

I. The Sure Word, Calling, and Reward

The Bible says we have a sure word. We know the Bible is the true Word of God. The second one was found in 2 Peter 1:10, and that is where the Bible says we are to have a sure calling of God. Then the third one was Proverbs 11:18 that talks about getting a sure reward from God. Those were the three things that we really based last week's message on.

From Proverbs 24:27, we saw that this preparation is to make you fit for what God's plan is and how you are going to fit into it. I have taught you many, many times that the Bible is like a gigantic picture puzzle. All of the chapters, the verses, and the words in the Bible are likened to the pieces in a picture puzzle. As you begin to put the picture puzzle together, a picture emerges. That is really what the Bible is all about. The overall concept of the Bible displays a picture. That picture is God's kingdom. All of the chapters, the verses, and everything in the Bible are the pieces that put that picture together.

When you got saved, God made you part of that picture puzzle. You are part of the putting together of God's plan or God's picture. You know as well as I do that in a picture puzzle, the pieces have to fit. In Christianity, to accomplish what God wants us to accomplish, you have to fit into the plan of God. You have to know where you fit, and you have to be sure where you fit. You get that from a sure word, a sure calling, and obviously then, a sure reward. It is your private piece of the action of what God is doing down through history.

Most Christians probably do not look at it this way. Every Christian in every age or dispensation or every generation, I guess you could cut it down to that far, I do not think they always look at themselves as how important they are, that they were born when they were born, and the time they were, and how God brought all the events in their life for them to get saved. Once they do get saved, they are vital to fitting into what God is doing. There is no accident that you were born when you were born. There is no accident that God orchestrated the events to get you here. He wants you to be a piece of the puzzle. Here, we will show you how you fit in. We will knock off the rough edges. We will polish you up. We will grind you a little bit, and we will see how it works.

II. The Word "Fit"

We looked at the word "fit" last week. This week was a great study on word studies. Word studies are a tremendous way to study the Bible. Most people take a very shallow word study. I like the depth of word studies. Last week, we looked at the word "fit," and I kind of walked you through how that kind of lays itself out in the Bible.

➤ In Song of Solomon 5, it talked about eyes fitly set, looking at the same thing that Christ is looking at and seeing as He sees it.

- > Then we talked about Proverbs 25:11, where he uses the word "fit" that the Word of God needs to be fitly spoken. When you give somebody the Word of God, it is going to fit the need in their life.
- > Then we talked about Ephesians 4:16, where he talks about in God's mind, the whole body of Christ needs to be fitly joined together.
- > Then I ran you to Ephesians 2:20 and looked at you and I, how that we are fitly framed together for the work of the ministry.

It was an incredible work, and it is an incredible study through the Bible. For me, it is quite incredible to watch you, as your pastor, to work together as a team. I do not care what we do, no matter what we do, or where it is at, or what it entails, it is how you all fit together perfectly for the work of the ministry. Our church is filled to the brim with men and women who are great leaders, and that is always a strength of any church. I am always looking for every young man, every young lady, every person, our teenagers as they grow up. I am always looking for anybody. I am combing the people that I meet for anybody who has a basic sign of leadership, and then cultivate that and grow that and help them.

Our church has an incredible abundance, and the old saying is that you have too many chiefs and not enough Indians. Of course, that is true in the world many, many times, but it is not true in a Bible-believing, Bible-teaching church because the first mark of a great leader is someone who is also a great follower. Someone who does not care. There will be times that this person will be in charge, and you will lend your support. Somebody else will be in charge, you will be in charge, and everybody works together. That is because, as I said last week, the common thread that weaves itself through everything we do is ministry. When ministry becomes your top priority, everything else will fall into its place in its proper order.

The people will always come. The key to all the different activities, no matter what you do, and I do not care what it is, I do not care if it is volleyball or softball or the Iron Man or the Halloween hayride or whatever we do, we are always looking out for that person that God is bringing to us and looking for that open door to be able to minister to them and to give them whatever they need. My job in all that we do is to never lose sight of the sure calling to ministry that God has given this church and to keep it before you. That is an easy job because you are also workable and pliable for the most part, and everybody here, almost without exception, is here because you want to be part of what God is doing, and you want your piece of the action.

III. Dealing with Conflict and Retribution

Now today, again, we will move through a couple of more verses here in Proverbs chapter 24. I want to read Proverbs 24:28-32. I am going to read verse 27 from last week, which was a key verse, so we can kind of keep it within the context here.

Proverbs 24:27

Prepare thy work without, and make it fit for thyself in the field; and afterwards build thine house.

We talked about that last week. Now here are the new verses.

Proverbs 24:28-32

Be not a witness against thy neighbour without cause; and deceive not with thy lips.

Say not, I will do so to him as he hath done to me: I will render to the man according to his work.

I went by the field of the slothful, and by the vineyard of the man void of understanding;

And, lo, it was all grown over with thorns, and nettles had covered the face thereof, and the stone wall thereof was broken down.

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

Now let us start with Proverbs 24:28-29. We are going to kind of work our way down through here, and as I already said, you are going to get another great example today of word studies because that is how you open up many, many passages of the Bible. Proverbs 24:28-29 deals with an issue of going up against a person over an issue that you have with them. Something that has arisen between two people or an organization or whatever, and now you are at odds with them, and it is a problem that comes up. You know as well as I do that in the course of life, whether you are saved or unsaved, you are going to have problems with people, and it is how you deal with those problems that are the way you want to deal with it.

