

I. Recap of Last Week's Message

Last week, we looked at four verses that formed a great message for all of us that we needed to hear. I always like to do a quick recap because all of these lessons slide together. Verse 17 last week was talking about doing violence to the blood of any person. Historically, I took you back to Numbers 35, Genesis 9:6, and Exodus 20, and I explained how it was talking about, under the law, someone murdering someone. We went through the whole aspect of that, and I defined it all for you in the historical context out of Numbers 35, which is the key chapter on it.

Then I showed you inspirationally that it is a great picture of the principle found in 1 John 3:15. The Lord tells us that when we as Christians have hatred in our heart for somebody, or hate a brother or a sister in Christ, or another Christian, that in God's heart and mind, you have committed murder. You murdered them. That is a great unknown principle today that is a powerful thing. Of course, it all goes back to a hardened heart, someone that will not forgive someone, someone that wants to hold a grudge against someone.

It is a great truth that God never just judges our actions. We get the idea that if our actions are seemingly good, that it is okay. God never really judges the actions. A great principle is that He judges the attitude that produced that action. The action can be honorable, but the attitude could have an ulterior motive. This is why, way back in the beginning of Proverbs 4:23, it talked about the importance of keeping my heart with all diligence, because out of it come the issues of life.

I did not tell you this last week because I was saving it for blending into this week, but I heard a guy preach a message on verse 17 a long time ago. The first thing he did was obviously make his case historically, which is what you want to do. Then you want to move from that into the inspirational, and he applied it then to us. He said, and I thought it was a great message, that when you hate another Christian, another brother in Christ, and you harden your heart toward them, will not forgive them, and you have an issue with them in your heart and literally hate them, that verse there that says when you do violence to the blood of any person, it is not talking about, in the New Testament anyhow, the person in particular, but in reference to the blood of Christ that covered that person's sins and covered your sins. When you hate someone in your heart, or you have a hard heart toward them, when you do violence to the blood, it is not them. It is the blood of Christ that covers them. I cannot hate you because I have to look through Christ to see you. So if I hate you, then I hate Christ. That is the way it works. It is totally foreign today. That is why so many of God's people get into the mess they get into, get a hardened heart, get an attitude about somebody. The truth of the matter is, whoever it is, if it is another brother and sister in Christ, that is why God gave us a process to fix it, because if you do not, the violence that you do is against the blood of Christ, not that person. It was a very interesting message. It hurts the cause of Christ. It was a great message, and I never forgot it. I have those little notes in along that verse there.

Then we defined in verse 17, he talked about a pit. We saw that from an unsaved man's perspective, that would be hell, the bottomless pit, Revelation 20. But I took you over to Isaiah 38:17 and showed you from a saved man's perspective, it is a pit of corruption. Falling into a pit that you cannot get out of as a Christian, you just get worse and worse, all because you forsake the basic fundamental principles of every Christian in their life of what they should be. As we get worse and worse, our heart gets more hardened to the things of God.

When it comes to the church, God's people, there are a lot of different aspects that the church does. But if you wanted to boil it down to what the church does, not only with unsaved people, but also with saved people, there are two fundamental things:

1. Forgiveness, because an unsaved person needs to be forgiven.
2. Restoration. An unsaved person needs to be forgiven in Christ, but then he needs to be restored to the image back to God that he can have fellowship.

In a saved sense, it is the same thing. People are not always going to act the way you want them to act. They are not always going to be. Sometimes they are going to do things that rub you the wrong way, things that are wrong to you. But at the end of the day, no matter what it may be, those two principles not only apply to an unsaved person, but to a saved person: the aspect of forgiving and the aspect of restoration. You simply cannot get around those. You can put everything else in your life in place and have those two out of whack, and you have lost the fundamentals of the Christian faith.

We, as God's people, are forever famous for one thing, and we all like to do this: to pick and choose what part of the Bible we want to put into our lives and what part we do not want in our lives. It is an incredible thing. I had a guy one time, he was upset about the fact that we were, after whatever we were doing, going to a little taco place over here and having tacos, but it was a place that sold alcohol. He and his wife came in, and they just thought that was the most terrible thing on the planet, that you would violate the scriptures by going into a place that sold alcohol to eat tacos. He did not quite get the fact that if that is the case, if you are going to run with that, then you cannot ever go get gas because most gas stations sell beer. You cannot go to any restaurant because they all sell liquor. But that was not the best of it. About four or five years later, he went out to do his own thing. Here is a guy that was so concerned about eating tacos in a place because of the biblical principles, but he went out and started a church. He just threw every principle away of how to do it.

We all like to pick and choose what we want to do. That is just human nature. What everybody has to work at is applying all the Bible into your life, not just the parts that you like. If there is one problem that God's people have, it is that simple problem. I had another guy one time, he is big on all these things with the Bible and churches and all this stuff, and wants to lay out the Bible. He is a stickler on all the doctrines of the Bible, and he would fight for them, which is a good thing. But when it came to establishing his own ministry, he threw out the principles that talked about whatever ministry you have needs to be under the authority of a New Testament local church. He just goes and does his own thing. We take what we want in the Bible that we

want to stand for, but the things in the Bible that we do not really like and do not want to change about us, we take what we want and leave the rest. You cannot do that.

