

I. Introduction to Proverbs 22:9

If you have your Bibles today, let's turn to Proverbs 22. Last week we talked about verse 7 and 8, and we looked at two really good, solid principles for just everyday living. We saw the world system becoming the master of our lives instead of the Holy Spirit of God in our lives. We saw in the verses, we talked about how in the world scenario that the rich is always over the poor, that the borrower is servant to the lender. We talked about the concept and the idea of Galatians 6:7, how that you sow iniquity, but you reap vanity and how it will lead to an empty life. I took you over there and showed you the concept of the end of your life: a bag with holes. Everything you put in it, you've lost. We wound up by talking about the rot of a man's anger failing him and told you how that people will control very angry people, and that'll always fail. It'll never work. These are common things that you'll have to deal with and face every day of your life. You're going to find these things. Proverbs gives you the insight to see and understand and to deal with all of those things that are going to come your way in life. God gave us a common Bible to the common man to be able to solve our common problems, and it's just that simple.

Today I want to look at just one verse, but what a verse it is. I want to talk to you about, I think, one of the greatest principles anywhere in the Bible for your future as a Christian. Hopefully, you'll come away today with some great truths from this great verse. This verse is really, I know it's only one verse, but I'm going to tell you right now, this verse is worthy of our time today to look at it and to take it apart.

Proverbs 22:9 He that hath a bountiful eye shall be blessed; for he giveth of his bread to the poor.

II. The Importance of Words in the Bible

Let's look at the first part of this verse, Proverbs 22:9, and there are two parts here I want to look at. We're going to take some time today, and what I want to talk about is the blessings of God in your life and my life through a bountiful eye. What does that mean? We read a verse like that and we say, "Boy, that's a great verse," but inside we're saying, "I wonder what it really means." I want to walk you through it today, and I want to talk about "he that hath a bountiful eye shall be blessed."

Thursday night we talked about how important words are in the Bible. Somebody asked a question out of John 21:25, and I talked about where that verse says:

John 21:25

*And there are also many other things which Jesus did, the which, if they should be written every one, I suppose that even the world itself could not contain the books that should be written.
Amen.*

I told you how that in a personal way, that verse really changed my life. I was like most of God's people when it came to the Bible. I knew it was God's Word. I knew it was special. I knew it was

wonderful. I knew it was truth. But I never looked at it as the fact, as that in light of that verse there in John 21:25, that of all the things that Jesus did, He handpicked what He wanted me to have. When I understood that, my whole life and viewpoint of the Word of God was never the same again. Where before I was reading through the Bible many times and just gleaning everything I could by reading it as quickly as I could to get through it, now I realized that every word was important. That ended my attempt to get through the Bible quickly.

Now, when I preach to you the book of Proverbs here, the reason why it has taken us so long is the fact that we have looked at every word, because words are important. Of course, when God wrote the Bible, He put it in a format that really the key to unlocking the Bible will simply be the words. This is why all the new translations come out. The devil wants to destroy your ability to ever really get into a depth of the Bible. So what they always tell you is, "It ain't no big deal, we just changed some words."

I'll give you an example. The latest monstrosity that came out in 1975 that everybody who wants to replace the King James Bible, the good old King James Bible, and yet they want to appear to be still okay, they won't go to an NIV or one of those, they'll go to the New King James Bible. Many churches today will tell you that, "Well, yeah, we use the King James." No, they use the New King James Bible. In the New King James Bible, they didn't destroy the text like they did in the other, but what they did do was destroy the key words. The devil doesn't care if he destroys the doctrines or he destroys the words, as long as he keeps you from getting the Bible.

I remember reading and looking at Genesis 1:2, where in my Bible the Bible says:

Genesis 1:2

And the earth was without form, and void; and darkness was upon the face of the deep. And the Spirit of God moved upon the face of the waters.

Most people don't understand the importance of that little verse there, but that verse says that the Spirit of God moved upon the face of the water. What you've got in Genesis 1:2 is the greatest fundamental single application of truth that impacts everything in the Bible: that the Holy Spirit of God starts moving in Genesis 1:2, and it never stops moving throughout your Bible. I could take you this morning into the Word of God and take you down through history. I could show you the movement of the Holy Spirit of God from Genesis 1:2, where the Spirit of God moved upon the face of the water. It never stopped after Genesis 1:2. I could tell you the direction it went. I could tell you the countries that it went to. I could show you the revivals that were about because of that one single word in the beginning of verse 2 of your Bible. The Spirit of God moved. Taking the word "moved," the Spirit of God moved upon the face of the water. He never stops.

You get into a New King James Bible, it says, "The Spirit of God hovered over the water." Now you might think that that's not a big deal. I'm sure there are God's people listening to my voice and maybe one or two of you in this room who would say, "Well, I don't see the big deal." Well, the deal is that moving and hovering are two different things. The Spirit of God didn't hover. You know, that's where God's people are at in most churches today. You're standing there, and the

Spirit of God is hovering over you, but it ain't going anywhere with you. One little word like that, one little change of one little word, destroys the whole concept of what God wants to do in the Bible. You know why you don't know where God is at today? You don't know why you don't know where God has been, and if you don't know where God has been and you don't know where God is going, you don't know where you're at today. You know why that is? Because you failed to see when He moved and then where He went. He filed a flight plan in Genesis 1:2, the Holy Spirit of God did. If you're a child of God this morning, you ought to know that flight plan.

Some words are clearly defined in the Bible, and they stand for things to teach us something. Words like "standing" and "state," two little words. "Standing" will be defined for you in Romans 5:1-2. "State" will be defined for you in Philippians 4:11. They're two incredible words. When you read them, you just look at them. You know, "standing" and "state." We just look at it, and we think they're two of the most impacting words in the Bible. You take the word "know" or "to know." One of the most powerful words in the Word of God. We wrote in the book of 1 John, you'll find in that book, five little chapters, you'll find the word "know" 27 times. The whole book's wrapped around that one word.