1 Corinthians 6 is a great example of this. The church at Corinth is all messed up on how to handle problems, and Paul tries to line them out. Anger in the Bible, and anger is a key word today in our society. We have all kinds of forms of anger that are just a terrible thing: child abuse, animal abuse, road rage, spouse abuse. It is endless today. But anger from the Bible standpoint is not always a bad thing. There is what the Bible calls a righteous indignation, an indignation of anger that is based on something that is righteous. There is a proper time for anger from the Bible, and then there is an improper time. The problem is that most of God's people do not know the difference, and they are always falling into the improper time. The key to anger will be the cause of the anger, and that is very important: a just cause in this case.

Anger is a God-given emotion. It is like all the other emotions we have. The same God that gave love is the same God that gave anger. We have all the neo-evangelical crowd and all the charismatic crowd like to walk around talking about God is love. Well, He is, but He is also angry. We seem to like to focus on the love and not the anger. What He is saying here is that if you have a just cause and you are up against an issue with somebody, be honest in how you deal with them and how you approach it, and be honest in what you say to them or how you deal with them. You deal with them in a biblical format.

We know that God gets angry. Christ gets angry. In the Bible, you have the term "the wrath of God." You have the fact where the Bible says that the anger of God was kindled. In those cases,

when you find that, if you study the passages, you are always going to see that there is a just cause to it.

I want to show you something here. I do not want to miss this. Turn over to Matthew 5:22. This is a definitive verse on anger. I know it is a millennial context in Matthew 5. We are in the Sermon on the Mount, but there is a practical side to it.

Matthew 5:22

But I say unto you, That whosoever is angry with his brother without a cause shall be in danger of the judgment: and whosoever shall say to his brother, Raca, shall be in danger of the council: but whosoever shall say, Thou fool, shall be in danger of hell fire.

Clearly there it says that to be angry with somebody, you have to have a cause. That cause, you just cannot lose your temper and get angry and have uncontrolled anger over everything. There has to be a just cause. That is a great checkpoint for somebody with anger: What is the cause behind your anger?

I want to show you something here that I think we have been talking about this, and I never miss an opportunity to expose all the corruption that is out there. In Mark 3:5, the Bible says that Christ was angry at His brethren for their unbelief. Then when you go over into Mark 11:17, and you will find that again in Luke 19:45, there He is angry when He goes into the temple, and He throws out, turns over the tables, throws out the money changers, and kicks over the tables and throws everybody out. Now there are two places, and I will just use those two. There are two places that show you and tell you that Christ got angry.

Now watch this. Matthew 5:22 says, "But I say unto you, That whosoever is angry with his brother without a cause shall be in danger of the judgment." If you have an NIV this morning or an ASV or any other godless piece of trash that they are throwing a Bible today, when you get to Matthew 5:22, you will find that very, very carefully, somebody with a scalpel sliced out "without a cause." It simply says now in your NIV, which your pastor tells you is the newest, best edition, and how the scholars will tell you that, but it says, "But I say unto you, That whosoever is angry with his brother shall be in danger of the judgment." By taking out "without a cause," where you have at least two places that Jesus is angry with His brethren, very, very slowly, very auspiciously, they make Christ a guilty sinner before the judgment. The cheap shots that they take at the Lord Jesus Christ. I mean, there are major ones that are unparalleled, but to me, it has always been amazing how the devil never even misses the most minute chance to take a shot at the deity of the Lord Jesus Christ and make Him guilty as any human man out there.

Now look at Proverbs 24:29 as we go on here. It says, "Say not, I will do so to him as he hath done to me: I will render to the man according to his work." Of course, the great verse we all love and cherish is doing to others before they do it to you. But that is not what He is saying here. In the Old Testament, and we hear people use this all the time, it talks about an eye for an eye and a tooth for a tooth. Many times, people will use that as a point of reference to take judgment out or retribution out on somebody that they have a problem with. "Well, he did it to me, so I am going to do it to him. An eye for an eye, a tooth for a tooth." I understand that. But

the truth of the matter is that kind of justice in the Old Testament was meted out through the structure of the nation of Israel. It may have been an eye for an eye and a tooth for a tooth, but it went through the judges and the elders. It was not somebody just going out and doing his own thing and taking revenge on somebody. God had a structure by which that concept, an eye for an eye and a tooth for a tooth, it went through. It was not up to an individual just to go out and to do his own thing, so to speak.

When it comes to issues in the church, you have problems with people, you never take matters into your own hand. I mean, I know the Bible says you go and talk to them, I am not talking about that. I do not mean the revenge side or the dealing with them in a harsh way. There is a structure for it. That structure obviously is the New Testament church, and you are to take it through the church. This is what the Christians in 1 Corinthians 6 were not doing. They were taking each other to a civil court, suing each other over issues. Paul says, "What are you doing?" He says, "Someday you as Christians are going to judge the world. Are you telling me, based on that, you are not able to judge the smallest matters that you have to deal with now?" Of course, they were not, and it was a mess. If you have problems in the church, you take it within the church, and you deal with it through the structure that has been set down that everybody makes sure that everything is done biblically in the way it should be.

Now when it comes to the issues of the world, Romans 12 tells us that here again, the powers that be ordained, the structure of government is how you operate. It is a thing where you have a legitimate process by which you can deal with issues that come up. It is never good to take matters into your own hands, not only within the Christian world, but also in the world. Now I am not talking about you protecting yourself. I am not talking about if somebody breaks into your house. The last thing you want to give them is John 3:16. That is the last thing that you give them as they are laying on the floor, whatever it may be.

