

Proverbs 24

Sunday 10/14/2018

Last time we were together, we came down almost to the end of Proverbs chapter 24. We have two verses left here. Chapter 24 has been a great chapter. All the chapters in the Bible are good, and you can get a lot from them. But from where we are as a church, and from where so many of you are in your own relationship with the Lord, I think there have been some really powerful things that God has shown us.

We have been looking at the ministry and the calling for each of us to do the work of God, and how we mature and grow through the ministry that God gives us and what we do within the structure of our church here. We see in time exactly how we fit into God's plan. It is very obvious to me, and probably obvious to quite a few of you, where you fit into this church. You are all unique. You are all invaluable as far as I am concerned, even if you are not where you need to be yet.

I learned a long time ago, do not look and judge people on where they are at, but look at them and see where they could be. Instead of criticizing them for where they are not at, try to help them be what they need to be. I look at all of you, and all of you have something very special to bring to the table here in our church.

We were told last week, as we saw that, when we see the things around us and the things that God gives us, and we learn through the ministry of the things that we do, that we ought to consider these things. As we consider them, and as we look at them and learn from them, then the Bible says that we are going to take instructions from it. As we take the instructions and see how we consider everything, we understand that the overall goal for our church here and everybody in it is to be planting a vineyard in the field that we have decided to buy, which is Kansas City for us.

I have always loved the book of Jeremiah. He is one of my favorite guys in the Bible. I think the book of Jeremiah is one of the most incredible books anywhere, not only doctrinally, but certainly historically, and from a practical standpoint. In Jeremiah chapter 1, verses 4 through 10, we find the commission of Jeremiah, just like we find the commission that God has given you and me. He had a job to do. You and I have a job to do. But there is a process to planting that vineyard. You do not just go out someplace and buy a farm and a field and then show up two weeks later and the crops are all ready to be picked. There is a lot of work that goes into it.

He says in Jeremiah chapter 1, verse 4:

Jeremiah 1:4-5

Then the word of the LORD came unto me, saying,

Before I formed thee in the belly I knew thee; and before thou camest forth out of the womb I sanctified thee, and I ordained thee a prophet unto the nations.

Then said I, O Lord GOD! behold, I cannot speak: for I am a child. Jeremiah saw himself as a child. That is not a bad thing, but Jeremiah is saying, much like what Moses said, "I cannot do

the job that You have called me to do. I am a child." Yet God was looking at Jeremiah like He did with Moses, like He is with you, and He sees the finished product of Jeremiah. He sees what Jeremiah can do if Jeremiah will just follow the instructions that God is going to give him.

He did not say to Jeremiah, "You have to go out and find the Bible." He told Jeremiah here, we are going to see in a moment, that He actually took the words and put them in Jeremiah's mouth. Jeremiah did not have to look for it. In fact, when you look at this passage here, there is not one thing Jeremiah had to do. God did it all. All Jeremiah had to do was say yes. So many times we make all the excuses in the world of why we will not do what God just called us to do. I look at you just like that. I do not look at you as Jeremiah looks at himself. I try to look at you as God sees you. I try to look at you as what you could be if you would just say yes.

Jeremiah 1:7-9

But the LORD said unto me, Say not, I am a child: for thou shalt go to all that I shall send thee, and whatsoever I command thee thou shalt speak.

Be not afraid of their faces: for I am with thee to deliver thee, saith the LORD.

Then the LORD put forth his hand, and touched my mouth. And the LORD said unto me, Behold, I have put my words in thy mouth.

The second thing I want you to see here, He did not put the originals in his mouth. In fact, one of the things that I love about the book of Jeremiah, if you come through the book of Jeremiah, you will find out that there were four sets of originals of the book of Jeremiah, and none of them matched. So this idea about the originals, you have to have the originals, there were four sets of Jeremiah before Jeremiah even died, and none of them matched. He did not say to him, "I am going to put My thoughts or My ideas or My message." He said, "I am going to touch your lips, and I am going to put My words in your mouth."

Jeremiah 1:10

See, I have this day set thee over the nations and over the kingdoms, to root out, and to pull down, and to destroy, and to throw down, to build, and to plant.

I. The Process of Planting a Vineyard

Our study that we are going to finish up today, trying to put it all together for you, is on the aspect of you and me in this church building and planting a vineyard. That was Jeremiah's job. That is what God had called him to do. If you look at verse 10, it says, "See, I have set thee over nations and over kingdoms to root out and to pull down and to destroy, and to throw down, and then to build and to plant."

There is a process to getting a field, buying it, and then planting a vineyard. When you look at verse 10, I told you this last week, there are some things that you have to do to clear the field before you can ever plant and certainly ever build. He says here, and I want to look at these four things that he talks about, just for a moment, if we move through here, and I want to show you the New Testament application to it, because if you are ever going to plant a vineyard, if you are

ever going to build a church, if you are ever going to do what we are attempting to do here, this idea that you are just going to walk in and everybody is going to love you and everybody is going to flock to hear you, unless you are Joel Osteen, that is not going to work.

There are some things through a process of planting a vineyard that have to be accomplished before you and I can really do what we are supposed to do.

- 1.) Root Out
- 2.) Pull Down
- 3.) Destroy
- 4.) Throw Down

The process is simply this: First, if you want to plant a vineyard, you get preaching the Word of God, you get helping with people. They will come in with their issues and their problems, and you go through this four-point thing. There are some things that they have to root out, there are some things that they have to pull down, there are some things that they have to destroy, and there are some things they have to throw down.

Once you get them to that point, we all came the same way. Nobody walked in here ready to just plant. Nobody walked in here ready to just build. Every one of us at a point in our life, before we decided we were going to do what God wanted to do and answer that calling, we had to go through this four-point process. You had to root out, you had to pull down, you had to destroy, you had to throw it out, and then you build it and you plant the vineyard.