We saw the words when we came through our child training classes: "to train" and "to teach." We know what they mean now. You train them in the truth, but you teach them by example. "Ears" in the Bible are a great study. "He that hath ears, let him hear." "Hands" in the Bible, wherever you find it, will always represent the work of God. Psalms 40:17 says the work of our hands will establish the Word of God. Your feet: "feet shod with the preparation of the gospel of peace," Ephesians 6:15. That's your walk with God. Your loins. The Bible says that in Ephesians 6:14, we're to have our loins girded about with truth. That's the strength of a man. Yet the Bible says in 1 Peter 1:13 that we're to gird up the loins of our minds. Incredible words. There will be key words in the Bible that when you find them in a verse, they will take you to a higher level. They'll begin to unravel the verse, and you'll understand, and they'll show you what the verse is talking about by showing you the context, by the definition, how the Bible uses the word. Of course, it's obvious now that when you take a Bible and change those words, you lose all of that. That's the idea of a real biblical word study.

III. The Spiritual Meaning of "Eye"

Now you take the word "eye." The eye spiritually in the Bible will always represent what we can see that only God sees, but you can see it too. It's like Proverbs 29:18, "where there is no vision, the people perish." No vision of being able to see what God sees.

The Bible says in Matthew, I'm going to tell you today, coming through here, you're going to get a lot of, I want you to understand how that every one of you needs to have a bountiful eye. What that means. Because it's already told us that the blessings of God are in the bountiful eye. Do you all want the blessings of God in your life? You've got to get a bountiful eye. You better listen. We're going to learn some things about Christianity today because there's a lot of phony Christianity going on out there.

Matthew 6:22

The light of the body is the eye: if therefore thine eye be single, thy whole body shall be full of light.

If your eye be single, singleness of mind. Be focused on the things of God. You have a single, notice it doesn't say, "the light of the body is the eyes." It says, "the light of the body is the eye." It's focused. It's single. It's singleness of mind for the things of God because it's singleness of what I see through the light of God. Seeing everything in life from a single perspective: the Word of God through the light that He has given you. Psalms 119:130 says:

Psalms 119:130

The entrance of thy words giveth light; it giveth understanding unto the simple.

Now the next verse in Matthew 6:23 says this, and it's a great contrast to verse 22:

Matthew 6:23

But if thine eye be evil, thy whole body shall be full of darkness. If therefore the light that is in thee be darkness, how great is that darkness!

That's what you're looking at. Your whole body shall be full of darkness. Now get the principle here. Here's what He's saying, and I know this is not popular today. This kind of preaching is not popular in the world that Christianity we live in. But what He's saying is this: you can't have light and darkness in your eyes at the same time. It isn't one eye light, one eye dark, but that's the Christian world we live in. "I'm not really out of fellowship with God, I'm not. I can do all things for God, but I can have terrible things in my life, and I'm okay because I say I'm okay." The Bible tells you clearly that you either have a singleness of your eye, which is light, or you have darkness. 1 John 1:5 says:

1 John 1:5

This then is the message which we have heard of him, and declare unto you, that God is light, and in him is no darkness at all.

The eye, biblically speaking, will represent what we as God's people can see on the same level that God is, through the light of God's Word. Physically, just to put it into a context for you, physically it's you looking at every situation in life that you have to face. Spiritually, it's looking at that situation in a physical way, but understanding it in a spiritual way of what you're really up against.

The spiritual condition of a man will always be determined by the light or the darkness that he has fixed his eye on, and you can't have one eye on God and one eye on the world. 1 John 2:15-16 says:

1 John 2:15

Love not the world, neither the things that are in the world. If any man love the world, the love of the Father is not in him.

1 John 2:16

For all that is in the world, the lust of the flesh, and the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life, is not of the Father, but is of the world.

Back in Genesis 3, the first time you find sin showing up with a human being. The first time the devil shows up, back there in Genesis 3, is the first attack that he puts on God's creation. The first attack, by the way, that he wanted to attack when he wanted to destroy man and God's creation was to simply take the words from her. Genesis 3:6 says:

Genesis 3:6

And when the woman saw that the tree was good for food, and that it was pleasant to the eyes, and a tree to be desired to make one wise, she took of the fruit thereof, and did eat, and gave also unto her husband with her; and he did eat.

You see, sin will always start with the eyes. It always will. It will start with your eyes, and it will move in. I mean, I don't know if you know it or not, but your ears and your eyes and your nose and your mouth are all windows to your spirit. When you look at things that are unholy and not of God, then your eyes go dark. Your singleness now is not on the light of God, but on the light of the world. When you listen to things that you shouldn't listen to, it affects your spirit. When you breathe in things that you shouldn't breathe in, it affects your spirit. When you digest things and drink things that you shouldn't drink, it will affect your spirit. We actually believe that we can do all of the things that the world does, that an unsaved man does every day in his life, and we can do it as a Christian, and we actually think we're okay with God. We have some message from God. It's not half-light and half-darkness; it's one or the other.

IV. Spiritual Discernment and Strong Meat

As a Christian, having the ability to have spiritual insight, spiritual discernment. Kenzie and Jared, remember I said that I saw that coming along before it ever got here, a problem? Remember I said that, and you came up to me and you said, "How do you get to do that?" Remember you asked me that question? That's a great question. Her question was, in your reference to something that happened, and I said, "You know what, it's not a surprise to me, I saw it coming along before it happened." She came up and she said, "How do you do that?"

Look over at Hebrews 5:12-14. Here's how you get to that point, and you are fast on your way to getting to that point.

Hebrews 5:12

For when for the time ye ought to be teachers, ye have need that one teach you again which be the first principles of the oracles of God; and are become such as have need of milk, and not of strong meat.

Hebrews 5:13

For every one that useth milk is unskilful in the word of righteousness: for he is a babe.

Hebrews 5:14

But strong meat belongeth to them that are of full age, even those who by reason of use have their senses exercised to discern both good and evil.

He says in the next verse, "For everyone that uses milk is unskillful in the word of righteousness, for he is a babe." Right there is most of Christianity: an inability to use the Word of God. I didn't say that they didn't think they were spiritual. I'm saying the real factor in your life and my life is what can you do with that book? Don't tell me what you believe about it. Don't tell me about all of the attributes of being saved. What do you know and do with what you do know in that book? He says if somebody is unskillful in the word, that he's a baby.