I want to make this clear. I do not want somebody to think that it bothers me. It bothers me how that, especially with women today, it is just almost like every week some woman gets attacked on one of these running places over here in Kansas or even in Missouri. They are very secluded sometimes. They are very hard to, you are out there all by yourself, and you are running, and there is some pervert out there that is going to hurt you, or even in your own home, in your own neighborhood. There was a YouTube video on the thing here a couple weeks ago where a gal was just running in her own neighborhood. Some guy pulls up the car behind him, comes up and tries to grab her. She fought him off and ran away, and the neighbors were there and yelled at him. But I am telling you, I am not talking about things like that. In spite of all this, you have a God-given right to protect yourself, your person. There are laws that you govern by that, but that is just the way it should be.

I think it is a terrible thing, and I know, and I watch these things, and I just, they say they have this, people get, these ladies get assaulted on the trail, and then it cuts to the fact that they go to hand-to-hand combat courses, or they go to some kind of rape prevention where they teach you how to break a guy's hold and all that stuff. Hey, listen, I am all for that. But I want to tell you right now, if you get a, and this is not maybe true in some of our churches, we got some gals here that are pretty rough, but anyway, if you are a 125-pound lady and some 250-pound guy grabs

you, I am telling you, you can know all the karate and all the kung fu and everything in the world, but unless you are a black belt, he is going to overpower you. In cases like that, you do not want to use judo, karate, or kung fu. You want to use "kerchink." "Kerchink" will solve all of the problems. "Kerchink" is not an Oriental martial art. "Kerchink" is the sound that your .45 makes when you run a little chamber around into it. I guarantee you, if every guy over there in Kansas or Missouri that likes to prey on these little trails with the innocent women, if they all went out there knowing that three quarters of them were probably armed and qualified and can handle a firearm, you would see the whole thing just go away. I mean, I am telling you, the response time for 911 in a place like that is probably 15 minutes versus the response time of a 9 millimeter, which is 1,500 feet per second. You figure it out. I do not know how I got into that, but I just wanted to say that.

IV. The Slothful Man's Field and Vineyard

Anyway, look at Proverbs 24:30. "I went by the field of the slothful and by the vineyard of the man void of understanding." Here is a picture of modern-day Christianity without any question about it. I want to look at each key word here, and I want to show you some more about a word study. I want to show you how you take a passage and just lift out one of the key words, run it through the Bible, and let it define that word and how it comes back and shows you how to put it all together.

The first word we want to look at is the word "field." We looked at that one last week, and you should already have that down. We know from Matthew 13 that the field is told us that the field is the world. So when he is talking about "I went by the field," he is talking about somebody who is slothful, who when it comes to their calling to the world by Christ, well, the next word, "slothful."

Twelve times in the book of Proverbs, you will find a reference to a slothful person, a man or a woman who when it comes to the things of God will become very lazy, very undisciplined, not diligent, very wasteful with the things that God has given them, unprincipled in their life. Somebody who will never get past themselves and what they want out of life for themselves and will never lift a finger to do anything that the Bible says they ought to be doing. They are also called a sluggard in the book of Proverbs, and if I remember right, there are six times that he makes a reference to a sluggard, which we all lovingly know as a slug, which you have seen in your driveway from time to time. It says this guy is slothful.

The third word we want to look at here is the word "vineyard." Doctrinally, the vineyard, and you have got to see the doctrinal, see how it fits into you and me. The doctrinal issue here is that the vineyard will always be the nation of Israel, in particular Jerusalem. It will be a reference to the city that God gave them that was going to be the city that everybody on planet earth got ministered to through the temple. Jerusalem, when you talk about a vineyard in a Bible and an Old Testament sense, it will always be a reference to God's work, getting His work in the Old Testament. In the New Testament, we know that it is going to be the particular work that God will call you to within the field, the world.

We talked last week about you buying a field where the Bible says that Christ bought the field, the world. You and I, He never asked me to buy the whole world. He just asked me to consider a field, a field that was in the field, and to buy that one. Then once you do that, you clear it, you plant, you build a vineyard that in time will bear fruit for the Lord. I gave you the verse last week in Proverbs 31:16, where it said, talking about the virtuous woman,

Proverbs 31:16

She considereth a field, and buyeth it: with the fruit of her hands she planteth a vineyard.

That is a great verse. I cannot wait till we get to Proverbs 31 and really look at this virtuous woman and all the aspects of how it applies to us as Christians. They use an illustration that you can understand, and I said this last week. When I came to Kansas City in 1976, I recognized that this was the field that God had for me. I bought this field. I realized back then that God did not ask me to go win the whole world. He just asked me to consider a field and to buy that field, but with all the intensity that Christ bought the field with. So I did. The truth of the matter is, if every child of God ever got saved, ever considered a field and bought a field, in time, we would cover the whole world. That was His plan.

My field was Kansas City. When I got here, the first thing I saw was my field, and I knew that I was supposed to plant a vineyard. But you know as well as I do that when you go out there to farm someplace and you get a field, you have got to do a lot of preparation to the field before you can ever plant anything. You have to get rid of the rocks. You have to get rid of the tree stumps and the roots. There are a lot of things in a field you have got to get out of the field before you can plant everything.

I remember back in the day when I started out, I started out as a youth pastor. As a youth pastor, I dealt with high school kids like Zach and Jenny do. That was where I started. But I knew that I was not going to be satisfied there because the system back then was nowhere like the system we have now. The system back there was that there was a guy who was over the college and career class. I had the kids from the time they went into high school to the time they graduated. Then when they graduated, they went into the college class and left the high school class. In the scheme of things, that is the way it worked back then. I immediately saw that that was not going to work for me because of the fact that I knew that my God had called me to take young men and young ladies and to invest everything I had to train them to be everything. I could not do that if I lost them after four years.

