

Proverbs 23

Sunday 5/20/2018

If you have your Bibles this morning, let's turn back to Proverbs chapter 23. We are going to continue today. I broke the verses up because there is so much material in here. I wanted to take a couple of different weeks and then tie it all together. We are going to continue today with the great principles on your personal relationship with the Lord and developing your friendship with Him, your walk with Him.

A pastor has many things he wants to accomplish with a church. I know I do, and I am sure that most guys do. Last week we talked about short-term and long-term goals. Obviously, there are things that I want to give you short-term, things that I want to help you with, things that you need to fix in your life short-term that will get you to a long-term solution, so to speak. I look at you, I look at the church, and my responsibility in that aspect.

I can honestly say my long-term goal for all of you, and I take it as my responsibility to at least give you the opportunity—I cannot make you do it—is that you receive a full reward.

2 John 1:8

Look to yourselves, that we lose not those things which we have wrought, but that we receive a full reward.

That is really my goal for all of you. If you are a member of this church, or you are just coming to this church, or you take anything that we say here seriously, honestly, quite honestly, there is absolutely no reason for you not to wind up at the judgment seat of Christ with a full reward. The Bible has everything that you need. We have every tool here that you need to have. The preaching and the teaching, I try to balance it as best I can to give you everything that you need to cover all of the bases.

Today I want to walk you through some things. I think we are going to add to last week, and we will go back and forth a little bit and kind of put things together. You will remember last week we saw one of the most valuable passages in all the Bible on the right relationship with the Lord. I showed you that any relationship with God has to be built on two fundamental doctrines of the Bible. Without these two in your life, without understanding how to put these in, let me say this: I realize when you get saved, you do not really understand these things. I get it. I realize that when you become a young Christian, and some of you when you came into this church and you have not had a lot of good Bible teaching, nobody expects you to be up to speed. Nobody expects you, I certainly do not expect you to understand these doctrines. But I think there needs to begin a process in your life that you get there. I do not expect you to understand it all, but in time you do need to understand, because the fundamental doctrines of the Bible are the key.

This is what is wrong with Christianity today. I know I speak a lot about it, but that is okay. I am going to continue to. I am going to tell you what is wrong today: we are trying to build a relationship with God without really knowing who He is. It is not working for people. We are going through all of the motions. We go to church. We have a Bible. We sing songs. We do all of those things that Christians are supposed to do. But those things do not give you a relationship

with Him. We live in a world today, a Christian world today, where God's people, bless their hearts, are trying to go through their Christian life without really understanding the One that they should be cultivating that relationship with.

I. The Two Fundamental Doctrines: Worship and Prayer

Those two fundamental doctrines, first of all, were the doctrine of biblical worship. What does it really mean to worship God? The second one was the doctrine of biblical prayer. These two inward activities, these two things that start inside you, are the most messed up doctrines in the church today. I preached a message a while back. We have talked about it in Bible study. I know I taught it in Bible Institute, or probably in people ministry. I talked about the seven things that we lose when we lose our Bible. When the world or Christianity or scholarship or whoever tells you that you do not have an absolute perfect Bible that you can not only bet your soul on, but you can take through every day of your life to find the answers to life, when you lose that, when somebody takes that from you, then you lose seven things. I have talked about it many, many times. My goal is not to go over those today, but two of the things that you lose is an understanding of biblical worship and an understanding of biblical prayer.

I showed you that both of these have really nothing to do with what you do. It does not have anything to do with where you go, or the position of your body, or if you fold your hands or not, or close your eyes. It has nothing to do with any physical location, but rather both prayer and worship have to do inversely with who you really are, inwardly. Your personal, intimate worship and prayer life with the best friend you will ever have. You can have a service. You can call it a worship service. You can have corporate prayer, single prayer, all kinds of prayer. You can do whatever you want to do. All those things that are spiritual, but where those two doctrines end and begin is in your heart and inside you.

Matthew chapter 23 is a great chapter because the Lord takes to task the scribes and the Pharisees and the Sadducees, and He tears them apart. A whole chapter dedicated to ripping them to shreds. These were people who feigned that they believed in God. They were the leaders of Israel, the nation of Israel. They were the spiritual leaders, and yet they were taking the people down the wrong road. In Matthew chapter 23, the Lord Jesus Himself called them "whited sepulchers." You know what a sepulcher is? It is a tomb. He called them "whited sepulchers." He says, "You know what? You are painted white and you look beautiful on the outside, but then He said on the inside you are full of dead men's bones." That is basically where I am afraid it is at today.

Last week we talked about Proverbs 23:15-18, and it was built around getting the wisdom of God in your heart that causes Him to rejoice in your life. Last week I gave you the definitive verse on the idea of worship. It is found in John chapter 4 verse 24. This is the definitive verse, and it says:

John 4:24

God is a Spirit: and they that worship him must worship him in spirit and in truth.

Spirit and truth are the two key words there. Obviously, the spirit that He is talking about is your spirit, my spirit, the human spirit. It shows me that worship, real biblical worship, does not start with a service. It does not start with taking up an offering and worshipping God. It does not even start with music. It starts in your heart. It starts with your spirit and God's truth. When you take the spirit of man and match it up to the truth of the Word of God, now you have worship. You cannot worship God without you exercising your spirit into the truth of the Word of God. It is impossible.

The magnitude of that verse to me is overwhelming. The implication of that verse and what it is saying to modern-day Christianity, it just boggles my mind. I know this is not popular today, but spirit and truth, the Bible way, your spirit and God's truth, are the two absolutes for your fundamental relationship with God through your worship.

II. The Importance of God's Preserved Word

Okay, I know we are a cult. I get it. I am confessing. It is on tape going out to the world. I am a cult leader, you are a cult follower. They are mixing up the Kool-Aid right now in the back, and they are going to feed it to you as you go out today. The bottom line is this: we are a cult because, get this, we are a cult because we believe that God was not only God enough to inspire the Word of God, but then God was God enough to preserve it. If that makes me a cult, I am a cult, because inspiration without preservation, you know what this is? What is that, Caleb? You are educated. It is a zero. Inspiration without God's preservation means nothing. What is it? What does it matter? What do we care if God someplace in the distant past inspired the Word of God if you cannot get it today? If that makes us a cult, you guys got that Kool-Aid ready yet? Because the magnitude of what I just gave you is unbelievable.