In dealing with people, I always ask people this: if you have an issue with somebody or a problem, how do you find out if you are right or wrong? If you were counseling somebody with the same problem, would you give them the advice from the Bible that you are following in dealing with them? That will kill you. That is why I always remind myself of that. Again, it simply comes down to the importance of all of us getting God's mind, that we look at things the way that He does. We are okay with the things that fit into our agenda, but not okay with what we do not want to totally put into our lives because the Bible is very clear on it. As a child of God, we never have that option. I am sorry, we have a lot of options under grace, but I want to tell you one we do not have: not doing what is right is not one of them. We have a lot of options under grace, and praise the Lord for it. I am glad we are not under the law. I would not have anybody to preach to this morning. I would be dead. If you did make it here, there would be nobody to preach to you because I would be dead. We have a lot of options under grace, but I will tell you one option we never have, and that is not to do what is right in any given situation.

I must say that that is the blessing in any church. That is the blessing and the benefit of a good, solid, biblical preaching platform in any church that really believes and teaches the Bible. That is just right down the line with the Bible, that you cannot move left or right on it. It will keep us accountable to the truth and open up to the place that we have to be everything that God wants us to be. That is the way God intended it to be. Many pastors today will only preach that which will not offend their congregation. You see it all the time. They do not want to make their people mad. They are afraid their people will get mad and leave. So they will tiptoe around in their preaching. They will not preach hard. Probably in most churches today, Baptist churches, certainly in the evangelical mess, you have not heard a good message on hell in 25, 30 years. Nobody is going to preach on sin. We are going to sidestep the issues because we will talk about the love of God, the grace of God, how great we all are, how wonderful we are. We will take the psalm, "How Great Thou Art" of God, and change it to how great we are. But when it comes down to really preaching a book where we really need it, they are not going to do it. That will never work, nor will it ever honor God.

I have one thought when it comes to preaching or dealing with people or whatever the case may be, and I settled this a long time ago. It is found in Romans 3:4:

Romans 3:4

Let God be true, but every man a liar; as it is written, That thou mightest be justified in thy sayings, and mightest overcome when thou art judged.

The book is the book. It says what it says. If you think I like everything it says, I do not. But I do not have that option. You just preach the Word of God. Paul said it in season or out of season. You let the chips fall where they may, whether it is convenient or not convenient. Truth is truth.

Then we saw in verse 18 the importance of walking uprightly before the Lord. As I told you last week, that is the key to it all. There is a bitter lesson in life that when we will not surrender

everything of ourselves to the Lord, we want to hold those things that we want to keep. It is a bitter lesson that whatever we are not willing to fix in time will find its way back to our family and to our kids. It is just as true as I am standing up here for you.

One of the greatest studies you ought to take in the Bible sometime is found in Leviticus 13. It is one of the single greatest studies in the Bible, and it is a great chapter on leprosy. Leprosy in the Bible is a picture of sin in our lives today. It came into being in a person's life because of great uncleanness. When you and I get unclean before God, we get sin in our lives. That sin in Leviticus 13, leprosy in 13, is a picture of our sin today. It is one of the most profound things that you could ever find in the Bible about you and me because there are three stages of leprosy, and it matches the three stages of sin in our lives that we go through.

3. The first stage of leprosy is a leprosy that gets in your flesh. That will be a picture when you begin to get out of fellowship with God, and it begins to affect you in your personal life. You start to walk away from God, and no longer are you walking uprightly.
4. Then there is a leprosy that gets into your clothes. That is where once it moves into your flesh, it becomes part of your lifestyle. Now it gets into your clothes. You dress like the world. You talk like the world. You look like the world. You smell like the world. You think like the world.
5. Then there is a third leprosy, and that is a leprosy that not only gets into your flesh, it gets into your clothes, but there is a leprosy now that gets into your house. That will be your sin, not being taken care of, your inability to forgive and forget, your inability to move on and get past things, not only will affect you, but it will work its way right back down into your home. Incredible chapter.

Verse 19, sowing the seed, we saw the Word of God in your heart, and then tilling the ground to get all the bread out of it you can. We talked about that that is what our church is really all about: giving you the Word of God, putting it out to you, but then helping you cultivate it, giving you the Word of God, but helping you dig it out and develop your own life with what we give you. We are a family here. All we have is each other. We have to help each other. We have to take care of each other. We have to bear each other's burdens. In Romans 14, it says, "Are you spiritual? Do you want to be spiritual? Are you really spiritual this morning?"

Romans 14:1

Him that is weak in the faith receive ye, but not to doubtful disputations.

He that is spiritual ought to bear the infirmities of the weak. How spiritual are you? That is just the way it works.

Then we saw verse 20, the faithful man abounding in the blessings of God. After three or four weeks and seeing all the verses pulled together, we have now seen a very simple formula:

- You get saved, and from that salvation, you build your fellowship.
- From that fellowship with Christ comes your joy.
- From that joy, based on the biblical fellowship, comes your happiness.
- That comes your contentment, and that equals your faithfulness.

- Now you have the blessings of God in your life, no matter what it may be.

I gave you a great verse last week in Matthew 25:21. It is one of my verses that all my life is, "If you are faithful in the little thing, God will make you rule over the many." Our lives, we have big problems in our lives, and some of God's people do today. If we have major huge problems in our world today, where did it start? It all started with just little things. It is just the little things.

II. Respect of Persons

Today, having that, we want to see how we can pull this all together. We will see a few more verses and in time develop, as we have seen the last couple of weeks, and try to put it into an understandable format as we sew all this together. This chapter has been an ongoing chapter, Proverbs 28. So I want to read for you today, verses 21, 22, and 23. Here is what it says:

Proverbs 28:21-23

To have respect of persons is not good: for for a piece of bread that man will transgress.