So I set my sights, without saying it to anybody, I set my sights to be a singles pastor or college, whatever you want to call it. It was not but a short time after that that the guy that they had there decided that he was going to go do something else. So that position became open. I remember going in, and I was just a new one to the ministry back then, and I told the pastor that I, you know, that is what I wanted to do, and if I could move on to that position, that I would like to do that. He did not want me to leave the high school because the high school was going so well, and they had had a history of a lot of bad high school guys there, and he did not want to do that. I understood what he was saying, but I also understood my calling. I was very kind to him, and I told him, I said, "Look, here is my goal and my plan to what I want to build. So I am either going

to do it here, or I will do it somewhere else, but I will not do it, cannot do it with the high school kid."

Well, to make a long story short, I got the college in Kirkland. Penny was in it during that time, were not you, Penny? Anybody else here back then in those days and early days? Yeah, you were there? Meredith, they were not even born yet. How did you get into my college class when you were three? Oh, okay. That is a good answer. I am not going to argue with that one. I am her Uncle Bob, she can do whatever she wants.

Well, I do not mean this in a bad way, but the guy who was on the college class that I took over did not know what he was doing. He was an evangelical. He had about 80 people in there, and they did not know anything about the Bible. So I knew at that point in time, I had my work cut out for me, and I knew that I was going to have to move some things out of the field. We were running about 80 people in it. I think I got it down to 40 before it started to turn around. This guy was a marshmallow type of guy. He did not really know much about the Bible, and he just, he just, he played at it. I had a plan, I had a goal, I had a calling, and I was sure of it, and I knew that you were not going to train up anybody to do anything for God with a marshmallow message.

So I began first, oh, I will never forget it, I began to, I began to, I could see the looks on their faces the first Sunday I preached. They all thought they died and went to hell, I am not kidding. I just did not let up. I knew that I was going to have to weed out of that field the non-hackers and then start from scratch or whatever to begin to go from there. They were kind, but they did not like it. I had many of them who turned the corner, come back, and they thought, "Boy, when you first came, we did not like it at all." But you know, everybody gets used to abuse sooner or later. They would leave me little messages. There was a blackboard, a whiteboard behind where I would preach, and I would come down there on Sunday morning, and somebody got down there before me and wrote on the blackboard, "Dear Pastor Bob, we love you very much. But you need to feed the sheep." I walked in and looked at that, walked back out. Whole place was there. I walked up to the pulpit, put my Bible on there, took the magic marker. "To whom it may consume," yeah, consume, "to whom it may concern. You cannot feed dead sheep. All you can do is skin them."

Over the course of the years, I think when it was all said and done, we took that 80, 40 people and was running somewhere 1,200, 1,400 and doing missionary work and discipleship all over the world. Many of you were part of that. It was a thing where when I saw that, I knew that was where God called me. That was my field. But I had to move some rocks out of the way. I had to get some stumps out. I had to get some snakes from under those rocks that were hiding under them rocks. It just takes some time. But I will tell you, when you begin to plant that vineyard, you have got to do it one tree at a time, one person at a time, one family at a time.

When we started our church 16 years ago, we started with 14 people. Now we have got this plus what is out there on YouTube all over the place. It is all because it started with a small group who planted trees, vineyards. They were fruit-bearing fruit trees, and it grew up, bore more fruit, and that is how it is supposed to go. In the parable of the sower, which is found over there in Mark 4, I think it is a great illustration of this. The Bible says that a guy goes out to sow, and what he is

sowing is the Word of God. It is called the seed, but it is the Word of God. You will find that that is a great picture of any church, any ministry that you are going to try to consider a field and buy it with the fruit of your hands, plant a vineyard.

In that story there, the first one, he puts a seed out, and it says some fell by the wayside. When you put the Word of God, not everybody is going to pick it up, not everybody is going to get it. There are some that just falls by the wayside. Then he keeps on sowing, and I guess that is the key here. You have got to go through these three to find the fourth one, which is the good one. He keeps on sowing, and it says some fell on stony ground. Now that is people who have a hardness in their heart. They really do not care for the things of God. They are bitter, they are angry, whatever, and it just falls on that stony ground, and it cannot take any root. Then the third group is somebody that says it fell among thorns. The thorns choke the Word of God, and we are going to talk about the thorns here in a minute. Choke the Word of God and cannot go anywhere. But then he says if he keeps on doing it, some falls on the good ground.

Later, if you keep putting out the Word of God, and you are considered a field, and it is the true field that God has given to you, and you have got the determination to buy it, that you are not going to stick around for about six, seven, eight months or two, three years and decide that it is not here in some place else. God does not change His mind like that. What God called me here, I have been here since 1976. It is a situation where this is where God called me. So you begin to see how it works that way and how that some fell on the good ground.

Then you have the man that is void of understanding. You will find that this guy has no clue what God is doing. He is oblivious to anything that God has called him to do. There is no calling. There is no nothing that he is sure of. No nothing. Christianity is filled with people just like that. Proverbs 25:19 says that people who are void of understanding or slothful, it says they are like a broken tooth or a foot out of joint. In other words, a broken tooth renders you pretty well helpless to try to eat. A foot out of joint completely renders you from running or walking. You find that Christianity is filled with people like this.

I want to say right now, the majority of them are not bad people. I mean, you find some that are into all kinds of things, but the majority of them are not. Some of the nicest people, in my almost 50 years in ministry, some of the nicest people you ever met were some of the most worthless people you ever met. They just did not want to step outside their comfort zone. They did not want to get a sure word or a sure calling and did not care much about the sure reward. I say this to you based on a little bit of experience. In every church, you are going to find four kinds of people.

1. You are going to find those who know what God is doing.
2. You are going to find those who have no understanding of what God is doing.
3. You are going to have those that identify, have no clue of what God is doing.
4. You are going to have those that do not give a flip about what God is doing.