Let's pretend for a moment that we are right. Forget us. Let's pretend that Dean Burgon was right. You know who Dean Burgon was? Dean Burgon, back in the latter part of the 1800s, when Westcott and Hort were putting out the RSV and putting their critical apparatus together for the Greek text from Sinaiticus and Vaticanus, it was Dean Burgon who single-handedly took them on and devastated them and proved they were liars. Let's just say he was right. Let's just kibitz for a minute. Let's say that Robert Dick Wilson was right. You know who Robert Dick Wilson was? He was a language expert and teacher at Princeton Theological Seminary back around the turn of the century. He spoke 45 languages. He was fluent in Greek and Hebrew and every language that the Bible was written in before 800 AD. He wrote and did the work. He wrote a book that says, "Is Higher Criticism Scholarly?" And "Higher Criticism" he is referring to the men who would read the Bible and then criticize the Bible and tear it apart. He wrote the standing work. Never been refuted. Never even been attempted to. "Is Higher Criticism Scholarly?" Let's just say he was right. He did the work on the Old Testament that is unparalleled. You could not find 50 guys today and put them together that could even carry his shoes.

How about David Gregory? Math professor at Yale in 1710. He did a work on the King James Bible and the coming of Christ that went 650,000 words. Never been refuted. Never even been challenged. Let's just say he was right. We will just pretend he was. Let's pretend that Wilbur Pickering was right. Let's pretend that J.J. Ray, who wrote the book on the King James Bible,

was right. Let's pretend that Clarence Larkin, who really shut up fundamentalism past the 1900s, let's just say that he was right. Let's say that J. Frank Norris knew what he was doing when he split from the Southern Baptist Convention because they jumped the King James Bible. He started his own Bible and set up the standard in the future that you and I have a Bible today that is the absolute perfect Word of God. Let's just say for a moment that Dr. Ruckman was right, who picked it up after J. Frank Norris. Let's just say that Mel Shabaka, my father-in-law, who got it from Ruckman, Ruckman got it from Norris, he gave it to me. Let's just say that he was right.

Now this is a terrible thought, because if all those guys were right, then I have got to be right. I gave it to you, and this is even worse: that means you have got to be right. Let's just pretend for a moment that all that is true. Let's pretend that whoever wrote Genesis chapter 3 verse 15 knew what they were talking about when they said that the devil had a seed and God had a seed, and then told you the seed was the Word of God. Because if they are true and that verse is saying what it is saying, that if you do not have the absolute perfect Word of God as God's truth, and you have got some other Mad Magazine translation, you cannot even have biblical worship because it has to be your spirit in God's truth. If you have lost the truth, you have lost the very concept of worship. That would say today, around this country, around the world, I know it is not popular. I know I am going to get a lot of thumbs down on a little deal over there. I love that. But I am telling you right now, if that is true, then what is going on in Christianity today, listen to me, I do not want you to misunderstand me, is absolutely worthless. You have no worship. There is no real worship with God in our lives. That is why, listen to me, that is why we claim to be saved but we never can get victory in anything in our lives.

III. The Doctrine of Biblical Prayer and Strange Fire

The second fundamental thing you have to have is prayer. Most people would think that there is a place in the New Testament that is a definitive passage. No, no, no. The definitive passage on prayer in the Bible is Leviticus chapter 10. That is where prayer starts. You can add to that Exodus chapter 17 and see how it works, but if you want to find out fundamentally what prayer is and why our prayer life today is as worthless as our worship. I know it is not popular. You have people all over the place claiming to be saved, probably are. They talk about what great prayer warriors they are. They talk about that. They give seminars on prayer. The greatest seminar on prayer you will ever take is found in Leviticus chapter 10 verses 1 and 2, and it tells us that prayer starts and stays with your personal walk and relationship with Christ.

In Leviticus chapter 10 verses 1 and 2, you have got the great biblical concept of strange fire being offered to God. Let us talk about that for just a moment. I will read it.

Leviticus 10:1-2

1 And Nadab and Abihu, the sons of Aaron, took either of them his censer, and put fire therein, and put incense thereon, and offered strange fire before the LORD, which he commanded them not.

2 And there went out fire from the LORD, and devoured them, and they died before the LORD.

Let us talk about the strange fire. Let me explain something to you. That tabernacle back there in the Old Testament is an incredible study. You are going to find that over there in 2 Timothy chapter 3 verse 16 it says that the man of God is to be perfect, truly furnished. I know all the new Bibles take the word "truly" out and put in the word "thoroughly." As stupid Christians, they think, "Boy, that is great," and there is nothing wrong with that. It completely destroyed the doctrine. The word there is that you are not thoroughly furnished, you are truly furnished. It starts on the inside with you and works out. The verse has the right doctrine.

When you went into that tabernacle, you will notice that there was a brazen altar out there. They had a brass altar. Brass is the picture of God's judgment. On that, it was a thing where that is where they offered the sacrifice. Then you went inside the second section. Before you went in there, there was a laver of water over here, kind of like a drinking fountain that nobody drank from. It was over here. Then you walked in, and when you came in over here was a table that had bread on it. They called it the showbread, a picture of the Word of God. Over here on this side was the seven-pronged candlestick, which is a picture of the Holy Spirit of God. Then up here, before you went into the Holy of Holies where the ark was, there was an altar of incense. The priest that went in there had a little censer, a little stick with a chain, and it had burning incense. Whenever he went, he swung that back and forth.