Most churches today try to build and plant without ever getting through these things. The pastor tries to teach them to build a vineyard to a maturity. You will never teach anybody spiritual maturity. You only get somebody to spiritual maturity by getting these four things out, and you do not do that by teaching. May I speak frankly? You do that by preaching the hell out of them. You say, "You should not cuss." Oh, it is a Bible word. I like using those words.

II. Recap of Proverbs 24 Word Studies

Last week, in the closing out of this chapter, we looked at some good solid word studies. Word studies I think are great. All you need to do a word study is a word, a Bible, and a concordance. And you have a ball. It fills up a rainy afternoon. It is a good thing.

- The Field
- The Slothful Man
- The Vineyard
- Thorns and Nettles
- Stones

➤ The Stone Wall

All of this has brought us down to the last two verses, which are really, I think, a fitting ending for this chapter. But before we do that, let us look at these verses in chapter 24 and let us just kind of do a short recap so we can put it all together. Let us remember now what we have learned from chapter 24 before I put the capstone on it here.

So far in chapter 24, we know and remember that the key to this calling is the ministry that we have. God called you to serve Him. God called you for you to do something for Him based on what He has done for you. That calling in the Old Testament, we know that it comes through a nation, the nation of Israel. But in the New Testament, we know that it comes through the body of Christ, the church. We know that through these two venues, in the Old Testament, the nation of Israel, and in the New Testament, the church, God wanted to reach the world with His message.

We know from earlier studies that in both cases, in both the Old Testament and New Testament, the key element within God's structure to do this was the family. We have learned these things: the unbroken chain of God's witness down through time through families within God's structure, that Mom and Dad had the ability to guarantee that their children would carry on the legacy that God had given them.

This is what we have learned so far. In chapter 24, we were told in verses 1 and 2 not to be envious of evil men. The reason for that is because the Bible says that all day long they study destruction. They do not want to build anything. They want to tear everything down. An unsaved man is not interested in building anything unless it is his bank account. He is not interested in helping you biblically and spiritually. He is interested in what will benefit him. He spends all of his life developing and coming up with ideas that at the end of the day will just be destruction for anybody that gets involved in it.

We saw in verse 6 that we are to make our battle plans a sure one based on the models and the examples found in the Word of God. We now know that to draw that out a little bit, it refers to the men that God has put in your life and the women God has put in your life to help you do that. We are supposed to get a sure battle plan.

Verse 10 tells us that we did this so that in the day of adversity we will not faint.

Then he said in verse 13, he told us that we are to eat the honeycomb, and when we make a steady diet of it, that is where our eyes will get enlightened to really see what is going on around us. Remember, we used this great study in there of Jonathan and Saul, how Saul would put them under a curse that they were not allowed to eat before they went into battle. He is blaming the people. Jonathan got a little bit of honey and his eyes were opened, and he says, "My father is the one who has caused these problems." The Word of God in your life will open up your eyes to show you what is really going on. That is what we learned.

We learned in verse 16 that we were told that it does not matter how many times we fall. We just keep getting up, get back into the fight. So many of God's people want to quit today. They want to get discouraged today. Life can be discouraging and life can be hard, but you are supposed to

be harder than life. When you are harder than life and life does not keep you down, you just keep getting back up.

We were told in verse 21 how not to meddle with them that are given to change. God is absolute. God is a fixed God. He is an absolute God. He does not change in anything that He does. We get into the thing where we want to change the Bible. We want to change who God is. We want to change all of the doctrines that have been the standard for hundreds of years down through history.

We were told in verse 27 that we need to prepare for the ministry, the calling that God has called us to. In verse 27 also, we are to grow through this calling that God will show you for sure your calling and where you and I fit into what God wants to do.

We saw in verse 30 that God will give you a field to buy. Also in verse 30, we found out that God expects us to not only buy that field but expects us to work that field, to develop that field, and in time, plant a vineyard that will bear fruit for God. That was Jeremiah chapter 1.

We saw in verse 31 that you and I are to build a wall out of the Bible doctrines that God has given us that protect us from everything that will come our way. Also in verse 31, we are to keep that wall in good shape. Keep the thorns and the nettles off of it, that it does not get all tangled up, that you do not tangle up the things of God with the things of the world.

Then we saw in verse 32 that you and I are to consider all of this. Learn from it and take instructions from it that God gives us through His Word. I am telling you, just breaking that chapter down like I just did is an incredible way to do any chapter that has so much meat in it. That is how you take those things, those things I just gave you, you consider them. Then you take the instructions from them. That is a recap of chapter 24 as it will apply to you and to me.

III. The Danger of Spiritual Slumber

Today I want to close out this chapter and look at these two verses that we can put into a workable context of what we need to do to receive the ultimate goal, which is a sure reward. That is what we are looking for. So let us read Proverbs 24:32-34. I am going to read verse 32 on it just to put it, even though we did it last week, just so it all flows together.

Proverbs 24:32-34

Then I saw, and considered it well: I looked upon it, and received instruction.

Yet a little sleep, a little slumber, a little folding of the hands to sleep:

So shall thy poverty come as one that travelleth; and thy want as an armed man.

Within our study today, we have a man who falls asleep on the job. I can identify with that, and so will you in time. I know you young kids have more energy than you know what to do with, but I am telling you, I am looking already, you older ones know where I am going with this. The older you get, the tighter you get, and the more your naps become great lengths that you look forward to. It is just a process of getting old.

But I am not talking about that kind of sleep. We all need sleep and we all need naps. Naps are in the Bible. They are. They nap up in heaven. The Bible says there was silence in heaven for the space of half an hour in Revelation. They were napping. But this sleep that we are going to talk about today in this chapter, it will be the slothful man of verse 30, the man that is completely void of understanding. There is a difference between being tired and falling asleep and taking a nap physically than spiritually. I want to talk about the spiritual slumber and sleep where Christianity is today.