Kenzie, the key in starting out of getting to the point where you can see things like that is strong meat, getting the principles down in the Bible. That's the beginning. Strong meat, that's Bible doctrine. He says the second thing, as I said, is not a baby Christian. It's someone that is mature, someone that has done some things with the Word of God, somebody that the Word of God has done some things with them. Now the real key down here is verse 14: strong meat, Bible doctrine, spiritual discernment, the ability to see things coming before it gets here, the high tower concept we talked about. But strong meat, Bible doctrine, belong to them that are full of age, "even those by reason of use." The discernment in your life and my life comes by you taking what you have here and then letting God use it in your life. You work with people, you disciple people, you begin to take the Word of God and you put it inside, and it does something, and it teaches you the patterns. It teaches you human nature. It teaches you how after a while there's only so many ways you can get hosed in the ministry. There's only so many ways a person can deceive you. There's only so many ways that somebody can do something, and when you learn those patterns, they're telltale patterns.

You guys are like the deer hunt. The guys that really get a deer, the guys that go out long before deer season. You know what you do? You look where they're rubbing their antlers on the trees, and you're saying, "Oh, they're rubbing their antlers, this is the way." You look for those game trails. Years ago, when I wanted to hunt turkeys, and turkey was the hardest thing in the world, and I practiced and practiced and practiced hunting turkeys. Everybody, I listened to every video, every demonstration, every idea I did who was a good turkey hunter. They'd tell you to do this and tell you to do that, and they said, "You've got to find out where they're at. You can be the turdiest turkey hunter in the world, but if there ain't no turkeys there, you're wasting your time." I always got my turkey. Hy-Vee always had them, always phrased up, just grab one and go home.

They said, "You know what? You look for scratchings because turkeys will go through the woods in little groups, and they want to eat acorns or something, so they scratch the leaves and put a little circle of scratching." So they say when you start seeing those, then you know. But he says, "You've got to be careful because squirrels do the same thing, and so do other birds." So I'm thinking, "Well, how do you do that?" He says, "Well, you've got to look real close." So you get down and you start pulling them, and sure enough, in one of them, you'll find a feather that belonged to a turkey. So there you are. He says you need to know the difference because of the different seasons. You need to know the difference in turkey droppings. Whether a male turkey dropping will be different than a female turkey dropping. I'm thinking, "Oh, please don't tell me the way you know the difference is by tasting them." That's not it; it's the shape of them.

In other words, when you want to get something in the woods and hunt, and you want to get something, you've got to learn their habits. You've got to be smarter than a turkey. You've got to be smarter than a deer. You always get in a deer stand. You don't hunt on the ground, and obviously reasons for his dimension, but you know why? Because deer animals, they never look up. They look around, they never look up. That's being smarter than they are. You never saw a deer that, they don't look up. They look around, they smell. When you smell, they'll know you're there, but they don't ever look up. You've got to be smarter, and you've got to understand. When it deals with people, you've got to be smarter than they are. You've got to understand the patterns. You let the principles dictate you the patterns by which human nature is going to flow. It never changes. You become a profiler, being able to see and understand by the pattern of things to do. There are 30 of them in the Bible. If you just took those 30 and just committed them to memory, and every situation you found yourself in, if you use it as a spiritual checklist, you'd never get messed up.

You know why some of you guys got a bozo for a husband? You know why some of you guys, one or two of you maybe, got a bozo for a wife? I put the emphasis on the guys because you didn't follow the patterns. He said he was a Christian when he wasn't. You should have saw the telltale signs that he's got light in one eye and darkness in the other. You can't have a Bible in one hand and a marijuana cigarette in the other. Hello? Patterns. Watching the patterns, it gives you the spiritual discernment. That's what he says, "But strong meat belong to them who are full of age, who by reason of use have their senses exercised to discern both good and evil." That's how you get it. You're right on track. You know what to look for, and then you have understanding when you find it. The greatest aspect of what we do here to try to get you ready to work with people is to train you in what to look for.

V. The Bountiful Eye: Definition and Examples

Now with that being said, let's look at our eye in Proverbs 22:9. It's a bountiful eye. The blessings of God in your life and my life are connected to this bountiful eye. It says, "He that hath a bountiful eye shall be blessed." Now using our Bible as our final authority, not the new one, let's get moving here. We don't want to hover here. We want to move. Let's see how the Bible uses the word "bountiful." That's a key word, and we're going to learn some things.

First of all, we would look, and you don't have to turn to these, I'll just read them.

- Psalms 13:6: "I will sing unto the LORD, because he hath dealt bountifully with me."
- Psalms 116:7: "Return unto thy rest, O my soul; for the LORD hath dealt bountifully with thee."
- Psalms 119:17: "Deal bountifully with thy servant, that I may live, and keep thy word."
- Psalms 142:7: "Bring my soul out of prison, that I may praise thy name: the righteous shall compass me about; for thou shalt deal bountifully with me."

In the Bible, you're going to find when you find the word "bountiful" or "bountifully," you're going to find it will always be in context of all that God has done for us and all that He has given us. Now when it talks about the blessings of God in our lives, it's talking about those blessings

coming from a bountiful eye. What does that mean? It's saying that do you look at life and everything in your life from the bountiful blessings of God that He has given you? When you stop and look at life, how do you see it? How do you see your life with God this morning? Do you see it because of what you don't have? Do you see it because your nose has been out of joint? Do you see it through the sin in your life? And to balance out a light and a dark eye instead of just being single with light, how do you see it? It's saying that when you look at life and everything in it, how do you view it? Do you view it through all of the blessings that God bountifully has done in your life? Or do you just see what you don't have or the screwed up life that you're in? When you really see it and understand it based on God's bountifulness to us, we then find the real blessings of God is giving of that bountifulness that God has given us to somebody else. We see what God saved us from, but we also see what God saved us for.

VI. Giving of His Bread to the Poor

Look at the last part of Proverbs 22:9: "for he giveth of his bread to the poor." There it is. That bread is a type of the Word of God this morning. God has bountifully given each one of you. I don't care what level of spiritual you're on. God has given, I don't care if you're just getting disciplined. I don't care if you're just getting plugged in. I don't care if you've been here for 20 years. I don't care how long you've been in. Whatever level you're on, God has dealt bountifully with you. I'll give you just one way: we all should be in hell this morning. That's pretty good, isn't it? That gets you through.