Every one of those is a picture of something in your personal relationship with the Lord Jesus Christ. Every one of them. When you walked into that tabernacle, into the inside part, it was completely black. There was not any light in there at all. The only light you had was the light off the golden candlesticks. Those golden candlesticks represent the Holy Spirit of God. It is a picture that inside you, the only light that should permeate inside you is the light off of that golden candlestick, the Holy Spirit of God. On the other side was a table of fellowship with six and six, twelve loaves of bread. One, two, three, four, five, six. One, two, three, four, five, six. Sixty-six. A picture of the Word of God. When the priest was doing all of the work over there, in complete darkness, only the light that he had, he had to walk around the table and work on it from this side because every time he got in front of the table, he blocked the light from the Holy Spirit of God, and he could not do the work. Every time you get between the Holy Spirit of God and the Word of God, you cannot do the work. See how it works?

Out there at the brazen altar, before you went in, there was a laver of water over here. Every time that priest would come out and go back in to do the Word of God, he had to wash his feet because the tabernacle had no floor. So he would walk in and do the work, he would come out, his feet would be dirty. So he would walk over to the laver and he would have to wash his feet every time he went in to do the work of God. That laver is a picture of the Word of God, and it is a picture of every time you start to do the work of God, you have got to get your feet clean with the water of the Word of God. That fellowship stayed.

Over here in the corner, right before he went into the Holy of Holies, there was the altar of incense, which in most Baptist churches has been turned into the altar of nonsense. But it had incense burning in it. That is a picture of your prayer life. Remember I told you a couple weeks ago how that when you talked about Christ, it was a sweet savor in the nostril of God. That incense is a smell that was a picture of your prayer life going up before God. All this is a picture

of the furnishings that should be inside you that this church, excuse me, this cult, is trying to build in you. Then the priest himself had the little censer, and he put incense in that off of the altar of incense, and he would walk around. That is a picture of your personal prayer life, wherever you go, pray without ceasing.

These two guys lit things up in there, and God killed them. They offered something called strange fire. It is one of the most predominant, powerful doctrines or teachings anywhere in the Word of God. It certainly is the answer why so many of God's people cannot get squat going with God today. The fire that lit the golden candlesticks, a type of the Holy Spirit, the fire that started the incense burning and the incense in that censer that he carried around, that fire, that fire could only come from one place. That fire had to come off the brazen altar where the sacrifice was made. It is a picture of you and me and my furnishings, and I am telling you this: the reason why my prayer life is no good and your prayer life is no good and you cannot get anything going with God is because we are offering strange fire. We are not. Every prayer you have, every moment of your life, every prayer, because of your relationship with Him, should go back to that brazen altar where He died on Calvary's cross for you. If you start your prayer someplace else, you just offered up strange fire. "Why did I not know that?" Because you are hanging out with the wrong crowd.

Leviticus 16:12 tells you that the fire had to come from the brazen altar. If your prayer life, my prayer life, does not start right there, that is why, may I be a little facetious, that is why for most Christians the best day for you to get your prayer answered is Easter. Yeah, but that is the only day you think about Him dying for you. It had to permeate everything you think of. It had to permeate everything you see. It had to permeate everything. If somebody gave their life for you that you might survive, you would think about them the rest of your life. Well, He did. He died on that cross. He paid the price. He was your sacrifice on that brazen altar. When you want to have a relationship with Him, fellowship with Him, a friendship with Him, you are going to forget what He did for you.

IV. The Doctrine of Standing and State

In the Bible, one of the greatest doctrines on all of this and your relationship with Christ is found in the unknown doctrine called standing and state. Completely unknown today. The failure of this teaching is what has made Christianity so absolutely confusing. In the doctrine of standing and state, you will find that the church is divided into two aspects. You must understand these aspects. Again, I am not saying, nor am I being critical. I am just simply saying if you just came here, you just got saved, or you are just getting plugged in, that is great. Do not go beat yourself up because you do not know. You are finally in a place where now you can get it. My advice to you is, do not waste any more time. Get it.

The church is divided into two aspects:

- The church militant
- The church triumphant

The church militant will be the physical walk and our physical work in life, the warfare of the believer, you and me, every day. That is the church militant. We are an army, onward Christian soldiers. Hold the fort for I am coming. That is the church militant. Then you have the church triumphant. The church triumphant is on the inside of you. That is the spiritual church, the body of Christ that you were born into the moment you trusted Christ as your own personal Savior.

Back in about 1490, there was a Roman Catholic priest by the name of Savonarola. Savonarola got saved. He was a thorn in the Catholic church's side all his life. He began to preach salvation by the blood of Christ. He began to preach on all the corruption of Rome. Boy, it was corrupt at that point in time. He just let them have it. They tried to shut him up. The bishop offered him a red hat to make him a cardinal, so he would shut up. He refused the red hat of a cardinal and said, "I will take a red hat of blood." He got one. Because he would not shut up, because he would not quit preaching, because he would not quit winning people to Christ, and because he went against the corruption of the Roman Catholic church, they arrested him. They tortured him. Finally, they burned him at the stake. When he was there, before they lit the fire, the Pope came over to him, stuck his finger in his face, and he said, "Today, I separate you from the church." Savonarola looked back and said, "You may separate me from the church militant, but you will never separate me from the church triumphant." For that solid piece of doctrine and theology, he would burn at the stake. You say, "Well, how? I did not know anything about that." Savonarola knew about it in 1490. You are hanging out with the wrong crowd.

If I did not know what we have was the right thing, I would know it any other way. I know it by this: you cannot steal my religion. You cannot. Somebody says, "Well, I will take your religion." You cannot. "Well, I will take your hymnal and we will burn them all up." I have got the songs in my heart. "Well, we will take your Bible."

Psalms 119:11

Thy word have I hid in mine heart, that I might not sin against thee.

"Well, we will burn down the building and burn down your church." I am the church. "Well, we will take all your beads and your candles." I did not need them anyhow. Welcome to them. "Oh, I know. We will kill your priest." You cannot get to him. You cannot take what I have got.

Your standing is found in Romans chapter 5 verses 1 and 2. You will want to get this down if you are trying to actually, honestly build a relationship with Him, because you have got to have these.

Romans 5:1-2

1 Therefore being justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ:

2 By whom also we have access by faith into this grace wherein we stand, and rejoice in hope of the glory of God.

This is the day you got saved. Notice it says, "peace with God." In the book of Romans, when you find the term "peace with God," it will always be dealing with you getting saved. The day you got saved, you made peace with God. You will find places where it talks about "peace of

God." That is after you are saved. Once you get saved, you have peace with God. Once you get saved, now you have the peace of God. That is how it works.