He that hasteth to be rich hath an evil eye, and considereth not that poverty shall come upon him.

He that rebuketh a man afterward shall find more favour than he that flattereth with the tongue.

Now, verse 21 says, "To have respect of persons is not good: for for a piece of bread that man will transgress." This verse alone is one of the most powerful, yet one of the most damaging verses in all the Bible dealing with pastors and churches and people today. Along with this verse here in Proverbs, we have the New Testament principles that will support this verse as a great New Testament context in the church age. To start out, we just go over to Romans 2. You do not have to really turn to it; write it down, I will read them for you.

In Romans 2:11, it says:

Romans 2:11

For there is no respect of persons with God.

God does not have a social class. God does not have a pecking order. God does not have a ladder-climbing Christianity.

In James 2:9, it gets better as we go on down through here. It says:

James 2:9

But if ye have respect to persons, ye commit sin, and are convinced of the law as transgressors.

Of course, that law would go back to Proverbs 28 where we are at.

Then we want to add Galatians 1:10 to it. Paul speaking here, he says:

Galatians 1:10

For do I now persuade men, or God? or do I seek to please men? for if I yet pleased men, I should not be the servant of Christ.

He is simply saying if you seek in your life, in your ministry, to please men, and you seek to do it and make and persuade men for your own benefit, then you do not need to be a servant of Christ.

Then, of course, the icing on the cake is in Colossians 3:25. It says:

Colossians 3:25

But he that doeth wrong shall receive for the wrong which he hath done: and there is no respect of persons.

What a verse. It does not matter how much money you have, it does not matter who you are or who you think you are. If it is wrong, it is wrong. When a man, when a pulpit tries to please man instead of, and persuade man instead of God, then in God's mind he is not even His servant.

I have seen in all my years in the ministry, and I grew up through the system, I have seen this clear violation of scripture all my years, even all my years and everything that I have done. I have seen it in churches, I have seen it with pastors. I have seen these guys cater to the rich and the famous and care absolutely nothing for the common, ordinary people. It is one of those things where I have just seen it. Back in the day, I remember staff meetings on Monday morning and the excitement with a pastor and all the other little wannabes in there because a federal judge and his family came to church on Sunday, and we might have a chance to have Judge So-and-so join our church. Wow, would that make our church great? Oh yes, Judge So-and-so come to our church. I have seen it when a rich, corporate executive showed up on Sunday. Everybody was so excited. Some filthy rich owner of a company.

I remember one time there was an evangelist that was about as phony as any three-dollar bill you ever could have. He started out with Youth for Christ, then he broke from Youth for Christ, he worked them for all that he could get. Then he broke out of Youth for Christ and he started working the Baptist circles, and he sucked everything out of them that he could get. When he got everything out of that, then he switched gears and went to the Charismatic, and he worked them as long as he could. When he worked everybody, he started his own church over here in Kansas, ripped everybody off over there, got everybody involved, threw them out of there. Now he is someplace else doing what he does best, which is his spiritual gift: ripping people off. It was a funny thing. I remember back in the day when he was working the Baptist crowd that he joined the church that I was associated with at that point because as he got up that night and told, in front of everybody, the pastor had him up, "Well, Brother So-and-so, come up and close in prayer. We have So-and-so, a great evangelist who is just preaching all around the country, and he is here today in our church tonight and in our service, and when he is not on the road, he is in church, and here he is. Would you close out in prayer?" He came up, and this guy had a 40-weight oil voice. It was as smooth as you could ever want, much different than mine. I sound like two broken gears grinding together, but he was smooth and slick. He got up there, and I was sitting down in the front, and he laid the bomb, and the pastor just about, I hope he had those little undies on that soak up because he wet his pants, I guarantee you. He announced that night

that he was going to join, that this church was going to be his home church. It just erupted into a roar, and everybody, the pastor cried, wept, hugged him like the great evangelist who is winning the world to Christ is going to have my church as his home church. He had already joined two other churches and said the same thing. That is how it works.

Somebody with a lot of money or status, and you suddenly think that, "Wow, what a great addition it will be to our church, make our church something special." So they get wined and they get dined. They get called on to pray. I have seen them put in positions of being a deacon when I had a dog that would be a better deacon. I have seen them put in charge of finance committees because the idea being, "Well, if he can be a corporate success and make all this money, putting him in charge of our finances here will really..." It does not work that way. I have seen them put on building committees. I have seen them put on every committee to kind of draw them in, to get them to stay, to make them feel important. Any place of prominence within the church to exalt them so they will be part of your church. Believe me, folks, politics are not always found just within the world of Democrats and Republicans. I watched this all my ministry, and I saw the games that were played behind the scenes. I do not hate anybody on this planet, but there are things that I despise and hate with a passion. One of them is in Baptist churches, the system, the political system. I was part of it and seen it all my life.

You do not hear much about it anymore, but back in the day, I grew up in the BBF. The BBF was the Baptist Bible Fellowship. The Baptist Bible Fellowship actually started with the split of J. Frank Norris back in the late 40s. They split with Norris. Norris started the World Baptist Fellowship down in Texas, and a bunch of his followers under a guy by the name of Beech and Vic started in Springfield, Missouri, the Baptist Bible Fellowship. Back in the day when Baptist churches ruled the roost and they were going to town, they all were connected with the BBF. Most people do not have an understanding of how it all worked back then. There were no evangelical churches then. There were a few Bible churches around. Something like today, the guys at Hall of the Mail were the Baptists, and they were out of Springfield, Missouri. The greatest names that you would ever hear about preachers were all connected with that because most of them were J. Frank Norris' boys that left. It is all gone now.