Now he said, "for he giveth of his bread to the poor." Ah, there's a couple of places I'm going to stop this morning and clear off a little spot. This is one of them. Note the personal application. Not just "give bread to the poor." Well, we can just read that and move right on, couldn't we? It's not just "give bread to the poor." It's "give of his bread." What you got. Not in a generalized, sanitized sense that I'm just going to give the Word of God out. It says the bread that you got, his bread, your bread, my bread, to the poor. One on one. Taking the bountifulness of what God has given us, seeing how He has blessed our lives, and then do what with it? Keep it to ourselves? It's no wonder God's people are the most miserable people on the planet. It's no wonder that they never understand and get to anywhere with God. If you would just stop and look at the bountifulness in your life that He has given us.

Now, I've said it many times, and you want a real blessing? Just start giving people the Word of God. Just start taking the Word of God and sitting down with somebody and giving them the Bible. Just start with discipling somebody. Start infusing your life with the life of somebody else. I want to tell you, absolutely want to tell you, I cannot even begin to put it into words, the prayer concept that we have put together and Bob does such a phenomenal job on and putting all that work together. I know it's a lot of work, Bob, but you do a great job with it. It's designed for so many multi-things. I know many of God's people can only see one tunnel vision thing, but it's designed for multi-purpose. I watched this last time as I stood up here and asked for the groups to come, and all you young guys, all you young girls that have never taken anything or never really taken a step out, you came up and took prayer groups. There were over 120 people in our prayer groups up there this morning. It's all because you just went up to another level. You now

are in the place of the greatest blessings, and the bountifulness of God is going to pour out all over you because now you're doing what the proverb says. I know you guys. You're giving back to God now in that because of what God has done for you. I know you guys, especially you young ones. I know where you've come from. I know the struggles you had. I know you found a place now where you found everything you could ever want in life from God. You appreciate what God has done. Some of you got saved here. Some of you found the right Bible here. Some of you just really, and God began to do great things in your life. Now because of the bountifulness in your eye, you see it. You want to take out your bread and give it to the poor. Let me say this, this church is filled with men and women who do just that. You do it because you look back and you understand all the blessings that God has put in your life. You look at your kids. You look at your marriage. You look at your own life in the Word of God. You look where God has brought you from. You stop and think, where would any of us be today if it wasn't for God in this book? Where would we be?

Now the example of this in the Bible will be in the Old Testament in 1 Kings 17:12-16. As an example of what I'm talking about is the bountiful blessings of God when you start to give to God what you have. It's the story of the widow of Zarephath. The prophet of God here is Elijah. He's now taken over from Elijah. He goes to this woman, and you know the story. He goes to this woman and he asks for some help, and she says to him, verse 12:

1 Kings 17:12

And she said, As the LORD thy God liveth, I have not a cake, but an handful of meal in a barrel, and a little oil in a cruse: and, behold, I am gathering two sticks, that I may go in and dress it for me and my son, that we may eat it, and die.

That's pretty destitute. Talk about the last meal concept, here it is.

1 Kings 17:13

And Elijah said unto her, Fear not; go and do as thou hast said: but make me thereof a little cake first, and bring it unto me; and after make for thee and for thy son.

Now I want to tell you something. Elijah's the man of God. This woman doesn't have anything, she's almost down to nothing. She meets the man of God, he says, "Hey, can I have something to eat? I'm hungry, and I'm doing God's work." She says, "You know what, I would, but I can't." She says, "You know what, I'm on my way to get two sticks to build a little fire. I've got a little meal and a little oil, and I'm going to make a cake for me and my boy, and then we're going to die." That's a good outlook on life. He says, "You don't have to die. If you just get some priorities in your life and make God's man, God, the cake first." There are some things you've got to do first in your life before the blessings of God will come your way. So she does. She goes and makes it, she gives it to him.

1 Kings 17:14

For thus saith the LORD God of Israel, The barrel of meal shall not waste, neither shall the cruse of oil fail, until the day that the LORD sendeth rain upon the earth.

1 Kings 17:15

And she went and did according to the saying of Elijah: and she, and he, and her house, did eat many days.

1 Kings 17:16

And the barrel of meal wasted not, neither did the cruse of oil fail, according to the word of the LORD, which he spake by Elijah.

She gives what she had to God. She took of her own personal stuff. It's all she had, and she gave it to God first. Then the multitude of blessings came down, and she had enough in that barrel. She had enough oil to go on forever. I don't need to tell you what that's a picture of because the oil is the type of the Holy Spirit of God, and the meal is the type of the Word of God. I'll tell you this, when you give what you got to God first, the oil in your life, the Holy Spirit of God, and the meal, the Word of God, will be limitless. It never ends. It's just always there. You've got the bountiful blessings of God. Why? Because she saw what God needed and put herself over here and gave the last of what she had. God said, "You know what? She saw an opportunity to give what she had to someone in need," and the blessing just kept coming. You know what that is? That's a bountiful eye. What do you see? What do you see with the people around you? Let me ask you something. Do you really see how much God has given to you? Do you really? I mean, I know we go to church, we go to Bible study, got the right Bible. We say all the right things. Do you and I really see and understand how much God has given us? Don't answer. If you do and you see it, why don't you have that bountiful eye to give it to others? Why do we want to keep it all for ourselves?

VII. Seeing Opportunities: Doors of Utterance

Now, that bountiful eye concept will move through here. We don't want to hover this morning. We want to move. That bountiful eye concept will be more than just you seeing and understanding what God has for you to do. A bountiful eye for a Christian will be the Christian who can actually see the opportunities that are all around him or her that God puts in our life to give to the poor because our eye is single. It's full of light. It's full of God's Word. He will always, the man of God or the woman, will always pay attention to every opportunity that God has for them. The verse says, "for he giveth of his bread to the poor."

You know, bread is a staple in life. We talk about the fact that, "Oh, this job, my bread and butter," it means that you're staple in life. We look at the Midwest across the United States, and we say, "The Midwest is the breadbasket of America." We do grain, but it means bread. It's a staple. In prison, when you get into trouble, they'll put you in solitary confinement, and they'll give you two staples to live on: bread and water. I always thought that was pretty interesting because bread and water are a type of the Word of God. As a Christian like Paul, who said in Philippians 1:1 and 1:9 that he was a prisoner of the Lord, we are prisoners of the Lord. We have lost our rights. From a worldly standpoint, from a Bible standpoint, we're in solitary confinement. God has taken and sanctified us from the world, given us a single eye, and

separated us from the world. Our only staple to get us through is the bread and the water that God gives us.