1 Peter 5:12 says, "we stand in the grace of God." Your standing is that in Christ Jesus, you are perfect in His sight. When He came down and saved you, He separated you from the world. He sealed you with the Holy Spirit of God. Now you are perfect, seated in heavenly places with Him, and nobody can ever touch that. You have been saved, you have been sealed, and then you are seated. That is your standing in Christ. We have a song in our hymnal, I think it is on page 175, "Standing on the Promises." Everybody thinks that that means you are just standing on the promise. No, whoever wrote that song understood that your standing, your sinless perfection, your relationship with God that you could have because your soul has been sealed unto the day of redemption, your standing is based on those promises. Incredible. Incredible that God's people do not know that today.

This is why the Bible says in 1 John chapter 3 verse 9:

1 John 3:9

Whosoever is born of God doth not commit sin; for his seed remaineth in him: and he cannot sin, because he is born of God.

All the scholars, all the Pharisees, all the Sadducees, all the great big-wig preachers, they say, "Oh, that cannot be right. That has to be a mistranslation." "Oh, he that is born of God cannot commit, does not commit sin." "Why, why, why?" "I know, we will change that. We have got to get rid of that. We have got to put it down there where everybody can get it. Let's change it from 'he that is born of God does not commit sin' to 'he that is born of God does not practice sin.'" That is much better. That is the stupidest thing you can ever put down in your life. You would be better off to say, "he that is born of God does not know anything about sin." Putting down "he that is born of God does not practice." Are you kidding me? I practice sin every day of my life, and I am saved. And you do too. You do too. Well, thank you. The front row does anyhow. We practice it all the time. You know why they change it? Because they knew nothing about standing and state. These are the guys that will teach you when you go to Bible college. Get your money back. The reason why the Bible says "he that is born of God does not commit sin" is because what got born of God, me, was not my flesh. It was my soul, and it is sealed, and it is unto the day of redemption, and my soul cannot sin. That is my standing.

Then you have your state. That is something else. Missouri, Ohio, or Pennsylvania, or wherever. Now your state, that will be the church militant, where the standing is the church triumphant. Your state then will be the church militant. That is your daily warfare. That is your daily battle in this life. The state of your fellowship with Him and your relationship and your friendship. How is that state this morning? How is the battle going for you? Are you on top of it today? Is your state of mind where you are one with Him, and you have the victory, and you are just getting through it? I know there are battles out there. We fall down, but you keep getting up, and today you have the victory. Is that your state? The state of your fellowship.

Philippians 4:11

Not that I speak in respect of want: for I have learned, in whatsoever state I am, therewith to be content.

That is your definitive verse on state. Wherever you are at, whatever situation you are in, you are content with it. You know why? Because your state is your fellowship and the relationship and your friendship with God. So circumstances do not matter.

This doctrine is taught, believe it or not, in the book of Leviticus. When I gave you the books of the Bible, all the breakdowns, I did Leviticus, and I told you that Leviticus is broken down into two sections, and the two sections represent standing and state. You know what the book of Leviticus is about, do not you? It is the priesthood. So what better book would be better than to put down the idea of a priesthood than the book of Leviticus, showing you standing and state? When you go from chapter 1 to chapter 11 of the book of Leviticus, you will find that the theme of those 11 chapters are the way you get to God, and you will find that the way you get to God is through sacrifice. There is your standing. You will pick it up in chapter 12 and go to the end of the book in chapter 27, and you will find in that the theme is the way with God will be your walk with God. There is your state. We will find out that standing and state is the basis for your understanding worship and your prayer life.

Understanding this doctrine is vital in having a working relationship with Christ. I am telling you right now, you may not have it now, you may not be where you want to be, but you can get there, but there has to become a process in your life. These things will form the foundation after salvation. They will become the anchor point for your walk, your relationship, and your friendship with Christ. These two, worship and prayer, standing and state, will form the intimacy which forms the relationship which leads to the friendship.

Proverbs 18:24

A man that hath friends must shew himself friendly: and there is a friend that sticketh closer than a brother.

Proverbs 17:17

A friend loveth at all times, and a brother is born for adversity.

For most of God's people today, this concept is an illusion. It used to be that only unsaved people had the problems that most of God's people have today. There was a time when God's people had their issues, but nothing like they have today. Today God's people have the same problems that the world had back in the day, that unsaved people have. Something is wrong. All of this is the reason, and I am sorry, I am here to help you, I am not mad at anybody, that all this is the reason for the struggle of God's people. Do you think I want God's people to struggle? I mean, would it not be wonderful to have a church where everybody did what the Bible said? In a perfect world, that would be wonderful, but we do not live in a perfect world, and it is not going to happen.

So God's people struggle with many things. They struggle with their salvation. Many of them struggle because they think they can lose it. I have had them talk to me about the fact that they do not think that they did it right when they got saved, and that comes down because they do not

understand the doctrine of standing and state. They will struggle with their inability to trust Him in their own lives. They will just not be able to walk by faith. They are always walking by sight, and that comes down to not following the great principle:

Proverbs 3:5-6

5 Trust in the LORD with all thine heart; and lean not unto thine own understanding.

6 In all thy ways acknowledge him, and he shall direct thy paths.

They will have an inability to commit their kids to Him. They will not be able to give them to Him, and yet they forgot what Psalm chapter 1 verses 1, 2, and 3 says:

Psalms 1:1-3

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

2 But his delight is in the law of the LORD; and in his law doth he meditate day and night.

3 And he shall be like a tree planted by the rivers of water, that bringeth forth his fruit in his season; his leaf also shall not wither; and whatsoever he doeth shall prosper.