There is a great illustration of this in the Gospel, and it is found over in Matthew chapter 26. It starts around verse 38, goes down through verse 46. It is where Jesus is in the Garden of Gethsemane. This is right before He goes to the cross. Without a doubt, it is the most crucial time of His life and ministry. He is about to go through what we know as the agony in the garden. We know that name, but most people do not understand what that was all about. Here is where He is going back with His Father and He is asking His Father that the cup He is about to drink could be taken from Him if there is any other way.

The neo-evangelical crowd and many of the Baptist crowd, they try to make this cup physical death. They are saying that Jesus did not want to die physically. So He is asking the Father that if He does not have to die, is it okay for this cup to pass from Him? Of course, if you know even a simple Bible, you know that we are not talking about physical death here. We are talking about the cup here being the cup of God's wrath, which is going to be poured out on Him on the cross of Calvary. A neo-evangelical can never get to that. Most Baptists cannot get to it. They are so limited and shallow in their understanding that is all they can ever figure out. We are not talking about the cup being a cup of His physical death. The cup that we are talking about is talked about in the book of Revelation, talked about many times in the Old Testament. It is the wrath of God's indignation poured out on Him, and He drank that cup to the dregs on the cross of Calvary.

This is what He is going through. This is the greatest place in the Bible that shows you the human character of Christ with the godly side. He is fighting back and forth, much like you and I do in a limited sense with our flesh and our new nature and our old nature, though He did not have an old nature as such. But it is a lot like that for you to understand it. The human man does not want the wrath of God to fall on him, but the God-man knows that it has to happen. He goes back and forth, but the great key is no matter what He wants, when He finds out what the will of the Father is, that ended the day. That is a great lesson for you and for me. It is not about what you and I want. It is not about how you think your life should go. It is not about the comfortable things in life versus the uncomfortable things in life. When you really understand what God wants you to do through the obedience to the Father, He did it, and so should we. It is a great example.

Without a doubt, this is one of the crucial times in all of the Bible in His life. He says in Matthew 26:38:

Matthew 26:38

Then saith he unto them, My soul is exceeding sorrowful, even unto death: tarry ye here, and watch with me.

As you read the story, the story unfolds itself three times. He goes through this agony, and the Bible says that His sweat is like great drops of blood. It is the most intense time of His ministry and His life in the garden of agony. Three times when He comes back to them for encouragement or comes back to them to be with them, they have fallen fast asleep. In Matthew 26:40, as He looked at them slumbering and sleeping while He is going through the most crucial time in His life, He says:

Matthew 26:40

What, could ye not watch with me one hour?

I do not know how much you know about the Bible. I do not know how much you really want to know about the Bible. I know some of you really do. But I have always looked at that, and He says He did that three times. I know in the Bible that there are two ways to document the second coming of Christ. There is a seven-day period to do it, seven thousand years, called the seven-day system. That is one way to do it. The other way, which they use for the New Testament, the Old Testament runs four thousand years, and the New Testament starts the five thousand, six thousand, and then the seven thousand, which is a three-day system.

When I saw this years and years ago, I realized that I was reading more than just the agony in the garden. I was reading what Proverbs is saying, what other verses we are going to look at today are saying, that Jesus is going through an agony, and He goes three times to His disciples who were supposed to be watching and waiting and ministering with Him, and they are fast asleep. To me, that has always been a picture of the church age. The most crucial time in our life is the time that we live in, and most of God's people, just like the apostles, are fast asleep.

Those three days represent the last three thousand years of the church age, ending in the Millennium. It clearly shows that the apostles did not understand the urgency of what He was going through. I will tell you something else, the reason why God's people are asleep today is because we do not understand the urgency of it either. I hope today that something I say will turn that light on in your life. I hope it will make the switch over, the change over from a life of just snoozing your spirituality away, to the urgency of Christ's imminent return.

I think that is really the key, and I think that is the greatest missing element, maybe outside the Word of God today, in Christianity. Nobody understands where we are at in the urgency of our hour in relationship to the coming of the Lord Jesus Christ. We are living our lives like we are going to live forever. We are living our lives like He is not coming back. We are living our lives and preparing our bank accounts, buying this, buying that, and nothing is wrong with any of that as long as it does not supersede what God has called you to do.

We are living our lives like Christ has forgotten all about planet Earth, and we are just going to have to muddle through down here, so let us get all we can and then can all we get and hold on to it. Today, God's people are so sound asleep and have no clue of what is actually happening all around them today. I would say that probably in all of church history, God's people today are the most unprepared for the Lord to come back. We have got so many things in our world, so much clutter, so many bad choices that produce such anxiety, such problematic lifestyles, such

problems with our children, problems with multiple marriages, problems with everything in society.

Because we have no understanding of who we are, where we are at, and what God is doing, we just get in the game of life like a volleyball between the world, the flesh, and the devil. We are batted back and forth over the net of life, and nobody ever wins.

We know now that the field is the world in Matthew 13:28. We have talked about that now for a number of weeks. In Matthew 13:24-25, where he talks about the great parable of the sower, he says:

Matthew 13:24-25

Another parable put he forth unto them, saying, The kingdom of heaven is likened unto a man which sowed good seed in his field:

But while men slept, his enemy came and sowed tares among the wheat, and went his way.

That is a picture of the Word of God being sown as good seed. In the Bible, there is a good seed and there is a bad seed, and it is defined for you in Genesis 3:15. He is saying here that here is a man that goes forth sowing good seed in the field, the world. But verse 25 says, "But while men slept, his enemy came and sowed tares among the wheat and went his way."