In Colossians 4:3, Paul talks about getting an opportunity to give out the gospel. He calls it a "door of utterance." Here's another really key word for you. "Doors" in the Bible, and there's a number of places, "doors" in the Bible will always represent an opportunity.

Colossians 4:3

Withal praying also for us, that God would open unto us a door of utterance, to speak the mystery of Christ, for which I am also in bonds:

He's a prisoner. If you want to get a good study sometime of what I'm talking about, study Paul's prison epistles. See how he changes his delivery once he's in bonds.

2 Corinthians 2:12

Furthermore, when I came to Troas to preach Christ's gospel, and a door was opened unto me of the Lord,

"Doors" in the Bible will represent opportunities. A door of utterance to get a chance to say something. Do you see those doors around you? Do you see the doors and opportunities all around you? Is your eye focused through the blessings of God in your life and all the bounties He's given you? That you see the bountiful opportunities that are out there? Do you see them through the bounty that God has given you? In Revelation 3:8, there's a door that is opened, and it's a great Philadelphia church age. It shows us that the doors are open or closed because a little bit later on it's closed in Revelation 3:20. The door gets opened one place and closed another based on what somebody thinks about the very Bible that you have in your hand. Those are opportunities. When a man has a bountiful eye, he sees everything through the blessings that God has given him, and he gives his bread to the poor because he's looking for the blessings of an open door, a door of utterance. He never misses the opportunity because God in the book or His singleness of His eye, a bountiful eye. I know God's people. They're following the two categories. Some of God's people will never miss an opportunity to do exactly that. Then there's some of God's people who never miss an opportunity to miss an opportunity.

Now within the Bible, there are some really good examples of this, and I want to look at just a couple. I want to illustrate what I'm saying by actually showing you at work. Having the ability to see and recognize the opportunities that God puts in our paths and to carry His Word, our bread, to the poor through a bountiful eye. Having the spiritual discernment and the spiritual insight to see it and understand it.

Back in the Old Testament, you have one of the greatest examples of this principle. It's found in the book of Nehemiah. You know the story of Nehemiah. The nation of Israel has been into captivity now for almost 70 years. God is ready to do some things. The Holy Spirit of God is beginning to move to bring Israel back to the land. They're in captivity. Right before the nation of Israel is one of the greatest opportunities, one of the greatest opportunities to have a great blessing in their life, to go back to the land. God needs them to go back to the land because just

400 short years from now, the first coming of Christ is going to transpire, and the Jews have to be back in the land. But they're in captivity. They're being held by a foreign power. They don't have the freedom to go do anything anymore. They're trapped in the confines of this Gentile nation, Artaxerxes the king. They're trapped in this Gentile nation. They can't do anything. But standing before them is one of the greatest opportunities to get back to the land to set the stage for the Messiah that's going to come shortly, the first coming of Christ. God does an incredible thing. But God could not do this incredible thing if He didn't have a man who was looking for an incredible opportunity for God to use him.

Now I want to stop here and say this. God wants to do some incredible things with you. But the problem is not God, the problem is you. God wants to do some absolute, this is one of the most unbelievable miracles in the history of the world. God wanted to do it, and He found one man. I'm telling you, don't you ever think that your life given to God in the singleness of eye and doing what's right, God couldn't use to change this world. The problem is not God, the problem is we don't see the opportunities. Or if we do see them, we don't want them. I'll let you choose which one that is. God does an incredible great feat through just one man who sees the opportunity that God has given him, an open door of utterance. I have a message I preach on this, and I'm not going to preach it today, but it simply goes like this. The title is "The Right Man in the Right Place at the Right Time." That's what the bountiful eye does for you. That's what the singleness of eye, that's what making sure the light that is in you is God's Word. It gives you the ability to be the right man in the right place at the right time. Most of God's people are not part of God's plan. They're rather involuntarily, they're in opposition to God's plan.

Nehemiah 1:11 says that Nehemiah is the king's cupbearer. He's a slave, he's a servant, but God orchestrated circumstances to put him right in the throne room with the king and brought him into favor with the king, much like He did Daniel.

Nehemiah 1:11

O Lord, I beseech thee, let now thine ear be attentive to the prayer of thy servant, and to the prayer of thy servants, who desire to fear thy name: and prosper, I pray thee, thy servant this day, and grant him mercy in the sight of this man. For I was the king's cupbearer.

You know what he's asking? He's asking God to give him an opportunity before the very king. He's the king's cupbearer. He's a nobody. But God orchestrated the events to put him in proximity of the king. Then he prayed a prayer, "And use me." Now what has happened is this. Nehemiah has gotten a report, and the report is a devastating report on the condition of Jerusalem, the city of God, and the nation of Israel in particular. It lays waste. When they came down in 606 B.C., they destroyed it. They absolutely destroyed it. He reads this despairing letter, and it's to the point where he is so moved but broken because he knows that's God's city. He knows what it once was and what God wants it to be. He's got a burden, but he's not just going to cry in his beer and say, "Oh, woe is me." No, no, he's got the bountiful eye, and he says, "God, I'm in the king's chamber. I'm his cupbearer. Give me an opportunity."