The guarantee, "Train up a child in the way he should go." All the issues of life that we say we give over to Him, but we just keep taking them back, do not we? We cannot take them to Him, lay them at the foot of the cross, and leave them. There is no rest in any of that. There is no rest because there is no friendship. There is no rest because there is no real relationship. There is no rest because there is no real biblical worship or prayer. We have got this great smoke screen. We play this spiritual front all the time. I remember a day when all that preachers ever preached about were the soap operas on TV. Now God's people are living them every day of their Christian life. We will play the spiritual Christian, but inside we are miserable. There is no joy. There is no fruit. It is empty.

We have lost the idea of understanding God and understanding the Bible. So we are always dependent on something else or somebody else. We are just miserable, and it comes out as that we are negative about everything. We see God in nothing. There is no joy in anything. We do not like people. We do not like the ministry. We do not like this. We do not like that. It is just that that is where Christianity is today. Last week I told you the key to getting God's wisdom into your heart to His rejoicing will be through your true fellowship.

1 John 1:7

But if we walk in the light, as he is in the light, we have fellowship one with another, and the blood of Jesus Christ his Son cleanseth us from all sin.

Today I want to build a bridge. I want to build a bridge from last week to this week and then to next week. We will add to last week and we will develop our personal relationship with God just a little bit farther.

V. Guiding Your Heart in God's Way

Proverbs 23:19-22

19 Hear thou, my son, and be wise, and guide thine heart in the way.

20 Be not among winebibbers; among riotous eaters of flesh:

21 For the drunkard and the glutton shall come to poverty: and drowsiness shall clothe a man with rags.

22 Hearken unto thy father that begot thee, and despise not thy mother when she is old.

Bill Tillman, you are in the back. Would you stand up and ask God's blessing upon where we go from here? A full reward. I want you to have a full reward. Is that so wrong of me? Why do you get upset because I tell you the truth? Like I have some agenda to ruin your day. Yeah, I do. My agenda is one thing for you, and that is that you come away with a full reward. That is all I want. If you raised your kids and you never corrected them or never disciplined them or never had to deal with them, do you think that they would go through life with a full reward? They would go through life with a full record. That is all I want for you. My goal is not to make your life miserable. You have made your life miserable. I am trying to make it better. Do not blame me for it. Understanding. Gaining a better understanding of the two aspects of God's church in our life: church militant, church triumphant.

Verse 19 says:

Proverbs 23:19

Hear thou, my son, and be wise, and guide thine heart in the way.

This is where we are going to start today, and there are four things listed here that show us the makeup of our personal relationship with Christ. I want to just talk to you about them for a moment.

The first thing he says in verse 19, he says, "Hear thou." We go to church. We come to church. But I do not think we always hear what is said. We come to Thursday night Bible study, and I do not think we always hear what was said. I think God's people today, they go to church every Sunday. They go to everything that goes on throughout the week. The guy gets up in the pulpit and he talks about truth, and he lays this down, lays this out, and yet God's people continually go and sit there and they listen but they never hear. I am telling you, if you want to begin to build a relationship with God, you are going to have to begin to hear what He is saying to you. A lot of what He is saying to you, and you have got to hear, is not what is going in your ear, but what is in your heart when the Holy Spirit of God starts to tap you on the shoulder. That is where you have got to hear it. A lot of times we block that out by blocking out listening so we do not have to hear.

The nation of Israel had rejected all that God had done for them. They came in Matthew, and the Lord just gave them every opportunity. He did everything by the book He was supposed to do to

manifest Himself to the nation of Israel. They rejected it. Over and over and over and over again, He finally in Matthew chapter 13 verse 13, they refused to hear what He was saying, and He said:

Matthew 13:13

Therefore speak I to them in parables: because they seeing see not; and hearing they hear not, neither do they understand.

The reason why so many of God's people, and I say it again, I know some of you are just getting started. I know that we are here for you. You can get there. That is our goal: full reward. But I am saying the reason why so many of God's people can never get to the place in their life where they understand God, the Word of God, and what God is trying to do in their life, is because they do not hear. They do not see what God is doing.

There are always people that complain about everything in church, and I have been in churches like that, and I know that there are churches that have a lot of issues, but in any church, there is always something that is good that is going on. Why do God's people always just want to focus on the negative stuff? Do you go through life just as a miserable person because everything is, you look at all the negative things in life? When it is your birthday and they bring you a present, do you say, "That is not what I wanted"? They bring you a cake. "I like chocolate icing." They put all the candles on it. "That is too many candles. Remind me how old I am." "Well, I brought you this really nice shirt." "Oh, I wanted a new car." Is that the way we go through life? He said in Matthew chapter 11 verse 15 to Israel:

Matthew 11:15

He that hath ears to hear, let him hear.

Israel never did hear. They never did. Now they have got to go through the tough time and tribulation to begin to hear, and in Revelation chapter 3 verse 6, when He is talking to the church, He says:

Revelation 3:6

He that hath an ear, let him hear what the Spirit saith unto the churches.

Let us hear, and when we do not hear, we have to go through our tribulation.

The second thing he says is, "my son." There is that relationship of intimacy that we started last week. My dad was my hero. He died when I was 20 years old. But I watched him all of my life, and I learned so much from him. He loved to hunt and fish. He was a crack shot. He was a fisherman. Oh, he loved to fish. Hard worker. Worked all of his life in a steel mill. Had a good value system. When I used to watch him go to work, I used to think that when I grow up, I want to be just like him. I have got a lot of my dad's traits. My dad never met a stranger. My dad's favorite word, and this is telling on me, but my dad's favorite word when he talked to people was "buddy." "Hey, buddy." "You are my buddy." I just picked that up. I would say that to you, and I do not even like some of you.

I will never forget one of the lasting moments is when I left for the army. I said goodbye. My dad took me to the bus station. We were quiet all the way there. Little did I know, in just a few short years, he would be emaciated by lung cancer and passed away. But we stood there waiting for the bus to load, and we were quiet. It was tough for him. The Vietnam War was raging, and for all they could have known, it could have been the last time that they ever saw me alive. When it was time to get on the bus, I hugged my dad, he shook my hand, and my dad told me that he loved me, and I told him I loved him. I wanted to grow up to be like him. And yet, Ephesians chapter 4 verses 14 and 15 says that we should grow up into Christ.