That is how you are going to find them. The last group today is where most of God's people fit in. They will not fit into the ministry, they fit into this. One gets the understanding and does something with it, the other one never gets anything.

V. The Condition of the Vineyard: Thorns, Nettles, and Broken Walls

Now look at Proverbs 24:31. "And, lo, it was all grown over with thorns, and nettles had covered the face thereof, and the stone wall thereof was broken down." That is the condition of the vineyard today. We are going to look at the key words here. You want a word study. Here we have a verse with four areas mentioned that are really important. They really illustrate what God's people are today and where they are at. Any way you examine and look at Christianity today through the Word of God, it is just clear all and over again that in most cases, it is a disaster, a calamity.

The first thing he says here is that it is covered and grown over with thorns and thistles. Now we want to do a word study on that. Thorns and thistles will always be a picture of sin in our lives. In Genesis 3, when Adam and Eve were put down in the garden, and they have a perfect life, with a perfect environment, and everything is just absolutely wonderful. In Genesis 3, when sin comes in, and in verse 18, when sin arises, the Bible says that the ground is now cursed, and then he tells them in no uncertain terms that thorns and thistles are now going to come forth. They were not there before. You are going to find from that point all the way through the Bible when he uses thorns and thistles or nettles or brambles. When Christ is dying on the cross, He has got a crown of thorns. He made Him king of your sin. Think about that for a while.

In Numbers 33:55, Israel is told that the other nations, and you getting messed up with them and getting involved with them, will become thorns in your sides and prick your eyes. In other words, the thorns will put your eyes out, they will snag you, they will hold you up that you cannot see. In Joshua 23:13, again talking to Joshua, he says that the other nations, the ones that they were told to wipe out and stay away from, the other nations are going to be snares and traps, thorns in your eyes and in your sides. Now it is a clear thing here, and we see it all the time if you work with people. How many times have somebody gotten in with the wrong crowd? When they get in with the wrong crowd, before they got in with the wrong crowd, they were just fine. But they let their guard down, they got into a situation that happens many, many times in different formats, and suddenly they are with the wrong crowd. They are getting bad information, they are getting bad counsel, they are getting bad influences, and pretty soon they cannot see from the Word of God once they once saw. In other words, the thorns that they are hanging out with have put out their eyes, and they cannot see it anymore.

In Judges 8:7, they are told that when they got messed up with these nations, and they did over and over and over and over again, that those thorns would tear you, or they would tear you apart with the thorns of the wilderness. In Proverbs 15:19, it says the slothful man is like a hedge of thorns. A hedge of thorns is like a bramble bush. Try to run through one one time. I do not care how good a hunting clothes you have got on. Those needles are as sharp as daggers, and they will stick you and cut you, and you will be bleeding from a hundred places, and you will never break through it. I mean, you may put trees, bushes, and everything, and you may blow through it. You will not blow through a very thorn bush. It will rip you apart. That is what he is talking

about. Thorns and thistles, likened to our sin, will stop us dead in our tracks of the calling that God has given us.

Then the next thing he says here is he talks about the stones of the stone wall. Now stones are a great study in the Bible, a great word study. You are going to find that basically there are two kinds of building material in the Bible in the Old Testament. One of them is stones, and the other one is bricks. When the nation of Israel is down in Egypt for 430 years, Pharaoh, a type of the world, a type of the devil, has put them into his service, and they are making bricks. The bricks that they are making are used to make Egypt better and stronger and bigger and more powerful. The bricks in the Bible will always be a picture of man-made consumption of things that are going to build a man-made, man-honoring, man-concept. Stones in the Bible are always God-made. So you will find that the Old Testament altars in the Bible are always made of stone. You will find that the temple was made of stone. Christ is called, and over there in Daniel 2:45, the stone cut without hands out of the mountain of God. The stones will represent Bible doctrine. Each stone is cut out of the mountain of God, and God puts it in your world in the form of a doctrine or a principle, and they form building blocks.

When we went back to Genesis 11:3 Thursday night, somebody was talking about the Tower of Babel, and I showed you then, made a reference to today I was going to talk about this. The Tower of Babel, the Bible is very clear that they have got brick for stone and slime for mortar. They made this tower, and it is a picture of a one-world religion, but notice the components, it is not stone. This religion is not God-made, it is man-made. What you have got in Christianity today is a lot of guys and a lot of churches that are completely departing from the Bible. They are leaving everything that God told you was holy and true. Now we have got the same issue. We have got churches that are man-made and that are not God-made.

Isaiah 65:3

A people that provoketh me to anger continually to my face; that sacrificeth in gardens, and burneth incense upon altars of brick;

Israel had transitioned from a God religion based on God's things to a man-made mess that was now constructed by man-made things.

Now, the next concept is "stone wall." Now we know what the stones themselves are. This will go back to Isaiah 28. I will turn to it, we have been there many times, but you know what it is saying. There it is talking about how shall we teach doctrine. It talks about the building blocks of you building a wall based on Bible doctrine that becomes your protection, that in time becomes a tall tower, a high tower by which you are protected from. We see how that this is God-made, not man-made. Bible building blocks made of stone, the stones are individual Bible principles or doctrine, building your wall of defense against the world. That is what will keep you and protect you in your walk with God.

Here, as today, the stone wall is broken down. Today, Christianity has no defense to what the devil wants to do with them. They are defenseless. They are defenseless because they are

slothful, and they are void of understanding. Their whole wall, everything that God gave them in Christianity, is overgrown with the thorns of their sin.