So he's sitting there after reading that report, standing there. The king comes in. The king's all happy, good mood. He sees Nehemiah, brings his cup over, and he sees Nehemiah all distraught

and looks worried and all depressed. He says, "Nehemiah, what's wrong with you? You're always so happy. You're my sunshine. When I come in in the morning, you're always such a pleasant. What's wrong, Nehemiah?" Nehemiah tells him the story. God just gave him a door of utterance. He didn't go up to the king and say, "Hey, king, you need to do this." He was patient, and God opened the door for the king to ask him what was wrong. Don't you remember that Bible verse over there in 1 Peter 3:15, where it says:

1 Peter 3:15

But sanctify the Lord God in your hearts: and be ready always to give an answer to every man that asketh you a reason of the hope that is in you with meekness and fear:

Nehemiah looks up and he says, "Thank you, Lord. What's wrong, my king? I'm a Jew, and I just got a report that Jerusalem is just terribly destroyed and messed up. My God, in what I believe, that's His city. I'm just really despondent today because I know what it means to God, and I know what it means to my people. You know what, king? I know I'm a captive, but you've been good to me, and I've tried to be the best servant I can be." He goes on and on and on. Now, I don't know what he said, but he said something like that. So you know what, the king had done, he said, the king looked at him and says, "Don't be upset. I'll tell you what I'll do. I'll pass a decree, and we'll send some people back, and we'll get God's city cleaned up for you. How'd that be?" He took the opportunity. He saw through the bountiful eye that what God had done for him, an opportunity to give God back what He wanted. Don't you know that's what our Christian life really is? It's recognizing what God has done for me and then me trying to figure out what God wants so I could do something nice for Him. Some of God's people have an issue with that. One man who sees the opportunity to tell the story of God, God gets His city back, and we're all set for the first coming of Christ. You know what it is? The right man in the right place at the right time. Nehemiah had a bountiful eye. He sees what God sees, and he knows what God wants, and he wants to give it back to God because of how good God has been to him. Is that me? Is that you? I mean, come on, what good is it that God puts you in the right place in the right time if you can't see what God is doing with you? It's worthless. It takes the right man, somebody who has the bountiful eye.

VIII. God's Prepared Sinner and Servant

Now another great example of this will be in the New Testament, and this will be found in Acts 8. This will be a story of, you know the story, Philip and the Ethiopian Eunuch. In Nehemiah, we see God putting you in the right place, and that's why I used that because I wanted you to see that he had a bountiful eye, and because of that bountiful eye, God put him in the right place. Now in the book of Acts, I want to show you a similar situation, but I want to show you how God gets you to the right place. Two incredible keys to a bountiful eye. Yeah, God will get you there, but now I want to show you how He's going to get you there or how you're going to get there. I've told you many times, Acts 8 is one of the greatest places in the Bible to see that God will have a prepared sinner, the Ethiopian Eunuch, and a prepared servant, Philip. Right now as we're sitting here in this and Thursday night Bible study and everything we do, if you're a saved person, you know what God's trying to do, He's trying to prepare you as His servant. You know why?

Because all across this city, maybe all across this country, He's preparing a sinner. What He wants to do is take you, the right man in the right place at the right time, and puts you with that prepared sinner like here. The problem is this: God has more prepared sinners than He's got prepared servants.

Now a great revival has just taken place in Samaria. God is on the move. Over in Gaza, an Ethiopian eunuch is in his chariot. He goes along, and he pulls into a Quick Trip, and he gets a big slushie, and he's sitting there reading a portion of scripture that to this day nobody knows who gave him that portion of scripture. But the portion of scripture that he had is Isaiah 53. Isaiah 53 is all about Christ dying on the cross and shedding His precious blood for your sins and my sins. So he's reading about Jesus dying on the cross. He obviously doesn't understand it. In fact, he doesn't even know who Jesus is from the story. But God has a prepared sinner. Now what God needs is a prepared servant. Way over in Samaria, where a revival has broken out, the head evangelist in Philip is an evangelist. The head evangelist is sitting in there after a great revival service, and people are getting saved all over the place. The Lord says to him, "Philip," that's Acts 8:26.

Acts 8:26

And the angel of the Lord spake unto Philip, saying, Arise, and go toward the south unto the way that goeth down from Jerusalem unto Gaza, which is desert.

He didn't tell him what he was going to do, didn't tell him why. I've always marveled at this story because if that would be most of us, we'd be arguing with God that we can't leave now because all these people are getting saved, and we are the key evangelists. He never said that. He just goes. He does. He leaves right away. He's gone. He left the great revival over here in Samaria where hundreds and hundreds of people were getting saved for one Ethiopian eunuch on the backside of the desert who needed Christ. The reason why he did that is because he's having direct communication with the Holy Spirit of God. Acts 8:29 says when he finally gets there:

Acts 8:29

Then the Spirit said unto Philip, Go near, and join thyself to this chariot.

The Bible says that when the Spirit of God says that to him, he runs. I've got to stop here and clear off a little spot for you again. Is anything wrong with what I just read between Acts 8:8 and 8:26, and when God comes down and tells Philip to go do this, and Philip goes to do it, and it's all just, I mean, for all you great spiritual gurus out there, there's something missing here. I want to help you clear it up this morning. He's over there having a great revival, having a great time. God comes down through the Spirit of God and says, "Go to Gaza," which is desert. Doesn't tell him why. He doesn't argue. He gets up and goes, and when he gets there, he runs at a guy. But you know what he fails to do in all this thing? He doesn't pray about it. He didn't pray about it. Now if that was you and me, and I was here, and God said, "Bob, I want you to go to Tanzania, and there's somebody over there that I want you to just go to Tanzania." Well, I'd be calling everybody together. We'd be down on our knees, and we'd be trying to make sure that's what God wants us to do.

Now I'm going to make a point. Philip had a bountiful eye. The classic example of 1 Thessalonians 5:17, which says that you and I are to pray without ceasing. When you have a direct relationship with the Holy Spirit, now listen very carefully because some of you are going to hear this wrong. When you have a complete, close, working relationship with the Holy Spirit of God where you are talking through Him daily throughout the day, there ain't a whole lot in life you've got to pray about. He tells you what to do. You do it. When you're dialed into the Holy Spirit of God, and you're on the move with God, and you're talking with Him minute by minute as Philip was, you don't see Philip calling a conjunctural prayer meeting where everybody can get, and let's really decide if this is what God wants. He didn't need that. You know why? Because he had direct access to the Holy Spirit of God as you do, and when you pray without ceasing and have that direct connection with the Holy Spirit of God, there are a lot of things you don't need to pray about. You just do it. He just did it.

