

## I. Opening Remarks and Personal Updates

We appreciate you coming. We were actually going down to Arkansas to see my wife's last living aunt, Aunt Stell. They are strong Christians. Uncle Glenn, her husband, goes to the Missionary Baptist Church down there, and he is the senior deacon. The senior deacon only smokes two packs of cigarettes a day, so we were trying to wave the smoke. We could only take about three days down there, and I said, "Honey, I'm going to get cancer if we don't get out of here." So we packed up and moved out. I love him. I have never talked to a guy as much about the Bible while smoking a cigarette as I have Uncle Glenn. That's the truth.

At any rate, I called Bob and said, "I want you to preach." I said, "I don't want to preach. I just want to see you guys." And he said, "No, I want you to preach. I've got to preach." So here I am. Don't get too excited. If you're visiting, come back. If this is your first time, come back. Don't gauge this church on me. I really appreciate it.

A couple of things I want to say before we get started. First of all, we appreciate your prayers a lot. We're going through a huge transition in our life, as you know. Kathy has just stopped working. It's okay if I tell you, right? Kathy has Alzheimer's, and she's about three years into it now. So I'm going through a huge transition. She's doing great, and we're appreciative of it. We're looking forward to what God has for us in the future. I appreciate your praying for us. I think most of you probably knew that.

I appreciate your praying for me when I was in the hospital. It was not a big deal. I got a little E. coli in my blood and went into septic shock, but it was not a big deal. I was only in for eight days. My grandson said, "Papa, why did you grow the mustache?" I said, "Well, when I was in the hospital, my nose was running all the time, and I'm always doing this, and I got tired of doing that, so I grew the mustache. It catches it, and then when I take my shower once a week, I can clean that off, and it works out pretty good." So we appreciate your prayers.

The second thing I want to thank you for is we celebrated our 40th anniversary. I was talking to Bob, and I should have never said anything to him. I said, "Well, we're planning on taking a cruise. I'm going to take a cruise and go down to the islands and see some of those girls that dance around their skirts and stuff." The next thing I know, the cruise is paid for, and we thank you so much for that. If you didn't know about that, you can take that up with your pastor. I hope he told you. We brought him back a shirt, and it's too small for him. He's gained a little weight since I saw him last. We're going to try and get him another one, some flannel. I brought him back a rum cake. Next Sunday, if he's holding on to the pulpit, you'll know he had rum cake for breakfast. We brought Barb a dress, and it's orange, really orange.

## II. The Foundation of Christian Confidence

A number of years ago, and I really couldn't tell you how long ago it was, a missionary friend of mine, Carlos Demarest, who was probably the boldest witness I ever met in my life. I used to tell

people when I was with Carlos that we got an elevator. I would just take a tract with everybody else. One time, I took him to Montreal, about two hours from where we lived. We went to Montreal and visited all the Catholic churches and put tracts in all the missals. He wanted to put them in where they do confession. I said, "Boy, oh boy, you might get in trouble. Do you have the church name on those tracts?" I said, "No, I took some from the other church downtown and handed them out with their stamp on it so we wouldn't get into any trouble."

I got an article he sent to me, and it was an article written by a Mexican in Mexico who was complaining and tired of Christian missionaries coming to Mexico and trying to push Christianity onto them. He wanted them to go back to the ancient Aztec and all of those religions. He made this statement in that article: "Christians are arrogant because they think they're the only ones." Have you heard that? I think we hear that all the time, don't we? I think people think that. Sometimes they put Baptists in there. They always say, "You're Baptist. You think you're the only ones." The whole Christianity thing, "You think you're the only ones. What about the Muslims and the Hindus and everybody?"

Nancy Pelosi thinks everybody has a divine spark of divinity in us. You heard that, right? She doesn't understand that that spark is not divinity; it's sin. She hasn't figured that out yet, but that's a little different. Well, I agree with them. I wouldn't say we're arrogant, but we are confident. I want to preach on that confidence this morning.

Bob and I are not young. He acts young, which is why he had back surgery. I had a verse for him. I told him I gave him a verse. I forget what for. Oh, pitching. He was going to pitch. I said, "I've got a verse for you." Paul said, "When I was a child, I acted as a child. When I became a man, I put away childish things." I said, "Maybe you ought to start thinking about that." We do have confidence, and we should have confidence.

*The LORD is my light and my salvation; whom shall I fear? the LORD is the strength of my life; of whom shall I be afraid?*

*When the wicked, even mine enemies and my foes, came upon me to eat up my flesh, they stumbled and fell.*

*Though an host should encamp against me, my heart shall not fear: though war should rise against me, in this will I be confident.*

Father, Your Word this morning is the focus of our attention. Your Son is the object of our worship and praise. God, as we look into Your Word, may we see Christ. May we see Him, Lord. Help us to be confident in what You have said and what Jesus has done. In His name we pray.