But I remember as the thing went on and on, and they started to start other fellowships. You had East Side and West Side, and you had Jerry Hammond, Indiana, there with Jack Hyles and West Pacific Coast. Everybody then began to break into a little fellowship. Nothing more than a little political organization hiding under the auspices of a Bible. I grew up working for pastors, knowing pastors that were on the inside of that, where all the little guys out there would go down to Springfield every May for fellowship week, and there would be 3,000 people down there packed up with every pastor, every big name guy you could think of that was connected. It was nothing more than a handshaking, hobnob, and just get to know this, and "I am looking for a job, and can you give me one?" It was all political. It is where they invited, they voted for the president every year of the fellowship, kind of like the Pope for Baptists.

I remember I was driving back and forth with a pastor that I was working for at that time who was really dialed in down there. We would talk back and forth, and he would tell me how there were two pastors that were wanting to be the president. He was not one of them, but there were

two guys that were. These guys were doing what all politicians do: calling all of their pastor friends and trying to get their vote because that is how they got voted in. He was laughing about it because this one guy nobody wanted, but he was calling all of his Baptist buddies, and they all were saying, "Yeah, we are going to vote for you." But underneath the table, nobody was going to vote for him, and it was all a sham. Then they got the guts to get up there on that last night and thank God for His guiding movement through all this to pick a leader for the next year. Ridiculous. The most corrupt system on the planet. But that is the way it works.

I remember when First Baptist of Raytown lost their pastor, and everything was in disarray for a long time, and they were running probably three or four thousand people. There was another guy out in Lee's Summit that had a church, and he probably was running six or seven, eight hundred people. This is how it works. One of the head guys from First Baptist went out and met with the pastor from this church. Here is what he says: "I have a thousand people following me right now to do whatever I want them to do." I thought when I heard that, I must be mistaken. I thought that was the job of the Holy Spirit of God. Guess not. He said, "I will tell you what. I will double your attendance. I will bring a thousand people into your church overnight if you will give me a job as a pastor on this staff and guarantee me this much money, and I will do it." They bought it. They did it. Overnight, this was the fastest growing church in the history of Christianity. It went from 800 to 2,000 to 1,800 Friday night to Sunday. Why? Because a political move was made. Yet we will get up on the pulpit and thank God for that. We will pretend that God had something to do with that. We will pretend that that is the way it works.

III. Three Truths About Building a Church

Watching that through all of the years, I have learned three great truths.

6. The first truth I have learned is rich people never build anything, especially not churches. Their money will always be, 99% of the time, it will always come with strings attached. They will pay for this, they will do that, but because they are putting their money into it, they want control of it. They have bought their way through everything in life, and now they think that they can buy their way through any church they go into. It is just a mindset that they live in. There are always strings attached. It is never going to be, "Take this for the glory of God." It is always, "Take this for the glory of me." "Name this chapel after me." "Name the first five benches in the pews after my mother." "Name the restroom after my uncle." We never really liked him much.
7. The second thing I learned was about elite people. Elite people do not build anything either. They think they are better than most people and are above the nasty, dirty jobs of ministry that sometimes have to be done. Elite people do not want to get their hands dirty. They do not want to get down in the mud and the blood. To them, they will pick and choose what they want to do that is worthy of their status. Absolutely worthless. The apostles fell into this category back there in Matthew 19. I do not know if you remember that story or not, but one time they brought some little kids to the apostles, and the little kids wanted to see Jesus. The apostles would not bring them to Jesus because little kids get dirty. They get hands dirty. They want to go see Jesus. Well, the apostles by this time, you have to understand, they were

in the ministry of the Lord. They had already ordered their big bus they were going to travel through the Middle East then. They had painted on the side, "Disciples for Jesus." They all had uniform robes that they wore that had rank bars on them. When these little kids came up and wanted to see Jesus, they would not allow them to go see Jesus because they were not important enough. They were working on the big-time people that were going to give them some credibility and stuff. Jesus said, "Suffer the little kids to come unto me." Then he added to it another place, "Except you come to me as a little child, you have no part of me." Have you ever met a child that was a millionaire? A court executive? You see, when you want to get anything from God, you have to come as a child. You have to leave your education, your money, your mindset, your status in the backseat of the car. You come just like a little kid.

8. I will tell you the third thing that I learned, and this is certainly the most important: churches are built by men and women who are just common people. Men and women, families who have to deal with bills and mortgages and car payments and medical bills for the kids. I am telling you what, for everybody who wrote about Martin Luther and George Whitefield, and for every book that was written about Jonathan Edwards and Bob Jones Sr., or some other famous preacher, there are 100,000 little guys out there that nobody ever knew their name and wrote nothing about that did the work of God. You see, when you are in that position as a common man, that is where you really learn what faith is all about. That is where you learn the meaning of sacrifice. When you have to look at your family and decide, "Are you going to do this or are you going to do that?" That is what is the premise to teach you and show you in Christianity. It is the same way. The same plan was a common Bible. They are under no illusion who they are and their struggles.

It probably still comes out, but there used to be a goofy magazine put out by Bob Jones University called Faith Magazine. It was for Christians, and everybody would get it. I always used to look at that, and I never read one in my life. You know why? I did not have to, because I knew a magazine called Faith Magazine that was put out by men and women who lived on tax-free property, that never had to fix a busted toilet or change a light bulb. They had a maintenance crew do it. They never had to mow their lawn. They never had to fix their car. Never had to sweat out a house payment or a car payment. You are going to write a magazine for these common people that talks about faith? Are you kidding me? You want to learn faith, just go through life as an individual just like you are. Do not sweat out the things of life that come your way, and God uses those things to prove Himself to you. Learning to walk by faith and not by sight.