Now I want you to see this. It says that the nettles and the thorns have covered the face of the wall. We want to talk about that for a moment. Because the face will be the face of Christ, who He is. If you know who Christ is from a biblical perspective and you have a good relationship with Him, you did not find out who Christ was from your daily bread. You did not find Christ was where some radio preacher. You got into the Bible and got the building blocks of Christianity one block at a time, and you built your wall. As you got the Bible doctrines as the stones God made and put them in the wall and built that wall, it was those doctrines that revealed to you the face of the Lord Jesus Christ. That is what He says in Isaiah 65:3 a few minutes ago: "Provoked me to anger to my face." You only know who Christ is in your life and who He really is and what He really will do for you and have the real relationship by the doctrines in the Bible that reveal His face to you that you see and know who He is.

A couple of weeks ago, I gave you a lamentation in Lamentations 4:1 and talked about how the gold has become dim and how the most fine gold has changed. Then I told you how that the stones of the sanctuary, these very stones that we are talking about here, the stones of the sanctuary were broken down and laying in the street. The reason the gold and the fine gold has become dim today to God's people is because it is covered with the thorns and the nettles and the briars of this whole world. God's people, just like Israel, they cannot even recognize who He is today. Oh my goodness, the absolute terrible state of New Testament Christianity because the churches today are being built with brick and slime instead of the stones that God gave us.

VI. Seeing, Considering, Looking, and Receiving Instruction

Now look at Proverbs 24:32. "Then I saw, and considered it well: I looked upon it, and received instruction." There are four things here we want to look at in our little word study.

The first thing he says is "then I saw." Let me ask you a question. What do you really see? Do you really see what is going on around you in Christianity? Do you really have any clue? Do you see the terrible rejection of God and His Word that is all around us today? Do you see Rome as the greatest enemy of Christianity, or are you willing to make an alliance with them so you can all win people to Christ in the third millennium? Do you see Rome as the greatest enemy ever in the history of the world where its only design is to take the world and put it into slavery and let the devil through his church, Revelation 7 and 18, do all the works through his religion? Do you see and understand how that in the great Reformation when Martin Luther broke from the Roman Catholic Church, as did the other reformers? Did you see how that that Reformation is written about in history probably as one of the greatest events? Everybody knows about it. Everybody talks about it. Everybody relates back to it. But do you know and understand, have you ever saw the counter-Reformation that the devil put into place to bring those people back to him? Of course, you have not. What do you see? "Then I saw." Do you see anything? "Well, yeah, I see they are all God's people. We need to all get along." Okay, that is great. Sit over here.

What do you see? Do you see the neo-evangelicalism, the neo-orthodoxy, and the charismatic movement for who they really are? Or you have got too many friends there. You do not want to make anybody mad. Do you see how the Roman Catholic Church, through the devil, has helped with God's people, took the only true possession of God ever gave you from you, a perfect Bible? Do you see that? "Then I saw." Did you? Did you know that the only thing that sets you apart from every other religion in the world is the perfect, absolute Bible that God gave you? If you lose that, you are just like everybody else. So the Baptists take Baptists off their name, the neo-evangelicals get involved, and the neo-orthodox get involved, they get rid of the Bible, and they are all together. There is not one doctrinal issue that separates them. But brother, there is plenty that separate us. "Then I saw." Do you see? "Then I saw." What did you see?

I will tell you what I saw. I saw in Genesis 3:15 that God had a seed and the devil had a seed, and we are not going to get born again by corruptible seed, but by incorruptible, by the Word of God. The devil and God both got a seed.

He says, "Then I saw and considered it well." Put emphasis on the word "well." Now for me, I cannot speak for you. Once I saw it, I went to work considering it. For almost 50 years, I have considered these things. I am not some old crazy coot up here that just gets up here, and I have had 50 years of watching this thing, how it impacts me, my family, my ministry. I considered over in Job 41:12-13, where he says,

Job 41:12-13

I will not conceal his parts, nor his power, nor his comely proportion.

Who can discover the face of his garment?

I considered that. I looked at that, and I thought to myself, "face of his garment." That is a strange phrase. Then he says, "I will not conceal his parts, nor his power, nor his comely proportion." I consider those things. I said to myself, "I see that. I saw. Now I am going to consider it. What is he trying to tell me?" He is telling me about the greatest chapter in the Bible, two greatest chapters, Job 40 and 41, that will tell me everything I need to know about the devil's plan. I got God's plan down. Now he showed me what the devil's plan was to overthrow God's plan. When I read there in Job 40 and 41 about Leviathan, when I read in Job 40 and 41 about Behemoth, I can go to Isaiah 27 and track down Leviathan, find out he is talking about the devil. I can go a number of places and find out that those are the two greatest chapters because I saw it and then I considered it.

The scholarship told me that Leviathan was a crocodile, that Behemoth was an elephant. You would not know how many millions of people out there read that, get what scholarship says, and then say, "Wow, that was nice," and then move on with life. You just missed and glossed over the greatest chapters that you need to consider well. "I will not conceal his parts," that is the men down through history he has used. "I will not conceal his power," that is the nations down through history he has used, "nor his comely proportion," that is the religion down through history he has used. I remember reading, "Who shall discover the face of his garments," and as I began to put church history together and look at all the things together, I found it, I saw it, "face

of his garments." I realized that the whole history of man and the history of Bible, of recording of that history of man, is nothing more than the devil changing garments, seven times down through history. Seven times like a seven-act play, when the scenery was changing in history, when things were being moved around and changing, he went off stage and put on a garment that matched the scenery and blended in. Seven garment changes. The face of his garment. You see, this is the key, he changed garments, but the face is always the same. When you know what that face is found in the Bible, he will never elude you.