You know, years ago I used to, when I was trying to figure it all out myself, I read these stories about John Bunyan, George Whitefield, all these guys that were traveling preachers, and they were telling their stories about how they were great men of God, great preachers, great men of faith, and they were. It would always say, I remember one time, I think it was one of the guys, Wesley, one of those guys, they said that he prayed 10 hours a day. Prayed 10 hours a day. That impressed me. I was a young guy. I thought, "Wow, I'm going to pray 10 hours a day sometimes." Then I got older, I thought to myself, "How did that happen? He's preaching here, and then he gets on his horse, and he rides 80 miles to the next place. It takes him all day or two days to get there. How in the world did this guy find time to pray for 10 hours a day?" Then it hit me like a ton of bricks. See, my idea was prayer that he was on his knees in a little closet someplace, or he was over there with his head bowed. No, no, he understood that the real concept of prayer was your communication with God 24/7. When he's riding that horse wherever he's going to the next place he's preaching, he's talking to God. You can get in your car in the morning, you can talk to God all the way to work. You can talk to God while you go in the office. You can ask God to kill the guy that just pulled out in front of you. You can talk to God about all kinds of stuff. The bottom line is you too can rack up at the end of the day 5 or 6, 7, 8, 9, 10 hours praying.

One time there was an old evangelist, and he had come to town, and he was preaching, and the town was getting saved, and everybody that was corrupt was getting put out of business. So they decided to run him out of town, and they wanted to get some dirt on him. So they put a guy in his hotel room, and the guy was in the closet, and he thought that I'll get some dirt on him, you know, when nobody's looking, and then we'll ruin him, and we'll get him out of town. So after the service, you know, the old boy comes in there, and the guy's in the closet with just a creak back there listening very carefully. The old man, he gets there, he puts his pajamas on, you know, and he gets ready for bed. There's a little candle there about a bed, and the guy's watching, and he says, "Oh, we're going to get something on him here." About that time, the old man sits on the bed and reads his Bible for about 5 or 6 minutes, closes his Bible and puts it on a nightstand, rolls over in bed, blows out the candle, and the guy in the bedroom says, "I got him. This guy doesn't pray before he goes to bed." It's about that time I heard the old man say, "Good night, Father. It's been good talking to you all day today." I'm going to tell you something. Your prayer

life isn't based on where you're at, the position of your body. It's dealing with the attitude of your heart, the position of your heart with God in your bountiful eye. I'll tell you what, he didn't pray at all.

Now I want to tell you something, and this goes contrary to everything that you hear. So listen carefully so you hear it right. One of the evidences that a man has a real relationship with the Holy Spirit of God is not the fact that he prays about everything, but he only prays about those things that need to be prayed about because him and the Holy Spirit of God are working through the rest on a daily basis minute by minute. We've all known preachers who pray about everything. I knew a guy one time, I ain't kidding you. Whatever you said to him, "Well, I'll pray." I want to tell you something. I know that prayer is the bedrock of the Christian faith. I get it. We've got a lesson on it in discipleship. It's one of the seven pieces of armor of God in Ephesians 6. I understand it. I will never take away from the importance of the prayer life in your life, but it better be the right kind of prayer life because prayer can be a mystic thing, can it? Prayer can be a big rock that you hide behind. "Look at me, how spiritual I am." Your eye is full of darkness, but you want to pretend that you're really spiritual. So prayer is the big thing. Well, I've known Christians like this all my life. This guy, he prayed about everything. I don't care. I would say to him, "You know, why don't you try this?" He's having an issue. I said, "Why don't you try this?" "Well, brother, I'll have to pray about that." I'm thinking to myself, "What is there to pray about?" I always wanted to get one of those guys in a car with me on a long trip that I was driving in, get him about five or six cups of coffee, and then driving there about two hours, and he'd lean over to me and said, "Hey, Bob, can we stop? I need to go to the restroom." And I'd say, "I'll pray about it." Two hours later, "Man, I really got to go." "I'm still praying about it."

You know, Gideon, he's a hero to a lot of people, and I preached a message before too. But to me, Gideon is a classic example of what you have today in most of Christianity. The Bible says that Gideon was a man of valor. God used him to defend the Midianites. You know the story of Gideon 300. We use it in Sunday school. It's a great message to preach, you know, lamp pictures and all that stuff. I get it. But Gideon was never really a champion of mine. When I got a little bit more into the Bible and I read the story of Gideon, over there in Judges 6:36-40, God came down and told Gideon that He was going to deliver him and going to whip the enemy through his hand. He told him directly. So Gideon goes back, and he says, "Well," and then he starts to pray. He says, "Well, you know what, Lord? I know what you said, but I just don't know if that's true or not. Boy, I'll tell you what, I'll tell you what I'll do. I'm going to take a fleece, a lamb skin, and I'm going to put it out in the grass. A dew will come down tonight, and all the grass will get wet. If that lamb skin doesn't get wet, then I'll know that that's what you really meant when you told me that." So he gets up the next morning, things dry, water all around it. He picks it up and he says, "Ah, praise the Lord. Oh, dear God, do it one more time." So he puts it out that night, sure enough, water all around the thing, thing dry as a bone. I always looked at that, and I thought to myself, why did he have to pray two times for a sign from God when the very Word of God told him what God was going to do? You know what that's a picture of? That's a picture of God telling you something through that book or in your life with the Holy Spirit of God, and you can't believe it, so you've got to ask God for some sign. You've got to pray about something. "God, show me this. God, give me this." When He's already given to you in the book what He's going

to do. The real mark of a spiritual relationship with God is not how much you pray, it's how little you pray about the right things.

Philip has a bountiful eye, and it's based on the fact of what he sees and what God is doing. When you and I develop that mindset of seeing the opportunities that God puts before us, then you and I will also have that spiritual discernment, that spiritual insight. You also now will become the right man in the right place at the right time, and you'll never miss an opportunity that puts you in your place because you're always looking around. Why are you looking around? You're looking through the blessings and the bountifulness that God has done in your world. There's no room for the dark things in your life. So, you see, this is a really good verse. "He that hath a bountiful eye shall be blessed, for he giveth of his bread to the poor."

IX. The Four Pillars of the Christian Life

Now it's been said that the Christian life is just four things. If we would take everything in the Christian world in our lives and we want to boil it down into just four simple basic concepts, it would be these four things. This is what I try to do here. I heard this years and years and years and years ago by somebody who was a lot smarter in the Bible than I was. He says, "You know the Christian life of being successful with God and being everything that God wants it to be, it's just four simple things. If you and I can master these four simple things in our lives, everything else will take care of itself."