Men and women who are willing to do whatever the job that needs to be done. These men and women are the lifeblood of any church. They are what makes it work. They are what keeps it going. Because of their salvation, they thank God for everything, and they are the lifeblood of any church, and they are willing to do whatever God called them to do. But not the rich and the famous. Every time something happens, they are always paying attention in a church. They realize the importance of a church. They are like my old lieutenant when he used to go down the perimeter before nightfall. He would say, "Oh boy, ears up, eyes open." There is not a person that comes through that church, that door, that is a new person that they are not over shaking hands and finding out about. Or you brought them here, and you are finding out about them, or you see

them, and you are shaking hands and getting to know who they are. You are not sitting over here by yourself someplace or doing this or doing your own thing. Eyes open, ears up. You are seeing what is coming in that door. How many times have I got a phone call after a week or so, somebody saying, "Hey Bob, so and so just started coming to church, and I kind of hung out with them and got to know them. Is it okay if I see about they want to be discipled?" No, certainly not. They see what needs to be done. They understand what a church is all about. Not the elite. As James 2:9 says, "You have sinned and have convinced of the laws of transgression when you have respect to people."

This church or any church is built by men and women who love God and the book so much that they are so thankful for what God has given them. There is nothing that they will not do for Him. There is no job that is too dirty, no job that is too mundane. They realize that from the cleaning crew, from cleaning whatever, doing whatever, it is our church. There is a job that needs to be done. There are people walking in that door all the time who are looking for somebody, something, or they would not be here looking. We have the opportunity to meet that need.

Back in the Civil War, I remember I read this story about an old Southern boy by the name of Peter Appelman. He was a big old farm boy, about six foot ten, and he was as hard as a rock. They were in trenches, and about a hundred yards out there was a Yankee trench, and they were all over there. It was about the middle of the night, and Peter Appelman got bored. So he heard the commander talking about the need to get some prisoners, so he just on his own climbed out of that trench, snuck over there, jumped down into that hole. There were about three Union guys on picket duty. He cracked two of them and knocked them out, knocked the other guy out, threw him over his shoulder, carried him all the way back to those lines over a hundred yards, and threw him down there, and the whole place just erupted. The commanding officer came out and said, "What is going on?" Peter Appelman said, and everybody was standing around, "There is that there Yankee prisoner you wanted. There is a whole bunch of them over there. You all could have had one if you wanted one." There are all kinds of people out there with needs. You all could have one if you wanted one. But the common man sees that. He does not care what he has got to do. She does not care what she has got to do because at the end of the day, it will all lead a road back to what God wants us to do. That will be people. In ministry, you are either a people person or you are not.

If I have any success as a pastor, and I am not saying that I do, it will be because of one simple element that I have followed all my life, really two. The first one simply says that everybody that God ever gave me was important to me. I do not care who they were. It did not matter to me. Everybody in this room brings something special here. You are not all the same. Everybody has different abilities. You certainly have different gifts. My job is to make you feel as special as you really are because God brought you here. He could have put you anywhere. When I look at you, I do not walk up here and just see a crowd of people. I see individuals that in your own life, for whatever reason, God put in your heart to bring you here. That makes you special to me because it makes you special to God. Then I have to look and see what you bring into this party. I do not pick and choose who I love and who I do not. I do not have that option. I look at you, and sure, there are people that maybe do things that I do not appreciate or I would not do. I get that. I

know there are people that do dumb things, and some of you have sin in your life this morning. I get that. But I am not going to hold that against you, and I am not going to put a preset in my mind that you are a worthless person. You know why? I will tell you the biggest reason why: because I did not look too hot the first time God saw me either. But He loved me, and He loves you. The real thing is God loves the very people that some of us do not want to love.

The second thing is when I got into the ministry in 1972, I did every job, big or small, that God ever gave me to do. I understood that great principle by then of Matthew 25:21, that if I just stayed faithful in the little things, God will take it and develop it, make it the big things. That is simply what it is. In the military, it is the difference between an army officer who graduates from West Point and an enlisted man or an NCO who in the battlefield earns a battlefield commission and becomes an officer through combat. Where one thinks himself as an elite West Point, the other came up through the ranks under all the combat that he goes. One is a textbook warfare, the other one is real combat. One of them is an elite status, "I went to West Point." That is the big thing in the military. Actually, the combat guys that got their commission, they are looked at with disdain. They are not looked at in the same rank, even though they may hold the same rank. But the enlisted men know who to go to when it hits the fan. They really do. They want somebody with experience.

My job here is to build leaders with character. I want to hand out battlefield commissions. But I also know that you are not born with character. There is not something that you just get. Character has to be built into you through discipline. It has to be built into you through hard work, through structure, through sacrifice, through accountability, through a principled life. That is where you get and build character into somebody's life. You will never build character in anybody's life by picking and choosing who you like or who you do not, or who you are going to cater to or have respect to. You will build character by seeing what needs to be done and then doing it even when you necessarily do not want to do it. God will take that and bless that. You see that it needs to be done, and you do it. It is just that simple. I do not care if it is working on a cleaning crew. What a nasty job that can be. We ought to have people standing in line waiting to do that. But we do not.