Then the next thing it says, "I looked upon it." Now I want you to see here again a couple of key words, he did not say "I looked at it," he said "I looked upon it." That is from an elevated position, including a show of you higher than ground level or what you see in a one-dimensional view. I might just add this, Christianity today and most of God's people are one-dimensional Christians. All they see is what is before them. They never see it as it really is in the three dimensions. Then if you want to get real spiritual, you move into that fourth dimension, and boy, you better look out when you get there. "Looked upon it." You looked upon it from the high tower that you built, from the wall that you built, with the individual building blocks of Bible doctrine that you built into a wall, that built into a tower. Now you can look down, and you have perspective. Now you can look down and have a contact because now you have a position.

I looked upon him from my high tower.

Psalms 18:2 says that my high tower was my salvation.

Psalms 61:3 says my high tower was for me to see the enemy.

Psalms 144:2 says my high tower was my deliverer.

Proverbs 18:10 says that my high tower was found in the name of the Lord.

You want to always get to the point by building the doctrines in your life, the principles in your life, getting the thorns and the nettles off of that wall, and start to see everything in life from God's standpoint. Seeing it higher than the other people see it. Through the tower that you have built, through the stones of God, building that wall and building that tower high.

So then the next thing he says that "I received instructions." 25 times in the book of Proverbs alone, he makes reference to giving out his instructions to us. You know the key to successful Christian life is not having the right Bible. The key to successful Christian life is not having the right church. The key to successful Christian life is receiving what those things give you and doing something with them. "I received instructions." That is what I did like the wise man in Proverbs. I, through instructions, saw God move down through history and how the devil moved in opposition to stop God. Through instructions, I saw the slow process of replacing the Christ, God's Word, through a systematic system that was going to destroy people's lives. Through that whole system, I observed, I got instructions about Bible college, about scholarship, about Christian education, destroying all that God has.

Now you might be asking at this point in time, if I did not get it through Bible college, scholars union, and Christian education, where do you get your instructions from? The answer to that is in 1 Corinthians 2:16. He says,

1 Corinthians 2:16

For who hath known the mind of the Lord, that he may instruct him? But we have the mind of Christ.

There is your instruction. Then he tells you in Philippians 2:5,

Philippians 2:5

Let this mind be in you, which was also in Christ Jesus:

The pure, complete, perfect, inspired, absolute Word of God that is the mind of Christ. That is where you get your instructions from. There it is. Your education, your degree, your scholarship, your I.Q. has absolutely nothing to do with it. God did not give us two sets of instructions. Take it or leave it. Your instructions will come through the book that is God's mind. God does not have two minds, nor does He change His mind because we are told last week not to meddle with them that are given to change. So you want something absolute and perfect that is fixed that never changes.

In Luke 24:45, it says,

Luke 24:45

Then opened he their understanding, that they might understand the scriptures.

There is the key. God will open up your understanding and give you His mind, His absolute opinion on everything, that you have to receive those instructions. Simply look at what is going on around us and run it through the Word of God. The Bible says he that is spiritual judgeth all things. Make the judgment call for your own life based on the mind of God, the instructions that He gave you. Then take instructions that is what is wrong and build for yourself a strong tower from which you can work the ministry through the building of a wall of stone. Bible doctrine that comes from the mount of God, and it reveals to you the face of Christ, and build your tower high and strong. The higher you build it, the stronger it will be.

VII. Building Your Tower

In the Bible, it talks about three types of fruit bearing. When I have always seen this and put it to what I have been considering and what I see and try to understand, I also know that it is not only times three types of fruit bearing, but God's people are going to build three types of towers. You can build your tower as high as you want. I guess the question today is, how high are you willing to build it? That will be the level of your protection. You will build that tower based on the stones of God, which are the Bible doctrines that you put them into a wall and build that wall and that tower high.

Mark 4:20 says, and they are talking about the sowing of God's Word, he says,

Mark 4:20

And these are they which are sown on good ground; such as hear the word, and receive it, and bring forth fruit, some thirtyfold, some sixty, and some an hundred.

You will find that God's people, you will find the 30-fold Christians. They will only give so much, and they will only build so much. I might say to you, a 30-foot tower is not going to do much for you. But that is where they go. They start to build it, start to put it up, and they go out there and they are like, "Well, that is good enough, that is good enough, that will do. Well, we have got a ball game to get to, the Chiefs are playing at noon. That will do. Let us go, that will do it. That is good, that is high enough, that is high enough. Come on, let us eat, that is high enough."

Then you have those that will go a little bit farther, and they will build the 60-foot tower. They bear fruit 60. They get that up there more, and they say, "Well, that is good, 60-foot, man, that is really up there. Ain't nobody going to get up there at 60-foot. We are good, let us stop right there, and we will go from there."

Then there are those that build 100-foot. Give 100%. Those who bear fruit 30%, those who bear fruit 60%, those who bear fruit 100%. Those who give 30%, those who give 60%, and those who give 100%. Those who build a 30-foot tower wall, those who build a 60-foot tower wall, those who build a 100-foot tower wall. But I am telling you this, the higher you build it, the safer you are.

Now I know 30, 60, 100, it is a great illustration, but let me just say this to you, do not ever stop building a tower. It always amazed me how back in Genesis at the Tower of Babel, the unsaved religious world that was trying to put out a false religion, when they built their Tower of Babel, and Babel means confusion, when they built that tower back there, their goal was, "Who taught me to reach unto heaven?" In our Christian world today, when we build our tower, our goal is just get it high enough so I can quit.

The higher you build it, four things happen.