Ephesians 4:14-15

14 That we henceforth be no more children, tossed to and fro, and carried about with every wind of doctrine, by the sleight of men, and cunning craftiness, whereby they lie in wait to deceive;

15 But speaking the truth in love, may grow up into him in all things, which is the head, even Christ:

It does not say "grow up unto him." It does not say "grow up to be like him." It says actually "grow up to be him in all things." I have a question for us, all of us. As a Christian, when will we ever grow up? Will we ever get to the place that we are not snagged by everything in life that snags us? Every relationship. I mean, I have seen men and women look at a relationship that was a dead end of a street you ever saw in your life, and yet they just let that thing snag them. You know why? Because you are growing up into somebody else instead of Him.

Then the third thing he says, "hear my son and be wise and guide thine heart." That is a reference to our free will process. You have to decide you are going to follow Christ. He did not make you get saved, and He will not make you follow Him. You will have to count the cost. You will have to look at that brazen altar. Let it mean something to you, and then you will have to decide that you are going to follow Him. I learned many years ago, this is a great principle of life, and I have lived by it. I have followed it. I believe it. I think it is the source of many, many people's issues and problems, but I learned something: you only get out of something what you are willing to put into it. It is true of anything. You can join whatever club you want to join. You can do this. You can do that. But you are only going to get out of it what you put into it, especially in churches. You have people all of my time, "Well, I just..." You only get out of it what you put into it. The Bible says, "He that hath friends must show themselves to be friendly." It is just a true staple of life.

In life, there will be filled with crossroads, and you are going to have to stand there and choose, "Am I going to go this way or am I going to go that way?" From a young man that some of you kids are right now, to a senior citizen like some of you are, you are constantly going to be faced with a road that you should not go down in every day of your life, every time. Listen to me, you will choose the right path based on your personal relationship with Him, and you will guide your heart accordingly. When you love Him more than life, you will never betray Him with your life. It is just that simple. You get to choose. I come here, you come here. I come and preach to you. I preach a good range of things for you. My goal, I have already told you, is to get a full reward. I will deal with any problem that you have. I will help you any way I can. Nobody is going to hurt

you here. You can have whatever you want, do whatever you want, rest, stand up, fight, whatever you want to do. But it is your choice, and in anything in Christianity, as in anything in life, you are only going to get out of this place what you are willing to invest into it. If you are not willing to invest anything, you are not going to get anything out of it.

Then the fourth thing he says, "hear my son guide thine heart and then he says in the way." That will be God's way versus our own way.

John 14:6

Jesus saith unto him, I am the way, the truth, and the life: no man cometh unto the Father, but by me.

That term, that concept, "the way," is taught all the way through the Bible.

Genesis 24:27

And he said, Blessed be the LORD God of my master Abraham, who hath not left destitute my master of his mercy and his truth: I being in the way, the LORD led me to the house of my master's brethren.

That is not getting in the way of the Lord and letting Him push you through life. That is getting God's way in your life.

VI. Repentance and Separation

In the Bible, along with the doctrine of salvation, you will find the doctrine of repentance. Again, unknown today. I just need to tell you this: there is no salvation without repentance. There just is not. Repentance is simply ceasing at the time of salvation going your way and starting a new life going His way. We get the idea the Bible is about you conforming yourself to it. It will never be about it conforming itself to you. It just will not happen. Most people today think it means that you are sorry. Peter talked about repentance. Well, sure, I am sorry. Repentance is not sorry. I mean, repentance is more than that. Repentance is you turn a complete different direction. I have known lots of people who were sorry. I knew a drunk driver that was sorry he killed some people, but he did not stop drinking. No, no. Repentance is a change of direction.

In Genesis chapter 6 verse 6, it talks about that God, and it repented the Lord that He had made man. So everybody says, "Was God sorry He made man? Was God, was God, He was sorry that He made?" No, no. It means that He had made man, and now He repented that He made him, and He is going to change and go another direction. He is going to kill them all, going to drown them. Repentance is a change in direction. When you got saved, you were going your way, and then repentance through salvation is now you are going another way.

The definitive verse on repentance again, back to Exodus chapter 32 verse 12:

Exodus 32:12

Remember Abraham, Isaac, and Israel, thy servants, to whom thou swarest by thine own self, and saidst unto them, I will multiply your seed as the stars of heaven, and all this land that I have spoken of will I give unto your seed, and they shall inherit it for ever.

"Wherefore should the Egyptians speak, and say, For mischief did he bring them out, to slay them in the mountains, and to consume them from the face of the earth? Turn from thy fierce wrath, and repent of this evil against thy people." The Bible defines repent as "turned."

The Bible says in Romans chapter 11 verse 29:

Romans 11:29

For the gifts and calling of God are without repentance.

Somebody said, "Does that mean Israel does not have to get right with God? Does that mean Israel does not have to repent?" No, what it is saying there is that under the covenant of Abraham, God set a direction He was going to go with Israel, and He is not going to repent or turn from that direction. People do have a time of it.

I say all this, and I am tired, I am sure you get tired of hearing me saying, but the price of learning is repetition. Today people claim to be saved. They go through all the motions. They say the prayer, but they never change anything about themselves. There is no direction change, and they claim to get saved, and yet they keep going the same old way, keep doing the same old thing. That may work in the Laodicean church, but when it comes to the Bible, that is not how it works. Without doctrine, salvation becomes a very dangerous thing. Doctrine will keep your emotions out of it. Doctrine will put salvation right where it is, in the confines of the truth of God's Word. Your salvation will be impossible without a biblical repentance that will set you on the right way.

Where did we get the idea? Because with the doctrine of repentance, the doctrine of salvation comes the doctrine of separation. When you got saved, God separated you. Understanding God is understanding that God will always divide first before He does anything else. He separates.

Genesis 1:4

And God saw the light, that it was good: and God divided the light from the darkness.

You do not go four verses in the Bible where it says God divided the light from the darkness. Four verses, and He just told you that the rest of the Bible is going to be divided up, light versus darkness. Your life today, my life today, is divided light versus darkness. Which way are you going to go?