I think of Jeffrey and Cheryl back there. They cannot drive. There is no greater blessing on this planet than to bring them to church on Sunday. At the jubmancy to Christ, if you did nothing the rest of your life, God would give you rewards and bless you for that because maybe you do not care about the things of God here, but you are bringing two people who really do. I am telling you, people like that are invaluable. He is out there on the street every time the street crew is out. He is out there doing it. He cannot see, has a white cane, and is just out there, a guy going out with everybody else walking five or six, seven, eight miles. He is not in a fixed point, which there is certainly nothing wrong with. He is moving up and down all the way through there. People like that in your church when we are all normal are invaluable. They are a lesson to all of us.

I think of Dale and Rachel back there, Bozy. It will always be Bozy. I do not even remember where Bozy got started. It was about 35, 40 years ago, but I affectionately call him Bozo. He went down to the mission last Sunday night. He cannot talk very well. He can hardly walk at all.

He has to use a walker. He would not be your first choice to put in a preaching scenario probably by most guys, would he? When he got up to give his testimony, you could hear a pin drop in that place. Every eye where if I got the preacher, somebody other guys can preach, fights break out. They argue with what you say. They get mad at this. They start fighting among themselves. Let me tell you something. There was not a word being said, and you could hear a pin drop when he laid out his testimony. I am telling you. By the way, I am going to have you give your testimony New Year's Eve when we have a big blowout. Bozy, I will tell you, here is a guy that drives me nuts. I will get a phone call, "Hey, Bob, when am I going to get to do something for the Lord?" I said, "Well, Bozy, we already got you set up to do some things." He says, "Yeah, I know. But is Charles going to pick me up for the mission?" I said, "Well, Bozy, this is only Monday. I am sure he probably is." He said, "Well, I just want to make sure because I want to serve my God and Savior, and I want to be used of God." I wish I would get a thousand phone calls like that a week. But do not call anymore this week, okay? And let us not forget Rachel. Rachel, there is a place in heaven for you. Miss Bozo, I am telling you. God gives us people like that. He gives us people like that to keep us honest. Here are people who the world looks at. In most churches, they would not give them a second look. Do you think a big church around this town is going to care if Jeff and Cheryl get to church? They think when they have a \$50 million sound system that they break dance on, and they can sing all kinds of music and makes your voice sound like an angel from heaven, they are going to let Bozo speak into it and take a chance on breaking it? I am telling you. God gives us people like that, and praise God for them. They are a treasure in this church because it keeps every one of us honest. One time, I am sure that both Cheryl and Jeffrey and Bozo asked themselves, or maybe they do, maybe they do not. Maybe they said it a long time ago, "Why God did I have to be this way, but I want to serve God so much? Why could not I just?" I will tell you why, because you will get more done for God the way you are than if God would have left you the way that we are. I am telling you, do not worry about it right now, kids. There is coming a day that you will be singing and dancing down those streets of heaven, and everything is going to be okay.

Do any job that God gives you to do with all the fervor that God put into death on the cross. 1 Corinthians 1 is a great chapter on all of the relationships that we have in ministry, and chapter one talks about how a pastor needs to be run with his people. He does that by going through the things with them, not making them just a number on a giving record or somebody in a file or somebody that you do not even know who they are. I remember one time Joel Osteen got up and gave honor to this guy who had died that had been a person who was a greeter and a seeder in his church for over 30 years. He said, "Faithful, everyone," on and on about this guy. Then he should have just kept his mouth shut. He said, "You know, I never had the privilege of meeting him." Yeah, that is because you are too busy up there shaking Mr. Money Banks. "How are you today? Yes, yes, yes. Well, it looks a little fat." Just a joke. I know how it goes. A leader will be the first person on the ground that will last boots off the LZ. You will never be that long as you respect people, their respect for persons. Forget the elite. Everybody on equal footing. You all get the same Bible. You all have the same opportunities. No politics involved as is laid out in the Bible. It says, "Examine yourself, know yourself, and then you prove yourself like Samuel in 1 Samuel 3, that none of the words fall to the ground." God proved him and established him like Paul in Acts 13, who had the great message of God to take to the Gentile world. What did he do? He got

in the New Testament local church and did everything that everybody else did for the church. He wrote using the models in the Bible to make people better, helping them, never hurting them, taking men and women, boys and girls, taking the raw ability, and taking many times that ability is held behind stupidity or immaturity or insecurity. But somebody has to be able to develop them into men of character and women of character.

IV. The Danger of Selling Out for "Bread"

The last part of verse 21, "for a piece of bread that man will transgress." I want you to note that this is a place in the Bible where the bread here is not talking about the Bible. It is talking about a literal piece of bread. It is simply saying that the pastor or the Christian who will respect one person over another will sell out his ministry to those people in time.

Paul says in 2 Corinthians 4:1-2:

2 Corinthians 4:1-2

Therefore seeing we have this ministry, as we have received mercy, we faint not;

But have renounced the hidden things of dishonesty, not walking in craftiness, nor handling the word of God deceitfully; but by manifestation of the truth commending ourselves to every man's conscience in the sight of God.

The job of every church, the job of every pastor without a doubt, is to simply renounce the hidden things and to manifest the truth and preach the truth and commend yourselves to every man's conscience in the sight of God. You cannot do that respecting people. I love you all, but I love the book more.