I just want to ask you, why are we so confident? Confident in what? It's a good question to ask people who want to debate with you a little bit about what you believe. You say, "What are you confident about? Where is your confidence? What is it that you stand on when trouble comes?" Because you know trouble comes. Bob and I are old. I act that way; he doesn't, but we are. He's going to be 68 on Thursday, if you didn't know. He'll be 68. In fact, we graduated 50 years ago this year. He graduated from what was the name of that school? Oh, the one that's no longer there. The one that got destroyed or something. Nobody went there anymore. Isn't that what

happened? Oh, it's a Christian school now, Heritage Christian School. He went to Lincoln. I went to Glenwood. I went to the suburb school. I was out in the burbs.

We're getting older. I used to hear preachers preach and talk about the journey, how life is a journey. There are some of you here this morning that are gray hairs, but a lot of you are very young hairs, pretty young. You're in the journey. Some of us are on the backside of the mountain. We may end up being 91 or 93. Should we want to do that? Be 93? Should we want to? Yeah. Okay, she says, "I want to be 94 too." We have a tendency to start to look back instead of look forward. Young people are all looking forward. What's life going to be? What's going to happen? How are my kids going to grow up? What's it going to be like to have grandkids? We're looking back the other way. We're saying, "Boy, oh boy, look at this happen. What happened? What happened?" In life, a lot of stuff happens. What are you confident in?

I want to share just a couple of things this morning. In Psalms 27:1, there are three things about this confidence that we have that I want to share with you.

### III. Confidence in God as Our Light

The first is very obvious: The Lord is my light. Most of us feel uncomfortable in darkness. I think I told you the story of when we used to do a haunted house. We had this maze that we had built, and you had to crawl through it. Bob and I, and I think Dan Sabaka, and a couple of the guys stayed there that night. We were up in the maze, and it was dark. You couldn't see anything. I was just a little nervous. Bob said, "Don't worry, Jim. I've got my .48," or whatever big gun he had, "a .110 pistol." He pulls out this big thing. I'm thinking, "Great, now we're all going to end up dead. This is going to be a haunted house before it's all over."

Most people feel a little uncomfortable. There are some caves down around Springfield. You can ride and go all the way to the back of those caves. When they get back there, they turn off all the lights. We took my parents there years ago. We were sitting back there, and they turned off all the lights, and you couldn't see your hand. At first, everybody was like, they just let you sit there for a while. Pretty soon, the giggles got a little more nervous. Then they turned the lights on. It's a little uncomfortable.

We had a lady in our church who was blind. You know what's interesting? If you live in darkness, it doesn't bother you. Alice, one time, Kathy and a lady in our church, Debbie, picked Alice up, and they came to church. It was dark in the church when they came in, and they were looking for the lights. Alice just walked in and went right to her seat because she was used to the darkness. It didn't scare her. It didn't bother her. People who live in spiritual darkness are not afraid of it. If you stay in darkness long enough, you will become very, very comfortable.

Light illuminates. Light illuminates and it brings confidence. It makes you more confident. If you're going down a steep set of stairs in the dark, you're doing this. I do that all the time anyhow, but you're sort of doing this, and you're holding on to something, and you're trying to see what the next step is. But when there's light, you don't have to do that. It gives you confidence. Light gives you confidence. The Bible here tells us that the Lord is our light.

When Genesis 1 said, "In the beginning God created," He said, "Let there be light." That was His essence. He didn't turn on the light. He didn't make the sun for a couple of days. This light was His light, and He is in the light. That is the difference between the world and us today. If you're walking in the Lord, you have confidence because of the light. Now, they have confidence because they're used to the darkness. They're used to it. They like it. They're comfortable. You and I should not be comfortable in the dark.

*And this is the condemnation, that light is come into the world, and men loved darkness rather than light, because their deeds were evil.*

*For every one that doeth evil hateth the light, neither cometh to the light, lest his deeds should be reproved.*

You know why people don't like the Bible? It's not because it's hard to understand or even hard to read. They don't like it because of what it says. It's light, and it exposes them, and they don't like it. I tell people all the time, "What are you getting mad at me for? I didn't write the Bible. Don't get mad at me. I didn't write it. You want to live like you want to live? Go ahead and do that." Christians, when they get off into sin, they want to argue with the preacher and defend their sin. They get very angry about it. And they're angry at whom? Light illuminates.

Jesus is the light of the world. I was reading one of Bob's books that he wrote on principles, and I like what he said in that. When he talked about, "We can't fix the world." He asked me, "What do you think about the president?" "About the same as I thought about the last one." You might like him. You might not like him. I said, "I like what he does. I don't know if I like him, but I like what he does." But I'm not worried about the world getting fixed by politicians because they're not going to fix it. Politicians are never going to fix it. If your confidence is in the government, you're in really big trouble.

