cause and effect of what happened to him, but then he shows you how he got back.

- First thing the Bible says that he did, he got ministered to. He recognized that he had a problem and he wanted to get back, so he got ministered to. He had to realize that he had to fix some things.
- The second thing he did, once he started getting ministered to, it gave him the ability to get a fresh vision of what God was going to do with him. He got back on track.
- And the third thing he did is he started to go to work for God and get involved. In other words, he starts adding some things back into his life that he had subtracted out. It's just that simple.

Jonah. What a great study he is. Here's a guy who gets out of God's ways because he wants to go his own way. Here's a great prophet. God said to Jonah, "Arise and go to Nineveh. I got a city down there that is lost and they want to hear the message of God and you're my prophet. I'm going to send you down there. You go to Nineveh and you know what? Cry against that great wicked city." Jonah didn't want to go to Nineveh. He knew that going to Nineveh could be a death sentence for him because Nineveh was the arch enemy of the nation of Israel. He never stopped and thought that if God sent him there, God probably prepared a way for him to get there. He never thought probably that God's, his going down there and being killed was in God's plan of reaching that place. That God probably worked it out. But just like so many of us, you know what Jonah did? He says in his heart, "I'm not going to Nineveh, but I'm still going to be a Christian. So I'm going to go down to the shipping place where all the boats are. And Lord, I know you said go to Nineveh, but I read the new NIV this morning and it didn't say, I think a better translation. I'll tell you what. If you want me to go to Nineveh, when I go down there, I'm just going to look for the first ship I see and the first ship I see is where I'm going to know you want me to go." And he went down there to the boat docks and you know what he found? A ship going to Tarshish. And he said, "Thank you, Lord." Our rationalization of our way over what God directly told him where he wanted to go will never work in your life. Because the Bible says that he went down there and he found a ship going to Tarshish. And then the Bible makes sure it tells you that he paid the fare thereof. And I want to tell you something. When you start to go your way versus God's way, you are going to pick up the tab for it. Then he wound up at a great school that we all have been to many, many times. Wayo University.

Now, the standard teaching on Jonah by most pastors is so silly. I've heard it all my life. "Well, let me give you an outline of Jonah so we can share our thoughts on Jonah. In chapter one of Jonah, Jonah runs from God. In chapter two of Jonah, Jonah runs to God. In chapter three of Jonah, Jonah runs with God. Oh, but in chapter four, Jonah runs ahead of God." Isn't that cute? The truth of the matter is Jonah, the book of Jonah, is not about what Jonah is doing. The book of Jonah never was about what Jonah was doing. The book of Jonah is about what God was doing

and Jonah was refusing to do. So get your little outline, put it in the trash can and get back to what the book is saying. It wasn't Jonah running from God. It wasn't Jonah running to God. It wasn't Jonah running with God. It was God told him to go to Nineveh and he didn't want to go. So he ran and went to Tarshish and he forsook what God wanted him to do, just like we do.

Jonah wanted to go his own way. God wanted to go His way. In this book, there are two great examples of what we all do when we get in that mode of Jonah, get our way perverted. God said to Jonah, "I want you to go to Nineveh." Right out of the chute he says, "I'm not going to go." So God comes down and deals with him. After He deals with him, Jonah looks at God and says, "Okay, I'll go, but I don't like it." There's no joy in Jonah's life. And that's the missing element in God's people's lives today.

Now, let me show you the difference in a few things here of his way versus God's way. The way he looked at it, the way God looked at it, the way we look at it and the way God looks at it.

- He sees Nineveh as his enemy and he hates them. That's his way.
- God sees Nineveh without the truth of God. That's God's way.
- He sees only his own comfort level. That's his way.
- God sees a nation without any hope in God. That's God's way.
- He can't see beyond his own selfish needs. That's his way.
- God saw the needs of hundreds of thousands of people. That's God's way.
- Jonah only sees what directly affects him. That's his way.
- God saw a whole nation that would come to God, which they do in 245, when a half-hearted preacher gets up and gives a half-hearted message and the whole nation comes to God.