Hebrews 4:12

For the word of God is quick, and powerful, and sharper than any twoedged sword, piercing even to the dividing asunder of soul and spirit, and of the joints and marrow, and is a discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart.

He divides. God will divide first in everything He does. In Genesis 2:3, God divided the seventh day from the rest of the week. When He brought Israel out of Egypt, Exodus 12, as a separated nation, He divided them from all the other nations. When He called Abraham out in Genesis 11 and 12, He separated him, He divided him from their family. When He established the law in the Old Testament, He set up a priest class, and He divided that class from the rest of the tribes. In the New Testament, at the time of salvation, He will divide your soul from your flesh.

Colossians 2:11

In whom also ye are circumcised with the circumcision made without hands, in putting off the body of the sins of the flesh by the circumcision of Christ:

He separates you. Now you have an old nature and a new nature. After salvation, once you get saved, now you have been sanctified. What does that mean? You have been set apart. Through your repentance, now you are separated. You are divided from the world. Are you supposed to be?

Here is the problem: we live in a Christianity, in a time today, where everybody wants to just get together when God's business is separating. Maybe you can begin to see what the real issues are today. Churches want no doctrine. They want to take "Baptist" off their name because to be a Baptist, you have to believe some things that will separate you. That is not a bad thing. They want to get everybody together, and they want to build a mega church that, "Oh, look at this, we have got a great, great, great, great mega church. Look at our church." A church is never a building, and a church is never a group of people. A church is simply whatever it is based on what it believes by doctrine.

I remember years ago, Shabaka and I were going someplace, and a church had a congregation of 10,000 people. This was back in the mid-70s, so it was pretty big back then. We walked out, and somebody said, "What do you think now?" And he said, "Just because you have a crowd on Sunday does not mean you have a church," because a big crowd does not make a church. It is what you believe on the inside. Bible Christianity will never get, you will never get the purpose in your life to first divide you. Check it out: when you got saved, God divided you from the world. Then 2 Peter 1:5 says that you add some things to your faith, and in Psalm chapter 1 verses 1 through 3 says after that He begins to multiply things in your life. So He divides you first, then He adds some things in your life, and then He multiplies based on that. The devil just does the opposite. The devil will add some things to your life first: all the world, all your friends, all your partying. Then he will multiply that. Your old flesh will not have enough and keep getting more. Then you know what he will do? He will separate you from, divide you from everything that is good. That is how it works. That is just how it works.

Now look at the next two verses here quickly:

Proverbs 23:20-21

20 Be not among winebibbers; among riotous eaters of flesh:

21 For the drunkard and the glutton shall come to poverty: and drowsiness shall clothe a man with rags.

Obviously, these are two good verses to deal with drinking, and they are great true verses that if you want to preach on alcohol or whatever, that would be the place to go. But in our text, they represent the Word of God that you and I as God's people should hear as a son, be wise, take it into our hearts, and then go the right way and stay away from those things in the world. Let His Holy Spirit of God guide you, guide me, and stay in the way of God and not in the way of the world, because that is the way the world will take you.

2 Corinthians 6:14-18

14 Be ye not unequally yoked together with unbelievers: for what fellowship hath righteousness with unrighteousness? and what communion hath light with darkness?

15 And what concord hath Christ with Belial? or what part hath he that believeth with an infidel?

16 And what agreement hath the temple of God with idols? for ye are the temple of the living God; as God hath said, I will dwell in them, and walk in them; and I will be their God, and they shall be my people.

17 Wherefore come out from among them, and be ye separate, saith the Lord, and touch not the unclean thing; and I will receive you,

18 And will be a Father unto you, and ye shall be my sons and daughters, saith the Lord Almighty.

There is no fellowship with God till you separate yourself from the world. It is so simple. How did we ever get the idea that we could actually believe that as a Christian, we could have one foot in church and one foot in the world? Where did that come from?

Amos 3:3

Can two walk together, except they be agreed?

You cannot.

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.

You cannot. Paul said in Romans chapter 1 verse 1:

Romans 1:1

Paul, a servant of Jesus Christ, called to be an apostle, separated unto the gospel of God,

There is the problem right there. Paul was separated from the world, and then he was separated to the gospel. God's people today may get separated from the world, but they never get separated

to something. If you want to have a relationship with God and a fellowship with God and a friendship with God, then you have got to get in tune and His way, and that way is you separate yourself from the world, and then you separate yourself unto the gospel. God's people today are trying to do both, and it will not work.

Matthew 6:24

No man can serve two masters: for either he will hate the one, and love the other; or else he will hold to the one, and despise the other. Ye cannot serve God and mammon.

So when you get saved, you got sanctified, you got divided based on your repentance and a new way. Now you are going to go in life.

VII. Heed Your Spiritual Parents

Verse 22, here is some really good advice:

Proverbs 23:22

Hearken unto thy father that begot thee, and despise not thy mother when she is old.

Inspirationally, that is good advice for any kid in our church or anybody: the importance of having parents in your life that you listen to. Your parents are not always going to be right, but they are always going to be your parents, and they are the authority that God put into your life to help you through life. The importance of parents in your life and the importance of good parents in your child's life.

In our context, there will be a reference to me as a son of God and my heavenly Father, and the wisdom and instruction that He gives me, and my hearkening to it and listening to what He says. Most of God's children do not listen to God any more than your children listen to you. Maybe that is the reason.

Now the mother here, and I get it, Galatians chapter 4 verse 26 tells us that New Jerusalem is the mother of us all. I understand that. But here in the reference in the context, this is a reference to Israel, who was the woman in Revelation chapter 12 who gave birth to Christ, and our salvation comes of her.

John 4:22

Ye worship ye know not what: we know what we worship: for salvation is of the Jews.

The Bible tells us in Romans chapter 3 verses 1 and 2 that the very oracles of God, the Word of God, comes from the Jew.