Jesus said this in John 8:12.

*Then spake Jesus again unto them, saying, I am the light of the world: he that followeth me shall not walk in darkness, but shall have the light of life.*

That's what you have. "Well, Pastor, I already knew that." Yeah, okay, good. But as we walk through life and troubles come, where's your confidence? Is your confidence in the light? Or do you get drafted, you start to get sucked back into that darkness because the world says, "Hey, come over here. We'll help you."

We have a teenage boy whose grandparents come to our church, and he comes off and on. His grandmother told me last week she's all upset, and she should be. His mom's a mess. I've known his mom all her life. He's just a mess, and she's a mess, and the whole thing. He said, "God never has done anything for me." That's really unfortunate to feel that way. What he meant by that is God didn't take away my problems. God didn't change my circumstance. God didn't, when my mom doesn't have a husband and has different men all the time into the home, and I have to go to my grandmother's house so she can be alone, and then they bring other kids in, and my life has just been a mess, and God has never done anything for me. You know what he means? He wants his circumstances changed.

Aren't most of our prayers about our circumstances? "God, please help this, change this for me, would you?" Now, I'm not saying you shouldn't pray that way. I pray that way. 1 John 5 is pretty clear that if we ask anything according to His will, He hears us. And we are, you know what the rest of the verse says? And we are confident. We're confident that He will answer our prayers. Because you see, if you're seeking God's will, not necessarily to change your circumstances, but if you're seeking God's will to be in the circumstance and say, "God, this is where I am. This is where You've let me be. I will trust You and go forward in Your light because You are the light. I will be able to walk and see." Jesus is the light. This world needs the light. It's what they need.

## IV. Confidence in God as Our Salvation

The second thing here, look at it, it says, "The Lord is my salvation."

*Behold, God is my salvation; I will trust, and not be afraid: for the LORD JEHOVAH is my strength and my song; he also is become my salvation.*

Sometimes, again, circumstances bring us in here, and we get a little afraid. I think the last time I was here, I shared with you about our piano player and my son-in-law's sister who died. How God has used that, even two years later, how God has used her death. Her husband is incredible, raising the daughters by himself and just focused. He has never taken the wedding band off of his finger. Raising those children, grandmas homeschooling them. It's just incredible to see what God is doing. You know what that was? God didn't change the circumstances, but what he realized is God is my salvation.

Folks, in times of trouble, you know what you want? When we talk about salvation, we talk about eternal salvation, but I want to tell you something: every day, I need to be saved from something. Every day, I face something that I need God to be my salvation, that I'm able to turn to somebody and get through a valley or get through a dark place or deal with an emotion that has risen in my own heart or my mind and say, "God, I need You to help me in this. I need You to get me through this. I can't do this on my own."

But what most of us do is say, "Oh, forget God. What's God done for me?" We grab that salvation, eternal salvation, and we hold on to that. "Well, I'm going to heaven." Well, what about living? How are you living? Heaven is going to, you're going to get there soon enough one way or the other. But you've got tomorrow coming, too. And tomorrow may be heaven or may not be, and you've got to get through tomorrow.

Kathy and I were at her doctor, and he was saying he was worried about President Trump getting us into a war with North Korea. I would hate that. I'm not too excited about it. It's getting almost Ohio State football season, and the war would mess everything up. I've got plans. I've got things to do. An atomic bomb, a nuclear bomb, doesn't have anything to do with my plans. But we don't know about tomorrow, do we?

I told Kathy, "Man, did you ever think a day would come and your world would change like that?" That happens. It may not be so catastrophic. It might be a loss of a job. It might be a broken marriage. It might be a sickness. It might not be anything terrible, but to you, it's terrible.

I tell people, "If you've got a problem, it's a problem." I may in my heart think, "Grow up," but I know in their hearts and their lives, it's a problem. And I know where the answer is. The answer isn't me. The answer is God. He is my salvation.

Isaiah wasn't exactly in a great place. He was in captivity, and he writes and says, "Behold, God is my salvation. I will trust and not be afraid, for the Lord Jehovah is my strength and my song. He also is become my salvation." My eternal salvation is not earned by how good I am or because I go to church or belong to a certain church. Men have confidence in those things. There are people all over this area this morning going to church, having confidence that because they've gone to church, God's paying attention and marking it down. There are thousands of people that are doing that this morning. There are hundreds of thousands of people that think because they help somebody or do something good, their only hope is in their good works.

What do you have confidence in? My confidence is not in myself. When I look in the mirror in the morning, I don't see a good guy. I see a guy that messes up a lot. I see a guy who stumbles, and most of the time, it's over my own fault. I look in that mirror and I say, "God, my only hope is You. My only hope is You." My confidence is not in myself. He is my salvation tomorrow and forever.