You see, Jonah, just like 1 Peter 1:4-9, we talked about when you don't have those seven things in your life, which he lost as we got perverted, he's blind. He can't see what God wants you to do. He can't see you far off. He couldn't see Nineveh from God's standpoint if he ever, ever wanted to. And he forgot what God had done for him. He forgot what God called him to do. He's a prophet. Jonah gets out of God's way and then he starts fretting against God. He starts murmuring. He's not happy. "I want to die. Why did you bring me out here? I'm dying." The gourd, it's hot. The gourd grows up. God gives him a little shade. Then he's happy. Then the sun dries up the gourd. Then he's not happy.

You can tell a lot about somebody. It's a Christian by what upsets them. You know that? In every church you have, you have Elijahs and Jonahs. I don't care where you go. I don't care where you're at in the world. They will complain and get upset about everything. You know, in all my studies in the Bible, I've only found three things that God has a controversy with. You know that? And those three things are worth studying. But these folks, they've got a laundry list. "It's too hot. It's too cold." I learned a long time ago that we had a thermostat when they redid the place that took it out. But I had a thermostat back here that wasn't hooked up to anything. There was a sign on it that said, "Please set the temperature to your own convenience." It made everybody happy. It wasn't hooked up to nothing. But just the thought that you were in control of that made you happy. They say the service is too long. Somebody else says, "Well, it's too short." Somebody says, "Well, there's nobody friendly." Somebody says, "Well, the paint on the wall,

they don't like it." Or the carpet's an ugly color. Just like Jonah. Somebody didn't show up on a Sunday and work in a nursery, so I had to do their part. Poor baby. Just like Jonah. "I'm glad. Now I'm mad. Now I'm glad again. I don't like this and I don't like that."

Hey, listen, dear friend. In 1 Corinthians 10:10, God killed his people for just the very same thing.

1 Corinthians 10:10 Neither murmur ye, as some of them also murmured, and were destroyed of the destroyer.

That's probably a little too much Bible for you. Now all this will go back to one simple concept: not getting your way, not getting your way perverted from God's way, and then getting an attitude about it toward God and the things of God.

VI. God's Way vs. Your Way

Now here's your passage. And I want you to take this with you today. Philippians chapter 4, verses 6, 7, 8, 9. Philippians chapter 4. It's either God's way or it's your way. And your way, you'll wind up getting subtracted things out, getting divided out, you'll wind up fretting against the things of the Lord. God's way, you'll just keep adding things to it. You'll continue to grow.

He says in Philippians 4:6-9:

Philippians 4:6-9 Rejoice in the Lord alway: and again I say, Rejoice. Let your moderation be known unto all men. The Lord is at hand. Be careful for nothing; but in every thing by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known unto God. And the peace of God, which passeth all understanding, shall keep your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus. Finally, brethren, whatsoever things are true, whatsoever things are honest, whatsoever things are just, whatsoever things are pure, whatsoever things are lovely, whatsoever things are of good report; if there be any virtue, and if there be any praise, think on these things. Those things, which ye have both learned, and received, and heard, and seen in me, do: and the God of peace shall be with you.

Now there it is. Do you have that peace that keeps your hearts and minds? Finally brethren, whatsoever things are true? Whatsoever things are honest? Whatsoever things are just? Whatsoever things are pure? Whatsoever things are lovely? Whatsoever things are of good report? If there be any virtue, if there be any praise, think on these things. There's what you're supposed to be thinking on. Now you fill your mind with those things. You know the first thing he says? Truth. Start filling your mind with truth. And then when you start filling your mind with truth you'll be able to have the ability to see what's honest and what's dishonest. And so you put into things that are honest. Then when you get the truth you'll be able to see what is just and unjust and you focus on the things that are just. Then when you get the truth you'll be able to see what is pure and unpure and then you focus on the things that are pure. Then when you really get the truth you'll be able to see the things that are lovely and then the things that are not so lovely and you focus on the things that are lovely. Then when you get the truth, that's where it all starts, then you'd be able to understand what things are of a good report and a bad report. You don't get

around the bad report stuff, you stay with the good stuff. And then if you get the truth, there'll be any virtues, there'll be any praise. These are the things you think on. But it all goes back to the truth.

Those things which you have both learned and received and heard and seen in me do, and the God of peace shall be with you. See? If you focus on things, you want to establish your way, think on these things. Get rid of the other things, think on these things. Put these things in your life. Let these form your thought process. Doing this will always keep you in the Lord's way and keep you from murmuring against the Lord because you're thinking on the things that are honest. There's a lot of things in Christianity that are dishonest. There's a lot of things in Christianity that aren't pure. You get to choose which ones you're going to think about. And when you have the truth, the Word of God, then you understand that my mind and your mind is something that we need to keep certain things out of.