Tares in the Bible and wheat in the Bible are people. The wheat in the Bible is always defined as saved people. The tares in the Bible are always defined as unsaved people. When Christ comes back at the Second Coming of Christ, we have talked about this in People Ministry and Bible Institute. Surely we talked about it on Thursday night from time to time. That threshing machine that Christ comes back on, a threshing machine like a farmer would use to thresh his wheat. The Second Coming of Christ is likened to a threshing machine by which God threshes out the wheat and separates the tares, the unsaved, from the wheat.

He clearly tells you here that the tares came in while men slept. I could take you through history today and history of the church and name those men who were fast asleep. I knew some of them. I could walk you through and show you how Christianity crossed its hands across its chest, nodded off, and never woke back up again. Today, God's people are so sound asleep. They have no clue of what is going on, and they are totally unprepared. They are happy that they had a new baby, but they are unprepared how they are ever going to get that baby saved. They are happy that they have got a new job, but they are totally unprepared of why God even gave them the job in the first place. They are happy about everything that they have in life and the good things that happen, but they do not understand in the context of how it all fits into the plan that God has for them, how they fit in with it.

He says, "while men slept, his enemy came and sowed tares." What we have here through history is a picture of the devil, the tares being unsaved people, the wheat being Christianity, how the devil brought the unsaved people in among Christianity and destroyed them. We talked about this a couple of weeks ago. This will be the neo-orthodox crowd. This will be the neo-evangelical crowd, and this will be the charismatic crowd who came in as tares among the wheat.

The Bible says in Matthew 13:33, a few verses down here, and Galatians 5:9, not only did you have the tares in the wheat, but the tares, when they came in to infiltrate the wheat, brought in leaven or false doctrine, which destroyed it. The great example of this is the nation of Israel at the coming of Christ, how God intended for them to be a vineyard that was going to bear fruit. The tares and the leaven came in, the false doctrine came in, and it destroyed them. Jesus at the First Coming of Christ walks out in the Gospel, and He sees the fig tree. That fig tree is a picture of the nation of Israel, and it is a fig tree that is barren, that has no fruit on it, and He curses it.

Now we can take that same illustration and put it into your world and my world and churches and Christianity today. God called the church to be fruitful. God called God's people to be fruitful. He has got a job for all of us to do, and it is to bear fruit in our vineyard. But just like the nation of Israel, churches today are barren. Christians are barren. Bad doctrine from very bad people. It always bothered me, and again it shows the lack of complete total disregard of understanding anything, but it always bothered me how some of God's people could be so enthralled and so caught up and so impressed with somebody who teaches the Bible and could spend hours and hours listening to them, buy all their books, buy all their tapes, follow them, go to their college, go to their school. When at the end of the day, that very same person is the one guy who wanted to take the very words of God out of your hand, it always bothered me.

Our job as New Testament Christians and our job as the church is to have understanding and realize what God has called us to do and then stay awake and watch and minister with Him instead of falling asleep.

IV. The Parable of the Laborers and Church History

Again, the Bible is filled with great illustrations of this. In Matthew 20:1-8, you have a great story here that goes way beyond just what you read here, as most of the parables do, and most of the Bible does. But let me read it for you, and then I will show you what you have here and how it fits into what we are saying today.

Matthew 20:1-8

For the kingdom of heaven is like unto a man that is an householder, which went out early in the morning to hire labourers into his vineyard.

And when he had agreed with the labourers for a penny a day, he sent them into his vineyard.

And he went out about the third hour, and saw others standing idle in the marketplace,

And said unto them; Go ye also into the vineyard, and whatsoever is right I will give you. And they went their way.

Again he went out about the sixth and ninth hour, and did likewise.

And about the eleventh hour he went out, and found others standing idle, and saith unto them, Why stand ye here all the day long idle?

They say unto him, Because no man hath hired us. He saith unto them, Go ye also into the vineyard; and whatsoever is right, that shall ye receive.

So when even was come, the lord of the vineyard saith unto his steward, Call the labourers, and give them their hire, beginning from the last unto the first.

When you got saved, you agreed for a penny a day to go into His vineyards. That was the agreement. This is why I am so adamant about what I say about most people: most people who claim to be saved today in the day and age we live in are probably not even saved. If you win somebody to Christ and you do not explain to them that the reason why they are getting saved is not because they can get their wife back or their husband back or their kids back or they can get a good job, but they can get this. If you do not explain that the reason why they are getting saved is because they are making an agreement with God to go into His vineyard, you miss something.

Why do so many of God's people get saved and never do that? Why? Because nobody ever told them that is why they got saved. You thought you got saved to put your marriage back together. You thought you got saved because you wanted to be a better person. You thought you got saved as a kid because you wanted your brother and sister to get saved. No, you should have gotten saved because of the fact that you saw your personal sin debt as a sinner, and you knew you could never get out of that personal sin debt, and Christ died for you on the cross. Then Him dying for you was your agreement that you would go to work for Him in the vineyard for a penny a day.

You say a penny does not sound like much. Well, then you have missed the whole concept about taking an investment and compounding your interest. Someone came to the Lord one time, and he says, "Lord," he says, "what is a million dollars like to You?" And the Lord looked at him and said, "Well, son," He said, "a million dollars to Me is just like a penny." This guy thought about it a minute, and he says, "Lord, can I have a penny?"

That is the way we are. We want everything for ourselves. We want everything that is going to make our life comfortable. The truth of the matter is, when you got saved, you were supposed to enter into an agreement to go to work in a vineyard for a penny. Then you take that penny, and through the work of the ministry, you compound that interest by making good investments, and you wind up at the judgment seat of Christ with a million dollars. It is just that simple.

This is one of the greatest illustrations anywhere in the Bible that goes way beyond the story. You know as well as I do that there is a depth to the Bible that most people would never see. Chapter 20 shows us the church age being laid out from the time that Christ showed up at the First Coming of Christ right up to the rapture of the church.