One thing about eternal salvation: eternity is right now. This is part of eternity. Eternity doesn't start when we're dead. Eternity started back in Genesis 1. Actually, it started before that. We're in eternity right now. I'm just going to change homes. I'm not going into something, some new eternity. Quit watching Star Wars. Well, go ahead and watch it because it's fun, but understand that it's not true. You're not going to go into some other galaxy and say, "Oh, this is what eternity is like." Today is eternity. You have today. When I leave this world, all I'm doing is going to another one, which is better because I'm leaving all this behind. I've already put my order in. I said, "Lord, I want a smaller body." I didn't have to eat with all you baseball players last night. Everybody's sitting around eating all this food. I could only eat half my sandwich. I said, "It's not fair, Lord. I don't care what You say. It is not fair." When I leave here, I'm leaving what's bad behind. I'm going to something new, but understand that while I'm here, today is my eternity. I need God's help today. I need it today, right now.

Where's your confidence? Where's the world's confidence? What are they confident in?

*Neither is there salvation in any other: for there is none other name under heaven given among men, whereby we must be saved.*

Jesus said He was the way, the truth, and the life, and no man could come unto the Father but by Him. So no, the Muslims don't get in, and the Hindus don't get in, and the Baptists who are trusting their church don't get in, and people that are trusting... Jesus is the only way. If you're sitting here this morning and you think coming to this great church, and it is a great church, is going to save you, it is not. This church can't save you. You've got to come to Jesus. Jesus will give you the confidence. My salvation is not based on me, and boy, am I glad. I am glad it's not about me.

I can fool you. I can even fool my wife, not a whole lot anymore. I can fool the people in my church. I can fool them. I can get up and preach with sin in my heart. I can. I can fool the people. Do you remember Captain Penny, Bob? He heard of him. When we were kids, there was a TV show out of Cleveland. It was Captain Penny. He ended that show every day by saying this: "You can fool some of the people some of the time. You can fool all of the people all the time. But you can't fool Mom." That was true in my house. But I tell you what, it's more true that you can't fool God. If you're trusting anything besides Jesus Christ for your salvation, anything, if you're carrying around a King James Bible and waving it and hooping and hollering, but you're not trusting Jesus, I've got to tell you folks, it isn't going to help you. It's not going to help you. The only Bible I would carry around and hoop and holler, the last time I hooped and hollered, I think I was here. But it's not saving me. Jesus is what's saving me.

## V. Confidence in God as Our Strength

Here's the third thing. Look at this in Psalms 27:1: "The Lord is the strength of my life; of whom shall I be afraid." You know what I've hated the most about getting old? I think I've gotten better looking, so I like that. I've hated getting weak. That's the best day, man, I've had in years. I don't like being weak. You'd think carrying this frame around for 68 years would make you strong. Lifting weights doesn't work, fellas. I hate to tell you, I'm lifting it all the time. It doesn't work. Getting older, you get weak. It's harder to walk. It's harder to get up. It's harder to lay down. It's harder to roll out of bed. It's harder. It's hard. I need something. I need some strength.

We've got a thing going on in our church. My son-in-law is involved in it. I think it's a cult. I told him we had a church split. They've got this health thing going on. Everybody's losing weight. I said, "We've lost half the church." Everybody's talking about it. It's a club. I'm telling you, it's a club. Now, if you're not losing weight, what's wrong with you? Give me a break. I'm just waiting because you know how diets are? They'll all be fat again. I'm not worried. Why should I go through all that and end up where I am anyhow? So they're all starving themselves and everything. Joshua, my son-in-law, Josh was talking about his journey through health, and you couldn't hear the "th" when he said it. I told him, "You better pronounce your words a little better. You need to say 'health.'" Journey through health. How did I get on that rabbit trail? I've got a guy in my church that says, "I don't mind the rabbit trail. Just shoot the stupid rabbit and get done." So, I forget about that.

Oh, getting healthy and getting strong again. I tell you the truth, I need strength. The easiest thing I do in life is preach. To be honest, it's probably the most fun thing I do. I like to preach. I enjoy teaching. Sometimes I get weary. I get tired. I never used to get tired. I get tired now. I find myself having to take naps, Sunday afternoon naps. I know I've been reading my Bible a long time. It's in there. It's got to be in there somewhere.

When I would come home from church when I was a kid, and my mom and dad said, "We're going to take a nap," I'd say, "I don't think so. The basketball hoop's out there. Baseball is out there." I'd go out and play. "No, you're going to take a nap." And I hated it. We had to lay down. "How long do I have to stay in bed?" "You have to stay in bed 20 minutes, 20 minutes." So you lay in bed and you throw the ball, waiting for that 20 minutes to come up. They're knocked out.