Romans 3:1-2

1 What advantage then hath the Jew? or what profit is there of circumcision?

2 Much every way: chiefly, because that unto them were committed the oracles of God.

That is a verse that references me as God's child and the ability to learn from Christ in the New Testament and then learn from God and how He deals with the nation of Israel in the Old Testament. Two tremendous aspects: you learn from Christ in the New Testament how to deal with the church, how to live your life, and then you watch God in the Old Testament with the nation of Israel. Make the parallels back and forth. You have got it. That is how you do it. Israel is 4,000 years old as we speak, and there are many lessons that we can learn. Look at Romans chapter 9 and Romans chapter 11. Many lessons that we can learn, and the parallels of what Israel did with God and His Word and the issues they faced because of their disobedience are unbeatable. I am telling you, I can learn all about my own relationship with God by looking and observing their relationship with God.

VIII. The Work of Discipleship

After you get saved, you need to go to work. No question about that. The moment you get saved, you need to go to work. Most churches would take the statement I just said and say that that means that we put you into the work of the ministry, get you here, get you there, put you in the nursery, get you to do this, get you to do that. That is where you need to wind up at some point in your life, but the first work you need to do will be the work of building your own personal relationship with God. That is the only work you need right now. You can come and do things and observe things, be part of things, but your main focus, the work right now after you are saved or you are just a young Christian putting it all together, you need to work on building the right relationship, the right fellowship, and the right friendship with Christ by getting here all the tools that you need.

I realize many of you go out and do things and help people. You learn from that. It is all a process. Our discipleship lessons is where we start, and I wrote those many, many, many, many years ago. We have today 10 lessons in those discipleship lessons. You might think that you are done, and I tell people this all the time, you might think that if you did one lesson a week, you can be done in 10 weeks. I tell people all the time, you are not done when you get to lesson 10, because the lessons are just a means to an end. There are four goals within the concept and the scope of our discipleship program. You are not done when you hit lesson 10. You are done when these four goals are accomplished in a person's life.

Those four goals:

- Establishing the person that you are discipling, that brand new person, establish them in the Word of God, give them the basic fundamentals.
- Establish them into our church. Let them know what is going on and help them be the shoehorn that they can fit in wherever God wants them to be.
- Establish them with other believers. Take them around. They get to know everybody. You get invited to this or invited that. You go here, you come to this, and you make the circle. You get in a prayer group up there. You change and you meet all the different people.
- Establish them in the ministry.

There are three things that we do in your own personal relationship before we even consider putting you into the work of the ministry, because the greatest work you have to build is your own personal relationship with Him. Some people will disciple, take a year to go through it. Some people take eight or nine months. I have seen it myself, you disciple someone and take them through in 10 or 12 weeks, and you miss something along the way. In doing discipleship, we build some things in you. We establish you. We want you to begin that fundamental basic understanding of basic Bible doctrine that is going to lead to your relationship. Once you get through with that, if you want, then we have Discipleship Two. That is another level. We talk about the seven things that change the day you got saved. It adds to and builds on top of that. We teach doctrine. We give you everything that you need because my overall goal for you in everything that we do, and I have many short goals, things I want to do, I want you to learn the Bible, I want you to know the Bible, I want you to, I get that. But my long-term goal for everybody in this room is that you might receive a full reward, and there is absolutely no reason that you will not unless you choose not to.

So last week and this week, we talked about the key to understanding a real relationship with God: the concept of worship, the concept of prayer, the concept of standing and state. All of those things that show you that the real relationship, the real work that you have in Philippians chapter 1 says that today in salvation He has begun a good work in you.

Philippians 1:6

Being confident of this very thing, that he which hath begun a good work in you will perform it until the day of Jesus Christ:

That good work is the fellowship that He wants to expand into every aspect of your life as you grow up into Him and being everything that He wants you to be. Our goal here is to help you, to give you the tools, to be here for whatever you need, whatever your struggles are, whatever answers you cannot find to life. Together we will find those answers and move through and help you become everything that God wants you to be, that through your relationship, through your fellowship, and through your friendship, that you stand there before God with a full reward.

I am sure many of you watched the royal wedding this weekend. I was invited, but I could not make it. I have got to tell you, and I try to find something spiritual in everything, I wanted to see it because they got married in the church that Henry VIII started because he wanted to divorce his wife. We talked about it a couple weeks ago. I knew it would be his day. But I have got to tell you, this black guy that preached the deal, I mean, I know he is probably a baby-sprinkling Episcopalian, but I will tell you what, he had somewhere in his life, he had a little Baptist charismatic in him someplace. What was funny to me, you could see it, I never saw more kings and queens and potentates squirming in their seats because they expected a dry, old, boring, lethargic sermon, and he was getting too close. He was getting down about the love of Jesus. I mean, it is like this normally, "Oh, we thank you for this wonderful event today, the Queen of England and the King and all the royal host. What a lovely day of this coronation of this wedding that we can all just savor and thank the Almighty God of the universe for blessing us with His presence." No, no. "Jesus has got the love for you!" And the Queen is down there going, "This

child is going..." I thought, if you are squirming now because some tin-horn preacher is getting close to your panic button, what are you going to do in the day when the holy eyes of a holy God pierce down through your naked soul? Short term and long term.

Let us have prayer. We will be dismissed. There will be no meeting because we are going to go down there. If you want to switch over and help, that would help. Please take time to sign up for the picnic today because we have got to get everything worked out this week. Ladies will be in contact with you next week. You will get all your stuff. Only one guy told me he was going to cook, so I guess it is just me and you, pal, but we will get it done. Let us have a word of prayer and we will be dismissed.

Father, we thank You and praise You for the Lord Jesus, and I love You so much. Thank You for today. Thank You for the truth of Your Word, for these good people who I believe with all of my heart, every one of them wants to have that relationship with You that only comes through the intimacy of knowing You and what You have done for us. May our prayer always be kindled on the brazen altar of Calvary. May our worship, may our prayer always be from the inward parts of us that are the secret parts between You and me, where my prayer and my worship really live. May all the inward furnishings for these good people extend out to the outward manifestation of God in their life. May we get our foot out of the world and put both of them in the Word of God. May we be found faithful in these last days, that these dear good people may meet You face to face for a full reward. I will thank You and praise You in Jesus' name, for His sake we ask it. Amen. God bless you. You are dismissed.