He said the first thing we all have to do is we have to:

1. Believe the infallible. In other words, you have to have the Word of God. You have to believe it's the Word of God. You have to believe it's powerful of God. You have to believe it has everything in it that you need.

He says the second thing, once you get the book and you believe that the Word of God and you believe the infallible, he says that book will give you the ability to:

2. Hear the inaudible. Now you'll begin to have a relationship with the Holy Spirit of God like Philip. Now He'll begin to speak to you directly. Now all this goofy stuff about you being a great prayer warrior and a great prayer pillar goes out the window because when you have the Holy Spirit of God in your life speaking you directly because you believe in the infallible and you're hearing the inaudible and you're doing what God wants you to do, it's very clear.

He says once you believe the infallible and once you hear the inaudible, then through that book God will give you the ability to:

3. See the invisible. You'll start to see what nobody else sees. You'll start to see the phoniness in Christianity. You'll start to see the phoniness in this, the realness of this. You'll get that discernment, honey, that we talked about. You'll be able to see any circumstances, and you'll see it not as it appears but as it really is. You'll be able to know when somebody wants to tell you how spiritual you are, you see how frail and weak they really are.

He said if you believe the infallible, which will lead to you hearing the inaudible, which will lead as you build a relationship with the Holy Spirit of God and you get God's vision that you'll see the invisible, then God through a bountiful eye and the opportunities of an open door will take the believing the infallible, the hearing of the inaudible, the seeing the invisible, and you'll:

4. Do the impossible. That's exactly what Christianity is or what it should be. You getting into that book and making that book your life. You get the sin out of your life, the darkness out of your eye and your singleness of eye. You don't have one eye in the world and sin in one eye, and you're going to pretend that you've got the great keys to all the spiritual things in life. Give me a break. You believe the infallible, which will lead you hearing the inaudible, which will lead you to seeing what's invisible but nobody else can see, and God will take you and through the opportunities He puts in your life, you'll do the impossible. The bountiful life of giving of that bread to others by what God has given to you.

X. Willingness and Relationship with God

In Romans 4:17, it talks about Abraham, and we all know the story of Abraham and how he went through a lot of things, but he wound up being the friend of God. He wound up being the friend of God for one reason, and that's given to you in Romans 4, because Abraham had the ability like God to call those things that are not as though they were. He could see what wasn't there yet. You know what I see in you? I see you on all different levels. I never look at you with your problems. I never look at you where you've come from with your problems. I only look at you and see you where you're at right now with the potential God has for you. My job is to take that potential and make you the very best that God for you for God that you can be. That's all I care about. That's all I want. I don't want your money. I don't want your car. I don't want your house. I don't want your dog. All I want is for you as a saved person to be everything that God wants you to be, and I see that potential in you. That's why I got so excited about watching all you young guys and gals take prayer groups. That's the next level up. That's exactly now you're going to start giving of your bread, and I love the older ones. The older ones stepped down and he said, "I'm not going to take one this time. I want somebody to step up, and I'll be there to help them." That's what we do on whatever level you are. Call those things which are not as though they were. Will you ever get there in your life? Will you ever see the situation that just beats you up one side and down the other because you see it as it appears, and you don't have the spirit of discernment to see it as it really is?

Over in Hebrews 11:27, I talked about Moses. What a great guy he is. You know Moses had a tough time believing what God wanted him to do. When Moses went before God and God told him what He wanted him to do, and Moses says, "Well, you know what, I don't know if I can do that. I don't speak very well. I don't do all these things." I heard old Mel Sabaka preach a message one time, and I've used the phrase many, many times. He says that when Moses went before God, Moses kept saying, "Lord, I'm not able to do this. I'm not able to do this. I'm not able to do this." Old Mel used to preach, "You know what, Moses, it isn't about whether you're able or not. It's about are you willing? Because if you're willing to do what God wants you to do, God is able to give you the ability to do it." God looked down at Moses and He said, "You can't do any

of this stuff?" "No, I really can't." Just like some of you. Just like some of you when we had conversations and time passed where you say, "Well, Bob, I'm scared to death to do this. I don't know if I can do that." "Boy, take a prayer group." "Man, I don't know." "Disciple somebody." "I don't know." Moses was there. You know, God's speaking to him out of the burning bush and said, "I want you to do this. I want you to do that." Moses says, "I don't think I can do that. I don't know if I can do that. I don't know." God looked down, and God knew what God said. He said, "Moses, I'll tell you how we're going to do it. What do you got in your hand?" He said, "I got a rod." He said, "Then we'll just start and use that." You know that all through his ministry to Egypt, he just used the rod in his hand that God gave him. He did the great miracles with it. He turned the waters to blood. He did everything with that rod in his hand. God will start with you with whatever you've got in your hand right now that you're willing to give to Him. He'll do everything for you. It doesn't matter how able you are. None of us are able. It is, are you willing? Through the willingness, you get the bountiful eye. Then you walk through your Christian life seeing every opportunity. You're talking to the Holy Spirit of God all the time. Pray without ceasing. You're walking, you're just walking there and saying, "Lord, I'll just tell you, thank you for that, Lord. Well, praise the Lord. Yeah. Okay, Lord, you know I'm going into this situation." You see, we get the idea, "real spiritual Christian," but that's not real prayer. No, your type of prayer is a real prayer. The real prayer is you and God just talking like a friend. Wasn't it Moses that said that he talked to God face to face like man speaketh to his friend? But see, that's not, "Oh, mystic." God just wants to have a conversation with you all day long. The Holy Spirit of God wants to say, "Go join that man. Go join yourself to that man's chariot." You know what He wants you to do? He wants you to run. He doesn't want you to pray about it. He wants you to run. He wants you to have already been in touch with the Holy Spirit of God, and you and God know exactly what your day is today, where you're going, what you're going to do, and how you're going to get it done. He wants to put you in the right place, the right time, and be the right man. The Holy Spirit of God is the one who's going to get you there.

It's an incredible verse. Singleness of eye, the concept of a bountiful eye, our ability to see and discern and have that spiritual insight through your own personal, intimate relationship with the Holy Spirit of God, praying without ceasing, 100% total commitment to praying in every situation you're in, following the principles of the Word of God and letting the Holy Spirit of God line them all up for you. That's Christianity.