They're sound asleep. I could never understand that. Boy, I get it now. Sunday is over. Everybody's in our church standing around hugging and kissing. I'm saying, "Somebody lock up. I'm going home to lay down." "What are you going to have for dinner?" "I don't know. I'll figure it out when I get up." Life is hard work.

*Truly my soul waiteth upon God: from him cometh my salvation.*

*He only is my rock and my salvation; he is my defence; I shall not be greatly moved.*

In our town, they call me King James. That's pretty good, actually. My name's Jim. They call me King James. I'm the separatist in town. I don't do anything with anybody else. I think I'm the only one that's right. I have all these things that, you know, you live in a little town. They don't have anything else to talk about. I just don't look. If you don't like what Bible I use, go use yours. What do I care? It's no skin off my nose. If we get to heaven, that's your problem.

You don't like the way I preach? One guy came in. He's on a sabbatical. I never got one of those. He takes a six-week sabbatical every two years. He's an EV-free pastor. He goes and visits all the churches. So he came into our church and he said, "Holy mackerel! You're worse than the Pentecostals!" I said, "What are you talking about?" He said, "You're here two hours, two hours in church!" That's somehow, that's... What is a normal movie run in a movie theater? About two hours, right? They don't complain about that. What's the big deal about two hours? If we were smart, we'd be in church all the time. I think you guys are sort of like us. We usually are.

I tell them my defense is the Lord. I don't defend anything. I don't defend what I believe. I got over the argument thing years ago. I don't debate with anybody about it. I don't argue about it. I don't need to defend it. I believe it. You don't believe it? Fine. Go away. I believe it. He is my defense.

*For when we were yet without strength, in due time Christ died for the ungodly.*

*For scarcely for a righteous man will one die: yet peradventure for a good man some would even dare to die.*

*But God commendeth his love toward us, in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us.*

*Much more then, being now justified by his blood, we shall be saved from wrath through him.*

*For if, when we were enemies, we were reconciled to God by the death of his Son, much more, being reconciled, we shall be saved by his life.*

That's us. When you and I got saved, we were without strength. I got saved in 1958. I was eight years old. I was without strength. Had no strength. Then he goes on to say in verse 7, "For scarcely for a righteous man will one die." We ought to thank God that we were ungodly. Poor people that don't think they're sinners can't get saved. You've got to be a sinner to get saved. If you're not a sinner, you can't go. I tell people all the time, "Listen, you want to go to heaven? You better find out, figure out you're a sinner because only sinners get to go. Good people don't get to go. Good people go to hell. Sinners go to heaven."

"For scarcely for a righteous man will one die. Yet peradventure for a good man some would even dare to die. But God commended his love toward us, in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us." Not after we got better. We were sick. We were without health.

I had my open heart surgery, I don't know, six or seven years ago? I don't remember. The doctor came in, and Kathy and Beth, my daughter Beth, were there. I was in intensive care, and they didn't really know what was going on. He said, "You've got two spots on your pancreas. We think it might be pancreatic cancer." And then walked out. My daughter just buried her sister-in-law a year and a half ago with cancer. We're standing there. They're standing there. I'm laying in intensive care in the bed. And I said, "Let's just pray." Who knows? "Let's just pray." And boy, I prayed. I'm sure they thought, "Boy, Dad is strong." And on the side, I'm saying, "God, are You kidding me?" He's the strength. No pancreatic cancer. A couple of stones in my something. That's all it was. The truth of the matter is, folks, you're going to go through stuff. Don't be surprised about it.

*And lest I should be exalted above measure through the abundance of the revelations, there was given to me a thorn in the flesh, the messenger of Satan to buffet me, lest I should be exalted above measure.*

*For this thing I besought the Lord thrice, that it might depart from me.*

*And he said unto me, My grace is sufficient for thee: for my strength is made perfect in weakness. Most gladly therefore will I rather glory in my infirmities, that the power of Christ may rest upon me.*

Paul said, "You know what? Boy, God's given me some good stuff. He's given me revelation. He didn't give Peter as many as He gave me. Andrew didn't get any. Stephen didn't, well, Stephen got stoned, big deal. He didn't get the revelations." He says, "Because of," basically he's saying, "lest I should lift myself up because I've gotten all these revelations, God sent a thorn to my life." Next time you start thinking you're pretty good, look out.

Do you ever have a stone in your shoe? I'll tell you what's even worse than a stone in your shoe: if you have dentures. Well, I do. What are you all excited about? Let me tell you something. You get a little crumb under that denture down there, you think the world's coming to an end. You start sitting at the restaurant doing this. It doesn't take much, does it? A little pebble in the shoe doesn't take much. In life, it doesn't take much. Paul said, "God sent a thorn to my flesh." He said, "Three times I asked Him, 'Take this away. Please, Lord, take this away.'" And He said, "My grace is sufficient."