I think it is absolutely imperative and invaluable for every child of God, wherever he lived in the seven periods of church history, to be totally effective, to understand what the issues of his day were. When you come through the book of Revelation and you see the seven periods of church history, and then you know a little bit about history, you can actually see from history what every issue that every period of the church had to deal with. Early on, they had to deal with the resurrection. Then they had to deal with the deity of Christ. Every major doctrine that we hold

sacred today has been questioned, thrashed out, and dealt with by the church of Jesus Christ down through history.

In doing that, every child of God who was a bona fide child of God in a relationship with God and the Word of God knew where they were at and what their job was in relation to the Second Coming of the Lord Jesus Christ or the rapture of the church. It is invaluable for you and me today to understand what our job is, what is the issue of our day. Not only the issue of our day, but unlike any other time in the history of the church, the urgency of our day. Chapter 20 shows us the church as being laid out, the time in God's day, the church age, as He sends us into the vineyard to work down through church history.

Here is how you do this, and it is not very complicated. You have here the morning, which will be 6 AM. This is a 12-hour day from 6 in the morning to 6 at night. Notice it is not a Jewish story because the Jewish story would be 6 o'clock at night to 6 o'clock in the morning. So this is the Gentile story: 6 AM to 6 PM, a regular workday. You have the morning he talks about that will be 6 AM, then you have the third hour, then you will have the sixth and the ninth hour, then you have the eleventh hour, and then the Bible says that even comes, that will be 6 o'clock or the twelfth hour.

Here is how you do this little thing, and it is not hard. Somebody that is an evangelical listening to this, you will probably laugh at this, and some of the Baptists out there say, "Well, I just do not know." I know you do not know where I am getting it. That is because you are an idiot, and we rejoice this morning that God has hid these things from you. So I get it. Do not reveal yourself by saying, "Well, I just do not know where he gets that." It is called a Bible, the B-I-B-L-E.

We know the church age runs approximately 2,000 years. We will say 2,000 years for a round number. God can slow it up or make whatever He wants to do. But we are given that time element in the Bible, 2,000 years, two days of a thousand years apiece, the third day being the Millennial Reign. We know that we have a 12-hour day here. So even I can do this without a calculator. I just take the 12 and divide it into the 2,000. If I want to find out what these hours represent in history of time, then when I divide 12 into 2,000, I come up with 166.6666666, a number all the way down, 167 years. So that means that in my story here, every hour represents 167 years in history.

If that is true, and it is, and we put the morning, say, at Acts chapter 20 with the church at Ephesus, that would make the third hour, according to our system here, around 500 AD, or the beginning of the Dark Ages in history. The sixth hour would bring us up to around 1000 AD, which would be the middle of the Dark Ages. The ninth hour would be up to about 1500, or the beginning of the Reformation. The eleventh hour, the hour that he is talking about here where the last workers would end before the twelfth hour, would be around the year 1837. That means that you and I, if I may infringe upon your delicacies today, that means that you and I, according to God's clock, are in the last minutes of the last hour before He comes back.

Christians laugh at that. The neo-evangelical crowd, and I am looking at you here, bud, you laugh at that. Most Baptist preachers that could not find their way out of the Bible if their life depended on it, you will laugh at that. Yet I have got to tell you today, many times, the unsaved

world has no truth, the unsaved world has no salvation, but sometimes the unsaved world is actually smarter than most of God's stupid people because God has clouded their minds and taken other saved people because of their rejection, where an unsaved man may not be able to know what he does with the truth, but he can still find some truth.

You know that the whole unsaved world in the scientific world, in the world that looks at the world scenario, they understand and know that the end is coming pretty quick. Now they do not look at it as Christ coming back. They look at it as some global destruction like the meteor that supposedly killed dinosaurs, like the comet that slammed into the Earth and put us into a winter night time for a thousand years that everything died. They are looking at a nuclear attack that somebody is going to send rockets over here, we are going to send missiles over there, and we are going to annihilate the world.

They are so afraid and know because everybody knows there is something wrong. Whether you want to pump yourself up and think it is okay, everybody wants to look for the silver lining in a dark cloud and wants to think that it is getting better, anybody with any sense knows that nothing is getting any better. In Chicago, Illinois, right now as I speak, unsaved men of the Bulletin of the Atomic Scientists in Chicago, Illinois, have had since 1947 a Doomsday Clock. Google it!

They have had it since 1947 that somebody decided from 1947 on that things were going to get worse and were going to end in some disaster. Really, 1947? You mean when the nation of Israel became a nation? Really? When they got the alien body down in Roswell? Really? Why 1947? My goodness, there was a lot going on in 1937. How about 1927? How about 1917 with World War I that devastated billions of millions of people's lives? Why did you pick 1947 for an unsaved world to put a Doomsday Clock up in Chicago, Illinois, that all the catastrophic events that happened in the world moved that clock one step closer, one tick closer to 12 o'clock even? In 2018, right now, you and I are two minutes to 12, and you think I made that up. You are laughing at that. When there are unsaved people who are going to die in burning hell who are smarter than you are, Dr. Fine, Dr. Howard, Dr. Fine, whoo, whoo, whoo, whoo. You would have to see the Three Stooges to understand what I am doing. I grew up with the Three Stooges.

You and I are the last part of the last minutes in God's hour before He comes back, and the whole unsaved world is telling you, "You have got two minutes left." By God's own clock, the last workers went in in 1837. That starts the eleventh hour. We are way past that point at this point.