I saw a picture the other day in a book of the ugliest woman that ever lived. She was too. I have never seen a woman more ugly in all my life. I'm not sure why you're saying amen, but I don't think I want to know. She was the ugliest woman I ever saw in my life. She was ugly. If there was an ugly tree, she was at the top and she fell down and hit every branch on the way down. She was ugly. I feel sorry for her. I don't know how I would feel. She lived in the 1800s. She's dead now. Thank God. She's dead. I want to tell you, that woman was the ugliest woman ever on this planet. You see those things, like the ugliest dog. Now, a dog can be so ugly, it can be cute. Not a woman. Nor a man in that case. But when we all think about a woman or a man, we don't think about the ugliest person we ever saw in our life. We think about the most beautiful person we ever saw in our life. When you think about life, there's a lot of bad things in our lives we've all had to go through. But you don't think on those things. When God changes your heart and changes your life, you think on the good things. We all lived in the world before we got saved. Some lived in the world after you got saved. But you know what? You do well not to dwell on those things and think about those things, but think all about the lovely things that God has done for you since you got saved. That's what he's saying. You do these things, it'll keep you, and think on these things, it'll keep you in the Lord's way.

Murmuring and fretting against the Lord. For you and for me, it's a simple question. We have a variety of people here that are in all different stages of spiritual growth. We have an incredible core NCO base here. Incredible. We have people who are leaders, and we have people who are leaders of leaders. And it's an incredible base here. But we have some of you who are growing, some of you are struggling, some of you are coming through things in your life trying to get where you need to get.

Let me ask you a simple question. On a daily, monthly, yearly basis, are you adding more to your faith than you're subtracting? That's the key. Are you coming to church more this year or less than you did last year? Are you in your Bible more this year, or are you in your Bible less this year? Are you doing more for the Lord this year or less? What are you adding in your world that is more than what the devil is trying to subtract? And that's really the question. Because everything about your way versus God's way will come down to what you add in your life. Because when you start doing it your way, you're going to enter into the foolishness. The

foolishness is going to pervert your way, and the devil is going to come in and subtract, and he's going to divide you out. You start going God's way with His wisdom. God's going to add some things to your faith, then He's going to multiply you.

That's such a simple concept, but I've seen that in so many of your lives. I've seen some of you come in three or four, five years ago. Your life was a mess. You had all kinds of problems in your life, and I look at you today. I look at you today because you were willing to add some things to your faith, and then God took what you added in, and He multiplied it in your life, and here you are. He says it's a miracle of God. Well, it is, but most miracles you can't figure out. A miracle is how did it happen. This miracle you can figure out how it happened. So I'm not sure it's a real bonafide miracle. It's a great thing, but it happened because you were willing to add to your faith and let God take what you added and multiply it, and here you are. Where somebody else that came into church at the same time didn't add anything, started subtracting and got divided out. There's no great mystery to it. It's either your way or God's way based on whether you add or subtract, and it's as simple as that.

Along with that, you can't just stay neutral. The Christian life is like two escalators. They're always side by side. You ever notice that? One going up and one coming down. There are no escalators, just stand on it and don't do anything. It wouldn't get you nowhere. When you get on an escalator, you're either going up or you're coming down. There's never an escalator for you just to stand on. You're either going up or you're coming down. Christian life, you're either going up or you're coming down. There's no place for you just to stand. And the moment you quit going up, you start coming back down. The moment you quit adding, the devil starts subtracting. You say, how do I know where the devil's at? He's the guy standing right behind you with a calculator. He wants to divide out. He wants to subtract and divide out everything in your life that God's given you. And God wants to keep adding and adding and adding to your faith and then multiplying that and multiplying it tenfold, hundredfold, thousandfold. The devil just wants to take away from you and subtract. He wants to subtract your Bible. He wants to subtract your fellowship. He wants to subtract your Christian friends. He wants to subtract your church. He wants to subtract everything out and have you think in your mind you're still okay. And of course, keep that 88 colors crayon box, man. Color with every color God gave you. Never lose sight of God's way in your life because God's way is the only way. God will hold up there.