I'm going to tell you something, folks, that's easier to preach than it is to live, but it is true nonetheless. In life, we're going to face some difficulties and challenges. Sometimes it's going to be health issues. Sometimes it's going to be personal issues. Sometimes it's going to be problems. Sometimes it's going to be money. It's going to be something. Maybe we will have a war. Maybe the economy will fall apart, and we'll go into a depression again. I don't know, but there's always going to be something that's going to happen. God's grace is always sufficient. It's always sufficient.

*Thou therefore, my son, be strong in the grace that is in Christ Jesus.*

We try to be strong in the flesh that sin has given us, but we should be strong in the grace that is in Christ Jesus. "And the things that thou hast heard of me among many witnesses, the same commit thou to faithful men." You know what your preacher's life goal has been? To give it to other people so they can give it to other people. This business, we grew up in a generation where everything was about how many people can you cram in a building? How much money are the offerings? How many did you baptize? Every time I went back to Ohio, they didn't know what to say. I had a church of 40 or 50 for a long time, so they said, "Boy, Jim is being faithful." They didn't know what else to say. I thought that was pretty good. I just don't think they meant it. They just didn't know what else to say.

You know what I found out? I found out that my job wasn't to build a big church. My job was to give to faithful men so that they could give to others. That's why we've got four preachers out of our church, so they can give it to others. That's your pastor's job. That's Bob's job. And that's what he's doing here. I don't know if you know how fortunate you are. Let me remind you, "To whomsoever much is given, much shall be required." Most churches are the same, and there might be some people who think, "Well, he's not that hot." Yeah, he is. He got it from me. No, he didn't.

Our strength to endure comes from the grace of Jesus Christ.

*I can do all things through Christ which strengtheneth me.*

I used to say, "The things, Paul said, the things I can do all things through Christ which strengthens me." I used to say it's the things that gave you strength. There's truth in that, as long as we emphasize this: it's through Jesus Christ that we get the victory. The things don't make you strong. The grace of Jesus Christ makes you strong to go through those things that you have.

I don't know what anybody's going through in this church. I have no idea. Bob tells me nothing, which is fine. He just says, "Go preach. I don't care what you're preaching. I don't care what you say." I think he worries. His prayer life goes up just a little bit when I come. I don't know. All of you folks are so wonderful. You come up and hug me, and I hate to be hugged, but you come up and hug me and shake my hand. "We're so glad to have you here. We're so glad to have you here." And I don't know who you are. I don't remember your names. I'm 68 years old. It's been a year and a half since I've been here. I don't know who you are. Not entirely true, but kind of true.

I don't know anything about you, but I know this: in this room, there's a smile on somebody's face and a heart that's breaking inside. I know in this place there's a smile on somebody's face, but inside there's "What am I going to do?" going on in their heart. In this place, there's somebody that's worried about something. I want to tell you something. This is not deep theology. I don't even know deep theology. Jesus is your strength. He's your salvation.

Somebody said to me one time, "Lake, that religion of yours is a crutch." I said, "Well, when you're crippled, you need a crutch." I have no problem saying I'm crippled. I'll tell you the story. I won't do it now. Come see me afterwards. I'll tell you the story about going to Disney World with my family, and I got a rider thing. Oh, I want to buy one. I'll tell you that story later.

Religion gives you false security in the tasks that you perform. When the crisis comes, the only strength that you have then is your own, and it's what tears your heart. I've been through the battle when I relied on myself. I've been there. I laid in the hospital this time, and the first doctor came in, and Kathy and Beth, my daughter Beth, were there. I was in intensive care, and they didn't really know what was going on. He said, "You've got two spots on your pancreas. We think it might be pancreatic cancer." And then walked out. My daughter just buried her sister-in-law a year and a half ago with cancer. We're standing there. They're standing there. I'm laying in intensive care in the bed. And I said, "Let's just pray." Who knows? "Let's just pray." And boy, I prayed. I'm sure they thought, "Boy, Dad is strong." And on the side, I'm saying, "God, are You kidding me?" He's the strength. No pancreatic cancer. A couple of stones in my something. That's all it was. The truth of the matter is, folks, you're going to go through stuff. Don't be surprised about it. I can do all things through Christ. That strength is something we're sharing.

I heard a preacher say one time, "I don't share the gospel. I preach the gospel." It sounds so pious. I said, "Well, my mother taught me to share." So what do we have confidence in?

## VI. Confident Anticipation of Christ's Presence

We have a confident anticipation. Turn your Bibles to 2 Corinthians chapter 5. I dropped down to verse 6 through 8.