The unsaved world knows that some catastrophe is going to happen. They do not know what it is. They do not have anything biblical. But anybody that has any sense can look around this world and know that we have raped and abused and ravaged this world to the point where she has got no more to give. Something is going to happen. Mankind has got to the place where everybody has got nuclear weapons. Somebody said one time, "What do you think about all the nuclear weapons?" I said, "I am not worried about it." "Why not?" I said, "I know something more dangerous than a nuclear weapon." "What is that?" "The Word of God." "How do you mean that?" I said, "I do not know any country on this planet that outlaws nuclear weapons. I can give you five countries that outlaw the Bible. That is a powerful book."

By God's own clock, the last workers went in in 1837 by God's own system, if you follow the system. We are supposed to stay awake and be on the job. When we do not, the devil will come in while men slept and bring in tares among the wheat, who were bringing the false doctrines, leaven, and a little leaven will leaven a whole lump. While men slumbered, hands across their chest, fast asleep, and leaven came in with the tares, the bad doctrine from the bad people, and destroyed the field in the vineyard with his seed, the devil's seed, Genesis 3:15.

V. The Call to Stay Awake and Hold the Line

Paul said in Romans 13:11:

Romans 13:11

And that, knowing the time, that now it is high time to awake out of sleep: for now is our salvation nearer than when we believed.

He is saying, "Your salvation is Jesus Christ." He is saying, "You better wake up because Jesus Christ coming back for your salvation is nearer now than the day you got saved." God is warning, "Wake up! Do not be a sluggard. Do not fall asleep. Do not get caught up with the tares and the wheat and the false leaven doctrine."

Our job as a keeper of the vineyard that God has given us, our job in the field that God has given to us, is to consider all of this, take instructions, and know where we are at in a relationship where Christ is coming. Understand what our issue is today, and then with every ounce of strength that we have, fight that, go against that, and hold the line with it. We have a calling, a job to do, a ministry that should take priority over everything that we do.

I am not some guy suggesting that you never have any fun, you do not have anything, you cannot live in a nice house. That is not me. But what I am saying is, with all that we have, with all that we do, with all the fun that we have, with all the goofy stuff, we never lose sight of the mission God has given us. We have a calling and a job to do, a ministry that takes priority over everything.

We are not to sit around as God's people and whine and complain about everything. That is what God's people do. I put up with a lot of things; my patience is endless. I will put up with somebody that has an alcohol problem; I will stay with them forever. My patience is unending, but I want to tell you, I have limits to some aspects of it, and in the war that I am in and the battle I have to fight and the battles I have had to fight, I am going to tell you something, I do not have any time for whiners. I cannot stand whiners. I just cannot. Always whining about this, or this or that, always blaming their issues on somebody else. Always coming to the place where they are always saying, "Well, you do not know this and you do not know that and you do not understand." No, the problem is I do understand. The problem is I understand too well that you have got a God and a Bible that you want to live above the circumstances, and because you are living in a dream world and you are asleep half the time of your life spiritually, all you can see is yourself and what you have.

We have some heroes in our church. Men who are, and women too, but not maybe at this point in time, but men who are examples of what I would want to be. You whine and complain about what you do not have, the little piddly things in your life. Let me ask you a question: Anybody want to trade places with Sam? He has terminal cancer. The night he was diagnosed with it, when he came to Bible study, some of you were there that night, others you had other things to do. I get that. He raised his hand, and it was not for, "What am I going to do?" It was not, "What can I, how will you all pray for me and anoint me with oil that I will get healed?" His prayer was, "I have just been diagnosed with terminal cancer. Can you tell me tonight how I can put in my life the right things to meet God the right way?"

If that was you and me, we would be whining ourselves all over the place. We would be going from person to person trying to suck out sympathy. "Well, you do not understand what I am going through." You never hear that from him. Never hear that from him. Yet, with terminal cancer, they just put him into a special treatment that he is going through to try to undo what is going on in his body. He has had chemotherapy. He has had round after round. The other day he had 10 hours of infusion, and he could not come to church for three days, and he called me on the phone letting me know that he would not be here. With his cancer, with his terminal cancer, with all that he has got, with all that he is struggling with, with all that he is going through, he never misses a Sunday morning. He never misses a Thursday night. He does not miss anything.

Now you want to whine about what your problem is? Why do not you trade him? Why do not you trade what you are whining about and get some real problems? I watched him sit in here and sit back there and get up to go to the bathroom, and he is so weak and he is so sick that two ushers have to help him back to the bathroom. You are looking up here. I am watching what he is going through, and he never misses anything. Why? Because he loves that book. He loves this church. He loves the Lord, and God has made a difference in his life. He does not whine about it. He does not complain about it. You do not see him moving around about it. He just comes and does what God calls him to do.

Yes, he is out on ReStart when they go down there. Jeffrey. Blind. Has this little white fold-up stick. Cannot see anything. But I will tell you what he can see. He can see more than most of God's people can see. He cannot drive. He wants to be at Institute. He wants to be here for People Ministry. He wants to be here Thursday night. There is no way he can get here. It ought to be a privilege for you to hitchhike off of his rewards at the judgment seat of Christ by getting him here to be what God wants to put in his life. Yes, blind. Cannot see. Cannot drive. Cannot go anywhere without that stick or somebody leading him. He is here every time the door is open, and he is into every ministry doing it. He is going to lay in a stretcher and let two of you carry him down because he wants to be a part of what we do. Do you ever hear him whine about it? Never hear him complain about it? Or bitter at God because he is blind? Never see Sam be bitter at God because he has got terminal cancer? What is wrong with us?

In the very midst of what we have and what we do and all God has given us, He has given us example after example of men and women who will take what the world gives them, take the short end of the stick of life, not whine, not complain, and stay in the work because they know God called them. You and I have got the same calling. You are too busy. You are sick. You have

got a family of eight or nine, and a kid on Sunday morning wakes up with the sniffles, and the whole family stays home.