When you do not do that, in time, you will start to cater to people, and you will change your preaching, you will change your mindset, and in time you are going to sell out. They will give you what you want, but they will always want something back, and you will get caught in that trap. One of the great rules I learned is never put yourself in the position where you take from your people, never. You always be there for them. When they take care of you, when they pay the bills and they continue doing everything the way God wants them to do it. The rich people, they will come in and they will just still do everything. I have had them come in and say to me, "Hey, when we started our church, there was a guy came in here and said, 'You know what? I will tell you what. I will pay your salary for a year. We will do all this. I will pay all the bills. I will pay all that stuff.'" I said, "No thanks. I do not think that is going to work." You know why? Because I learned a long time ago, when somebody does that, they own you. Then they are going to tell you down the line, and then when their kid screws up or gets in trouble, you try to deal with them, you are going to have hell to pay because of the fact that they put all their money in it. No thank you. Do not ever let yourself be held hostage. Do not ever let someone threaten you to leave the church because of what you have got to deal with. Semper Semper. See you. In German that is, Auf Wiedersehen.

When you put them in a place of power, position of authority, you are dead. You are dead. So you will change your preaching not to offend them so they will stay because now they have all this

investment. You will not deal with the issues that need to be dealt with. You never want to allow yourself to be held hostage by that.

Jeremiah 48:10 says:

Jeremiah 48:10

Cursed be he that doeth the work of the LORD deceitfully, and cursed be he that keepeth back his sword from blood.

Honestly this morning, all of us, me included, when we leave here this morning, we all need to be bleeding a little bit. With that verse, 99% of God's pastors today are doing the work of God deceitfully. They are never going to preach anything that needs to be preached.

V. The Evil Eye of Riches

Verse 22: "He that hasteneth to be rich hath an evil eye and considereth not that poverty shall come upon him." This verse will stand as a great general truth about anything in life, but here in the context of riches. Basically what he is saying here, there is no shortcut to getting rich. There is no fast scheme. There are no overnight deals. People every year will lose millions and millions of dollars. They lose their retirement. They lose Junior's college fund. They lose their 401Ks. They lose their life savings investing in somebody's fast money scheme. "You give me 100,000 and in three weeks I will give you 500,000 back." It does not work that way. You are broke this morning.

In our context, in a general way, he is simply saying there is no fast track to building people or building a church. In fact, there is no fast track to anything in life. It took the apostles, it took the Lord three and a half years to train the apostles to take over when He went back. I have given it to you before. I think it is out of Acts 19 there that in God's school, and we are in school for life, and we learn seven classes that you better go to if you are a child of God, if you really want to learn what God has for you. It is a school. Seven classes you better make sure you get through. None of them are a drama class. You saw Samuel in 1 Samuel 3, the process, many models in the Bible. But God's people today are always looking for a shortcut in life. They are looking for a short fast food lane. It used to be that you ate around the table and mom cooked a meal. You do not anymore. I know mom and dad work, it is hard to do sometimes. So you go to restaurants, nothing wrong with that. Everybody loves restaurants. But I know now that years and years ago that when society changed, the restaurants, they were not fast enough. So now they put fast food restaurants in like McDonald's and Burger King, which I am not arguing with. You went in there and got what you want. That was not fast enough to put in a fast drive-through lane. Then that was not fast enough. Now you get an Uber driver to bring it to you. Fast, fast, fast. Everything has to be fast. Fast money. You invest in this, all the schemes that people come up with. Fast lifestyles. Fast relationships. Everybody wants to get to the head of the class. We are in the middle of a big scandal right now about all these movie stars that paid all these hundreds of thousands of dollars to get their kids to the head of the class at all these premier schools and got busted in it. Everybody tries to buy their way through everything because everybody wants to fast track.

Let me tell you something. There is no fast track when it comes to building the church. There is no fast track when it comes to the Bible. You build a church one family at a time, and you build a person one person at a time. Maybe that is the way it works in the world, but it should never be that way in ministry. You have to earn your way. Notice he says, "the evil eye." That means you are focused on the wrong things. You are looking at the wrong things. Looking at things the wrong way. That is what he is talking about with the evil eye. Then he says, "considereth not that poverty shall come upon him," that you may have great possession, but spiritually and biblically you are bankrupt. You do not know anything about the Bible. So when the real issues of life do show up, you are lost. You do not know what to do with it. You will find where money will fail you is when your health goes, your kids get sick, and everything in your life that you thought was real falls apart. You see how far your money goes at that point. Where the common man builds his spiritual relationship one principle at a time, his spiritual bank account, the elite uses his status or money to influence to get what he wants. But in the end, he winds up broke with nothing to show for it.

VI. Rebuke vs. Flattery

Verse 23: "He that rebuketh a man afterward shall find more favour than he that flattereth with the tongue." Here is a great verse and a great principle. This goes along with verse 23. We saw Colossians 3:25 where it says:

Colossians 3:25

But he that doeth wrong shall receive for the wrong which he hath done: and there is no respect of persons.

It does not matter your status or how rich you are. You cross the line, you get dealt with. It is just that simple. You preach the book, you spare no one's feelings. Truth is truth. As the old saying goes, "If the shoe fits, you wear it."

The favor here is not the favor of man. Though I must tell you, I preach hard messages. Last week was a hard message, and I probably had 30 plus people throughout the day with all we did come up and say, "Man, I really needed that message today, thank you very much." In every case, you will find that, but you will find nobody came up, but in any crowd you are going to find one or two or three people that get upset about it, do not like it. To me, that has always been so stupid. If you are not guilty of being a priest, what is there to get upset about? You betray yourself. It is just that simple.

The Bible says, and it is a familiar verse for all of us in Proverbs 27:7:

Proverbs 27:7

The full soul loatheth an honeycomb; but to the hungry soul every bitter thing is sweet.