*Therefore we are always confident, knowing that, whilst we are at home in the body, we are absent from the Lord:*

*(For we walk by faith, not by sight:)*

*We are confident, I say, and willing rather to be absent from the body, and to be present with the Lord.*

So what do you mean, "to be present with the Lord, absent from the Lord"? Didn't you and I get saved? And as soon as we got saved, Jesus said He would never leave us nor forsake us. Of course, He did, but He is not here. Haven't you wanted to sit down face to face and ask Him some things? Man, I have. We had a lady we buried last summer, a really great saint of God. I was sitting with her, and I said, "Boy, it won't be long, you'll be holding His hand, or you'll be seeing His face." She said, "I want to hold His hand." And I thought, "Man, oh man," and she's laying there taking her... it wasn't her last breath. It was a day or two before she died. "I can't wait to see Him," because we don't get to see Him right now. We don't get to hug Him. I'm going to be hugged when I see Him. We don't get to hug Him.

So we're obviously physically absent from Him. But the Bible says here, "We walk by faith, not by sight." My confidence doesn't come from what I see. Everybody's confidence is in what they see. My confidence isn't in what I see. My confidence is in my faith. So what do I have faith in? I have faith in the absolute truth of the Word of God. I believe it is absolutely true. Every single word, every word. I have no doubts. I can't explain it all. I can't understand it all, but I believe it all. I believe it all. So I walk by faith, not by sight. My confidence is in the Word of God, what it

told me about the Son of God, who I then trusted, who then became my salvation and my strength. So I am confident.

Paul wasn't giving up on life when he said, "I would rather be absent from the body and to be present with the Lord." What he was saying is that what we're learning here is that we are confident no matter where we are. He said, "I'm not going to change my circumstances." While I'm here, I'm in this place, I'm absent from the Lord, but I'm confident. And if I'm dead, if this body ceases to exist, then I'm with the Lord, and I'm confident in that. Don't change. Don't worry about your circumstances. Quit spending so much time trying to get God to change your circumstances. We try to convince God that what we think is the right thing to do. What we have to do is have confidence in Him.

When you go through the valley, and He doesn't always do what you want Him to do. We prayed for Sarah. We had a special prayer meeting for Sarah. We asked God to touch her body. We asked God to heal her. He didn't do that. He didn't change her circumstances. But we had to be confident that whether she was there, she would be absent, or if she was in heaven, that's the confidence. We rejoice. Did we miss her? Yeah, we miss her a lot. I don't miss her like her husband does. I sure don't miss her like her little girls do. We asked God to change something. He said, "No, I've got a plan. It's going to work. You be confident in that."

I could pray that I preach that after Sarah died. But now I've got to preach it with my wife. And I think, "Well, what happens if something happens to me before it happens to her? What are we going to do about this? How are we going to go here? What are we going to do there? How is this going to work? How's that going to work?" And God says, "Don't worry about the circumstances." So Kathy and I hold hands, and we're going to walk through life just the way it is. And we are confident, not in ourselves, because every day we cry. Every day we want things different. Every day something isn't the way it should be. But we walk through this life together that started 40 years ago as one flesh. And we're not confident in ourselves. We're not confident in the doctors. We're not confident in the medicine. Yes, she goes to the doctor. And yes, she takes her medicine. But that's not where our confidence is. Our confidence is in Him.

*Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? shall tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or peril, or sword?*

*As it is written, For thy sake we are killed all the day long; we are accounted as sheep for the slaughter.*

*Nay, in all these things we are more than conquerors through him that loved us.*

*For I am persuaded, that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor powers, nor things present, nor things to come,*

*Nor height, nor depth, nor any other creature, shall be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord.*

He is our confidence. Yeah, I have great confidence. What about the Muslims? Do they have any confidence? What about the Hindus? Do they have any confidence? What about the unsaved?

What about the religious? They don't have any confidence. Their confidence is in them, and they know about them like we know about us.

## VII. Confident Trust in God's Work

We have a confident anticipation. We also have a confident trust. Trust is interesting. A lack of trust makes something or someone seem immobile. Do you ever go to step on something? Sitting on something always makes me wonder, "Should I do it or not?" No, I don't think so. If you see those glass bridges, it's like, "There's no way I'm going out on one of those suckers. I have nothing to prove to nobody. I'm not going out there. I don't care how thick it is, not going." Trust, if you don't trust something, you become immobile.

Back in 1929, the banks failed. People were jumping out of buildings. You know what's really comforting? They do not have any money. Then if it fails, this is no big deal. Welcome to my world. But 10,000 banks failed, and everybody that had their money in those banks lost their money. They had to run. They were beating on the doors. The banks, they locked the doors. There was no money. In 1933, FDR became president, and the first thing he did was declare a bank holiday. All the banks were shut for two days. In those two days, they somehow restored confidence in the banks, and they started that FDIC thing. You see that? When you go to the bank, your money is insured. I always wonder about that. For \$200,000. I said, "Good. I only got 100 bucks in the bank, so that sounds good to me." If it's insured for \$200,000, that's a pretty good life insurance policy. Well, if there's no money, how's the bank going to pay me? But people got trust in the bank. You and I have bank accounts.