The heroes of the faith are not defined when everything is right. It is not defined when you get a big income tax check back. It is not defined when you get a promotion at work. It is not defined when you get this, you get that. It is defined when the world goes to hell around you and the doctor report comes back. Are you in or are you out? If you are a whiner, do not whine to me. I will get you some cheese and have it with your wine.

Listen, the great principle of Matthew 20:1-8, the great principle, and get it! The great principle is not what time did you go to work in a vineyard. The great principle is, when you went to work, were you on the job? Our job is to stay wide awake and to watch with Him in the most crucial time in all of history. To keep that field clean, to keep that rock solid wall up.

Song of Solomon 2:15

Take us the foxes, the little foxes, that spoil the vines: for our vines have tender grapes.

We are to keep that stone wall and that field intact. Keep it from falling down in your life and my life. Yes, as Paul said in Acts 20:29-32, we are to keep the enemies of God out of it.

Acts 20:29-32

For I know this, that after my departing shall grievous wolves enter in among you, not sparing the flock.

Also of your own selves shall men arise, speaking perverse things, to draw away disciples after them.

Therefore watch, and remember, that by the space of three years I ceased not to warn every one night and day with tears.

And now, brethren, I commend you to God, and to the word of his grace, which is able to build you up, and to give you an inheritance among all them which are sanctified.

He said to the church at Ephesus in Acts chapter 20, we just studied a couple of nights ago, telling you that there are dangers without the church and there are dangers in the church.

As you grow, as you mature, as all of you are and get into the ministry, and God grows you through it, and as you build your wall high, your high tower like last week, you will see some things in ministry and around you and in dealing with people that you will consider, you will take instructions from through the Word of God. But unfortunately, God's people today are sound asleep when it comes to the calling God has for them. No clue where they are in their relationship with Christ and the impending judgment seat of Christ, which is right two minutes away, according to the world. Those who have no understanding of the urgency of our hour in which we live.

Jesus made reference to this in Revelation 1:11 when He says:

Revelation 1:11

Saying, I am Alpha and Omega, the first and the last:

I read that. I know what He meant by that. I can read between the lines. In church history, the two most important times were the first and the last, where it started and where it ended. In your Christian life, it is the same thing. The two most important times are when you start and how you end. You want to get a good study in the Bible, study the church and study the devil's first attack and then study his last attack. See the church at Ephesus and the church at Laodicea, which means "rights of the people." See where it started and see where it ended, and then see how it got there.

The greatest responsibility of God's people today in Christ's Church is to stay awake because on the altar of ministry, we have the greatest privilege of all time to offer ourselves in the last moments of the last day to take our stand and hold the line of truth in a Christianity that is in total apostasy.

VI. Rebuilding the Desolate Church

I make no apology for where our church is at and what we stand on. No apology whatsoever. I have told you many times, I am looking for a few good men, but I am not looking for everybody. I am looking for men like in Ezekiel 22:30 that God was looking for in their dire time, and that is a man that will stand in the gap and make up the hedge. Not everybody is cut out to hold the line that we need to hold. It is just truth. It does not mean you are a bad person. It does not mean that you are not going to heaven. It just means that that is who you are.

Normal Christians are a dime a dozen today. I am not looking for normal Christians. I am not looking for people who just do what they are supposed to do because that is what they have been told to do. I am looking for men and women who understand where they are at in relationship to Christ coming, understand the urgency of the hour, and will not fall asleep and will wait and watch and work for Him.

It takes a certain kind of man and woman to take your stand today in the midst of your family, your friends, the people and pastors and churches, because the criticism is going to come down on you unbelievably. Most men and women today do not have the steel in their backbone to take their stand. They need to be in a milquetoast church, that mega-church concept where you can sit and hide with no real accountability, that if you go to a church like this and you miss three or four weeks, somebody is going to say, "Hey, we missed you. Where were you?" You go to those places, you could be gone for a hundred years, and nobody would know you were not there.

You like that. You like that. You like going to a church that you can, you have all the nice little things going on around you that you can stop and get your little latte on the way in. Be amused and entertained with the rock band up there singing about Jesus and smoke and fire coming out of the altar, and everything just, you are thinking, "God is here. God is here." You like that. You like that soft soap message where it never offends you, that they always tell you how nice you are, how good you are. My God, you could kill a hundred people and go to church, and they think you were wonderful. You like that. You need that. You thrive on that soft, cushy, milquetoast, baby food atmosphere.

The spiritual three-ring circus with the pastor as the lead clown. Or those little disastrous churches where the pastor could not preach his way out of a wet paper bag. He is totally void of understanding. Churches that are all built on another man's foundation all across this country, and they are filled with nothing more than the rejects from truth. They never grow. They never go anywhere. It is all just a pretense among the wishy-washy, non-offending teaching, never preaching, that becomes a spiritual nursery filled with babies.

But I am telling you, in all this mess, God will always have His remnant. They are spread across this country. Little pockets here in New York, in Pennsylvania, in Ohio, in California, in Colorado. Every place out there, God has got these little pockets of men and women and churches and Christians that are holding that line. God will always have His remnant who will stand on the Book and do it by the Book. Who in their last moments of the last hour will recognize where they are at and realize, greater than any time in history, "You better wake up. Your salvation is nearer than when you believed." They do not fall asleep. They will get it done. It is a difference between a work of God and a work that is simply for God.

I read this and I preach this, and I am so reminded this week as I was putting this together of the book of Nehemiah and how Jerusalem was completely destroyed, and how after 70 years captivity, God through Cyrus sent a small remnant back to rebuild the city. In Nehemiah 2:11-18, Nehemiah is told to rebuild the city. Nehemiah is told to rebuild Jerusalem, God's holy city.