5. The higher you build it, the better you can see what is going on around you. To want a good example of this, just get on your computer and call up your Google Maps or your Bing Maps. Put on an address. You will get a satellite view that shows you probably 40 square miles. You start putting the button to zoom in on it, you get closer and closer and closer, you come right down on the rooftop of what the house you are looking at, which will do everything that is out in the perimeter. In other words, the higher you get, the more you can see around you. The more Bible you get in your life, the more Bible principles you get, what do you think? We have got our own prophecy and people ministry. I will tell you, that was probably the greatest rendition that we have ever done on salvation in the Old Testament versus the New Testament. I do not know how we could have ever done it in any clear and any depth that you walked out of there yesterday saying, "Boy, I got it." You know what, it was based on everybody putting in things that pulled it all together. The more you learn about God, the

more you learn about who He is, the more you learn about how He thinks, how He operates, and look at the things around you and see what they are, the higher you get, the better you can see what is around you. Pretty soon you get that bird's eye perspective that you understand it.

6. The higher you get, the better you can see what is coming your way. If you have got an army and you are going to camp, if you have got a mountain near right close to your high hill or high observation point, what you want to do is put two guys up on there and take them in a shift, and everybody watches the surrounding area so you know what is coming your way. If you are in a desert someplace, they can be 40 miles away, and you can see the dust clouds knowing something is coming your way. If you are in a jungle someplace, and it is very quiet, and you are sneaking through the jungle, and all of a sudden about 4,000 birds start going crazy, something is coming your way. The higher you get, you not only can see what is around you, you can see a long way off what is moving toward you. This tower that we are on, this great tower, we already know from the Bible that it is pitch black dark, and we live in darkness. So you have got these incredible big King James 1611 searchlights that go for hundreds of miles that will illuminate everything in the darkness.
7. The higher you build it, the harder it is for somebody or something to get to you. The devil likes to pick on people who are easy prey. When he came to destroy Adam and Eve, he picked on the easy prey, Eve was the weaker vessel. He will always pick the ones and manipulate the ones that have fear because the Bible says perfect love casts out fear, so we attack the ones who do not have perfect love, and that is how we manipulate them. He will exist with people who are afraid, and he knows if you really get into the Word of God and you really are confident and you are protected in the Word of God, then he has no place for you. A great example of that is over there in Matthew 4. He comes to the Lord Jesus Christ, and he tries to tempt Him three times. He comes up the first time, and he says, "I am going to do this," and Jesus just looks at him and did not argue with him, did not say a word to him, did not even recognize him. He just simply says, "It is written." He went the second time, and he said, "Well, if you do this, I will do this." Did not argue with him? All he said was, "It is written." Third time the devil came back, and he said, "I will give you this, all the kingdoms of the world, you just bow down towards me." He did not argue with him. He did not say, "Those kingdoms are going to be mine anyhow." He did not say anything. You know what he said? He says, "It is written." You know what the Bible says? The devil leaves Him. You know why? Because the devil knows when you are so filled with the Word of God and you have got your high tower, there is no point in coming against your wall. It is when the wall is only 30 or 60, he will try to scale it. As you walk out there and say, "Well, my wall is done."

In the Army, the guys the first night out in combat when you had to dig a foxhole, and sometimes you had to dig foxholes, and then you get it all dug down there, and so then they come in and they say, "All right, we are moving out, let us go," and you would have to go another two, 24 miles and dig another foxhole. Sometimes that happens two or three times a night. After a while, some of the guys the first night out there, they thought, "Well, you know, I do not have to dig it that deep," and they just dug where one guy who was a vet was digging down six, seven feet. The other guy was just digging two, three feet just to get comfortable. Everybody thought that was fine until them rounds start coming in the middle of the night. You wish your hole was 150

feet deep then, brother. I mean, that shrapnel is dragging over there, and it is not just a shrapnel. It hit them trees, and those tree bursts, that wood just is like steel. First night out, you take it easy. The second night, brother, you dig that so deep that you have to have a ladder to get out. Just as the deeper you dig it, the safer you are, when it comes to Christianity, the higher you build it, the safer you are. They cannot get to you.

You take a Christian that is a mature Christian, somebody that has been around for a while and built their life in a relationship with God, and we all look at them and think, "Boy, I would like to be like that, nothing seems to bother them." In many cases, nothing does bother them. You know why? Because if they have been in the ministry at any length of time or just been a Christian for a length of time, they have seen it all, and they have got their high tower so high that they can see way around there what is going on. They can see what is coming a long way, and they absolutely have the peace that nobody is going to get to them because in fact, whatever you are saying does not bother me. Whatever you are saying about me does not affect me. Whatever you are saying about me does not bother me. "Yeah, sticks and stones may break my bones, but words will never hurt me." You cannot get to me, you know why? My tower is so much higher than you. All you can stand around down there and run around my tower and yell.

8. The higher it is, that is where you find the rest of God that we have talked about the last couple of weeks that eludes all of us. The rest of God, you rest because of the fact that you have the peace and the mind of God. You have the peace that passes all understanding. It keeps your hearts and mind. You have everything in your life going your way because you know that when you have got that wall and that tower high, and you have got that wall and those stone blocks of Bible doctrine, and there are no thorns and there are no nettles on it, and that thing is built strong and high, and you can observe, and you have taken instruction, and you have done everything that God has called you to do, you rest in the fact nobody is going to hurt you, and I cannot describe to you any other peace in this world that feels like that. God's people today are the most fearful bunch of people you ever saw in your life, and that is because they do not even have a tower. They are standing on top of their station wagon hoping that is high enough.

This is an incredible book. Proverbs 24 has just been a great chapter, and every chapter, but we have really got a lot of good things out of Proverbs 24. We are going to hold up right there. We are going to close out Proverbs 24 next week, and then we will jump into Proverbs 25, just six more chapters, and then we will be done. How to be done in four or five years the way it is going. Let us have a word of prayer, we will be dismissed. Father, we thank You and praise You for the Lord Jesus, we do love You.