I'll tell you who didn't have a bank account: my grandmother. She never went to a bank again. When she died, we were going through her apartment, and we were taking pictures off the walls. There's \$500. Got in the cupboard and taking a dish, and there's \$1,000 stuck back there. I said, "How come I didn't get any of that money?" I'm getting it now. She had money all over that apartment. She had no trust in a bank, no trust. What do you trust?

Trust is important. It's vital in a relationship. You've got to trust the one you're married to. That's true with our relationship with God. Why do you think it's any different with our relationship with God? If a successful marriage, and we've had a successful marriage so far, and we've had some ups and downs. You don't know what I've had to put up with for 40 years. We've had our ups and downs. The trust is, the confidence is, the success is that we have trusted each other. We trust each other. Trust is important in a relationship. It should be that you trust God too.

*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:*

Why am I confident? I have a confident anticipation. If I'm here, okay. If I'm gone, even better. I have a confident trust. What do I have to worry about? If God's Word is true, it's true. And I believe it's true. Somebody said, "Well, you're nuts." I said, "I may be nuts, but I'm screwed on the right bolt." Amen. "Being confident of this very thing, he which hath begun a good work in you will perform it until the day of Jesus Christ."

## VIII. Confident Expectation of Christ's Return

I'm just about done. We have confidence in His appearing. I know preachers have been preaching this for 2,000 years. He could come today. He might come tomorrow. When we were kids, we heard messages. One time at camp, I was preaching at a junior camp at our camp, and I had a guy behind the thing that blew a trumpet just at the right time. Scared those little kids to death. We talk about it all the time, but honestly, when was the last time you thought it was going to happen? When was the last time you went to bed and said, "Man, maybe it'll be tonight"?

*And now, little children, abide in him; that, when he shall appear, we may have confidence, and not be ashamed before him at his coming.*

Evangelization in every way looks like egotism. You pass a tract to somebody, you're saying, "Here's the way that I'm going. And this is the right way." If you witness to a friend of yours or someone, a family member or something, it's like saying, "Look, I know this is right." It looks like egotism, but it's not egotism. It's confidence. We're so confident that we use just about every means possible. Pastor Bob said something about YouTube. Who would have thought 30 years ago about somebody watching this church on YouTube? I still don't understand it. So if you're on YouTube, if you're watching me on YouTube, I don't get it. We're sitting with Kathy's aunt and uncle, and we FaceTimed my grandkids so they could see my grandkids. Who would ever have thought that 30 years ago? That was stuff for the Jetsons. They had the talking phones back then. Do you remember the Jetsons?

Not every preacher who stood by the pulpit was worth his salt, but God's had some good preachers. Not every missionary that went to a foreign field was worth their salt. But you know what? He's had some good missionaries. Paul referred to them as evangelists. That's what they were. That's what evangelists were. They went somewhere, preached in a place, started a church, trained leaders, and then went somewhere else. That's what real evangelism is. Evangelists today, whatever. Not everybody who's ever passed a tract was worth his salt. But there are faithful people that pass tracts. Today's technologies aren't exactly... you can do a lot of bad stuff with this technology. But God uses it. Why? Why do we employ all those things? Because we're confident.

Jesus said, "I have come that they might have life, that they might have it more abundantly." Let me encourage you. This hasn't been a salvation message. I know, and I've said this to my church, I know God lays things on your heart. I've had some things laid on my heart in the last two, three years, and my messages have reflected that. Because I know there's somebody else that's going to go through what we're going through. And I want them to know God may or may not change your circumstance, but He is who you can be confident in. Be confident in Him.

## IX. Concluding Prayer

Let's pray. Father, we thank You for the fact that You are our confidence. Lord, the Word of God that You've given us and the church that You've provided for us, and through the preaching and principles and things that You have given us as Your children, build that confidence. Lord, we

know that confidence doesn't just happen. It has to be built and built on the principles and the foundation of the Word of God as it instills itself in our lives. I thank You for the message today. I thank You for Jim. He always comes, and he always preaches. He always is sensitive to where we're at and the message that You have through him to us. I pray, Father, today that You'll let us take to heart what he has said. This church will only be as strong and they'll only get the job done as the strong, confident people that are in it. Lord, we've got our share, and I thank God for them. But Lord, so many of us just struggle with the mundane things of life. So hold us back from being everything that God wants us to be. Help us, Lord. Help us to put the confidence in You and no confidence in our flesh. We'll thank You again for what You've given us today. May we go our way today and think about those things. Lord, if there be someone here that doesn't have that fundamental confidence of salvation, may even today be the day that they would come and speak with me, and we could take a Bible and open it up and show them how to know for sure that their confidence can be in the greatest book that the world has ever seen and Your death on the cross and Your saving grace through Your blood. We'll thank You now and praise You in Jesus' name. Amen.