In that passage, he goes down by night, a picture of the church age. He goes down by night and sees the utter destruction of God's city. Nebuchadnezzar had come down in 606 BC, utterly gutted and destroyed. It is unbelievable, unprecedented. What was once God's great place to teach all the world the truth of God now lies in waste and is desolate. It is a picture inspirationally of today and the institution of the church that God had planned to take the truth to the world, which today lies desolate. I might add, it is my thoughts today as I look around and survey God's structure of the church today.

Nehemiah 2:11-18

So I came to Jerusalem, and was there three days.

And I arose in the night, I and some few men with me; neither told I any man what my God had put in my heart to do at Jerusalem. Neither was there any beast with me, save the beast that I rode upon.

And I went out by night by the gate of the valley, even before the dragon well, and to the dung port, and viewed the walls of Jerusalem, which were broken down, and the gates thereof were consumed with fire.

Then I went on to the gate of the fountain, and to the king's pool: but there was no place for the beast that was under me to pass.

Then I went up in the night by the brook, and viewed the wall, and turned back, and entered by the gate of the valley, and so returned.

And the rulers knew not whither I went, or what I did; neither had I as yet told it to the Jews, nor to the priests, nor to the nobles, nor to the rulers, nor to the rest that did the work.

Then said I unto them, Ye see the distress that we are in, how Jerusalem lieth waste, and the gates thereof are burned with fire: come, and let us build up the wall of Jerusalem, that we be no more a reproach.

Then I told them of the hand of my God which was good upon me; as also the king's words that he had spoken unto me. And they said, Let us rise up and build. So they strengthened their hands for this good work.

Then I said unto them, "You see the distress that we are in." That is what I told you today. All I have simply said in this message and asked you, "Do you see the distress that we are in today? Do you see this distress that you are in today? How Jerusalem lies waste and the gates thereof are burned with fire. Do you see the church today, how it is destroyed? They do not even have a Bible. Over in Europe, they do not have a God; they are all atheists, even the pastors in the churches. Over here, we still have a God, we just do not have a Bible. We are only a short step behind them."

He goes down and he sees this city by night, a picture of the church age, and everything is in disarray, everything is destroyed, everything has been burnt with fire. The city of God, by which God was going to take to the world, has utterly now been destroyed. He goes to the people around him and he says, "You see the mess we are in? Come, let us build up the wall of Jerusalem that we may no more be a reproach." And I told them of the hand of my God which was good upon me, as also the king's words that were spoken unto me, and they said, "Let us rise up and build." So they strengthened their hands for this good work.

That is where we are at right there. We are going to rebuild the work the way God wants it to be. God has brought men and women into this church and has strengthened your hands for this good work. While the rest of Christianity is asleep, while the rest of Christianity is in a mess, God has raised up a remnant here and across the country. Little pockets of resistance of men and women who understand the urgency of the hour, where they are at, and what our job and our calling and what our vineyard and what our field is. Together we rise up, strengthen our hands for this good work.

VII. The Rearguard Action

We do not sing the song "Onward Christian Soldiers" anymore. We do not sing "Sound the Battle Cry." Those are too warlike, too warmongering. Christianity is a kind of passive, sissy-fied, effeminate concept that wants nothing to do with supposedly anything that is violent. Yet the very men who try to take the Bible from you are the most spiritually violent men you ever meet in your life.

I look at us in these last days, and I look at us in military terms because Jesus Christ is the Captain of our salvation, and we were told to endure hardness as a good soldier of Jesus Christ. A good soldier follows his orders. In the first century, God gave them their orders. In the second

period of church history, God gave them their orders. In the third one, God gave them their orders. In the fourth one, God gave them their orders. In the fifth one, God gave them their orders. In the sixth one, God gave them their orders. For you and for me, God has given us our orders.

We form a rearguard action. We hold the line of truth in a world that wants no truth. We do what is the dirtiest job in the military, that every commander, every corps commander, every regiment commander, every division commander, he never wants to hear the order that comes down from the top. A rearguard action means that you are surrounded and your whole army is going to be cut off and wiped out. They want to escape so they can. So they look down and they pick. If it is a division, they will pick a regiment. If it is a regiment, they will pick a battalion. If it is a battalion, they will pick a company. If it is a company, they will pick a platoon.

They will have a division of 10,000 men that are trapped. They will take a regiment of 3,000 men and they will say to those 3,000 men, "You stay here and you keep the enemy at bay till all these other people can get out and fight again another day. Because if you do not, they are going to come down on us, and we are going to lose everything. So we are asking you 3,000 men to stay and fight and hold the line so we can escape."

Now know this: there will be no help coming. Know this: there will be no air support. Know this: there will be nothing. You are a rearguard action. You are going to sacrifice yourself so others may get out and fight again another day. If it is a division, then you will leave a regiment. If it is a regiment, then you will leave a battalion. If it is a battalion, then you will leave a company. For the company, then you will leave a platoon. They sacrifice themselves holding that line so the others can get out.

God has called us and given us our orders. We are to hold the line. We are the rearguard action in these last moments of this last hour of Christianity. It is you and me who must stay awake, must hold the line, must fight so people can still get in and get saved and still find the truth. If it is not with people like you or people around this country, these little pockets of churches and pastors with men and women who love that Book. If it is not men like you and men like them, where will it go? This whole world will get swallowed up, and there will be no truth left in the last moment before the Lord comes back.

I cannot speak for other pastors. I cannot speak for other countries or other cities, but I will speak for this one. That will not happen here. We will hold the line. It is not going to happen. We have got enough men and women who have strengthened their hands that will take the stand, and we will hold out in the last moments and the last seconds of the last hour before the Lord comes back. Because that is what we have been mandated to do. We will take our stand, and we will not fall asleep. He will not have to come to this church and say, "I wish you could have watched with Me one hour." He comes around here, He will see us on our post, on our wall, manning the gates. Because that is the job God has given us to do.