We do not always like everything that comes out of the Bible. We do not always like everything that gets preached to us. I know I do not, and I am only a preacher. You only got to hear it once. I had to work on it all week. This is how a New Testament church should operate. You should be

so in love with the Word of God. You should be so in love with the Lord. You should be so thankful for what He did for you. The forgiveness that He gave you. Everything that He has given you. How can you not give that to somebody else? I just do not get that.

Leadership gets established through the church by what you allow God to do in your life and how you respond to it, and it never ends. It is a lifelong experience. I have heard people before tell me, "Well, I did that back in the day, and I did all those things, and I am past that now. I do not do those things anymore." Let me tell you something, that is somebody I want to stay away from. I have been doing it for almost 50 some years, and I keep on doing it. You know why? Because it is a long school lesson, and it is never out. The Bible says we are in a warfare, and there is no discharge from this war. You go through it and you do it, and no matter what it is, it is not the fact that how many years ago you have done it, and you do not do it now. That tells me is you ought to be able to do it better now and help somebody else do it. We are in a war, and Ecclesiastes 8:8, as I said, there is no discharge from that war. In warfare, you have to be down in the mud, in the blood, in the guts, in the dirt, no matter what.

I watch all these pastors today. I am 69 years old, and most of the guys that I grew up with in my day are out of the ministry now. They have all retired. They all convinced themselves that they did their part. I had one guy tell me when he told me he was retiring, he was getting out of it. He said, "Yeah, I did it for 30 years. I did my part. Somebody else has turned." I am sure glad Jesus did not say that on the way to the cross. I thought when you got saved, you got in the ministry, it was a lifelong deal. I did not know that you got an option to bail out and move down to the dinosaur graveyard in Florida someplace. It is a thing where when you are in, you are in. Now I may die of a stroke. I may die of a heart attack. I may become incapacitated someday, and I cannot preach, and somebody else has to step in and do it. Maybe that will happen someplace. But I am telling you this, I will never step out of here because of the fact that I am retiring now. When you look in the Bible, the greatest guys that God ever used, He did not use them until they were 67 to 80 years old. These guys learn all this material, you go through all these mistakes, you do all these dumb things in your life, and you learn how to deal with it. You finally come to the place when you are 70 or 60, 70 years old, where you now have a good handle on it, and now when you are ready to give that to the younger guys to help them, you are going to quit and go play golf. I do not get it. You see, to them it is just a job. To me, it is my life. It is all that it is. It is all that I have. When God saved me, He saved me for the duration. There was no expiration date on my ministry of when I was to stop. It just goes on till He comes down and says, "That is it. That is it. Come on, you are done."

I am telling you right now, the rich and the famous will never figure into the ministry. They just will not. It is one of those things where we have to realize that all we have is each other. We are all common people with a common Bible. We all make dumb mistakes. We all do stupid things. If we do not work together, then we will work against each other. It is just that simple. If God is not in the center of this, and the two fundamental aspects of Christianity are not the bedrock of what we believe, and that is forgiveness and restoration, then we just need to go sell used cars someplace because that is the fundamental law of the Bible that it runs through everything. The reason you are here today is because God forgave you and He restored your image, and then we

are not willing to do that to somebody else. Maybe that fits into some scheme of Christianity someplace, but that is a good Thursday night question I am going to ask.

There is no end to it. There is no end to the ministry. There is no end to people that God will give you that will be a benefit and a blessing, and there will be no end to the people that come in and have struggles and problems, and some of them will make it and some of them will not. It does not matter. We always do what is right. We do not have the option not to. When God gives us people like Bozy and Jeffrey and his wife, Cheryl, God gives, most people look at it, I look at it this way: God loved our church so much, God saw what we were doing. He just wanted to add two extra blessings to it, and they are sitting back there today. We do not want to be part of that. I am telling you, I watch you guys last night helping Bozy into the hayride thing. We put him right on the end so if we took a tight turn, he would be out. But that is what we do. I watch you guys helping Jeffrey down on the street. That is what we do. We are all in this together. Is nobody better than anybody else? Nobody is an elite guy here, especially me. We are all in this together. We all eat the same mud, drink the same water, and get the same blood. We are all struggling to fight it together. If we do not pull together and hang together, then we will hang separately. This is the key. This is the essence of that great verse that there is no respect for a person with God, none ever. We are all the same. We all have our issues. We all have our struggles. I have no right to castigate you for whatever you have done in life. I only have a right to try to help you be better. That is where I am at with it because that is what Jesus would do. I know there are things that you have to be held accountable to. I am not saying that. There are things that you have to go through. I get it. But when you do and you make it right with God, I will tell you what, I would not want God to treat me like a lot of God's people treat other God's people. That is the key. That is what makes this church work: a family mindset. In every family, you have crazy uncles and aunts. But they are still part of the family. You have the uncle that everybody laughs at and talks about. That would be me. But at the end of the day, he is still your uncle. Everybody laughed because everybody has those in your family and knew exactly what I am talking about. Right now, we can all pull out pictures and hold them up.

The thing that makes this church what it is is the people in it who get the heart for God and God's Word, that no matter what, will do whatever God has called them to do. We are all in it together. Nobody better than anybody else. This is what is exciting to me about these prayer groups. Because I have got people that came to me this last week that are going to take one that has not taken one before. Brand new. To me, that is what it is all about. It is simply bringing you up through those levels of preaching and teaching and people working with you. People helping you. Yes, people holding you accountable. But at the end of the day, we all get to the same place we want to, and that is where we are ministering together.