

Proverbs 27:6-7

Sunday 5/19/2019

Well, it has been a great morning, and we are looking forward to getting into the Word of God today. No book on planet earth has ever changed more lives than the book that you hold in your hand this morning. Last week, we looked at some great verses on the three key areas in the life of the Lord Jesus Christ. I showed you how those three areas should be in our own lives, and how our walk, our witness, and our ministry should all be guided by these three aspects.

We talk about being like Christ and Christ-like, and everybody likes to imagine in their own mind that they are. But the reality of it is, it is having a humbleness. Humbleness is not weakness. Many times when we think of humble, we think of the Baptist pastor who comes up and preaches and then is a little wimpy guy, and you stand at the door and he shakes your hand, you just feel like you picked up a dead fish. That is not true. Humbleness is the power of God in your life under the control of the Holy Spirit of God. Make no mistake, Paul was one of the most humble people you ever saw in your life, but he could put it out when he needed to.

The second thing was making ourselves of no reputation. It seems today, and we talked about this last week, that everybody wants to be somebody. Mel Sabaka used to say, "Everybody wants to be the chandelier in the main ballroom." What God's people just need to be the light bulbs on the back porch. That is so true.

He must increase, but I must decrease.

The third thing was having a servant's heart and realizing that God saved you to serve. He did not save you to be served; He saved you to serve others and be there for others. How important it is for us to consistently and constantly have that reality check in our own Christian life.

I told you, God's program will always be through the New Testament local church. It will be through the preaching of the Word of God, giving us that reality check. Through that preaching and using the Bible principles to build your life, you will instill in your life not only those three character qualities of Christ that I just talked about, but also last week we talked about four key areas in our lives that will really hold us to a biblical standard, an accountability, and allow us to fulfill all that God has called us to do.

We talked about how we had to get the right perspective, and that means just seeing things as they really are, not as they appear or trying to pretend that they are. We talked about getting a good position in life, and that simply means a good balance, being able to see a situation and position yourself to be the best used of God in that situation. In every scenario in life, it is all about position. It is about how you put yourself in a place to be able to do something. Certainly, when it comes to Christianity, it is being able to put yourself in a position where God can use you in any given scenario.

Then we talked about purpose. Unfortunately, we see this so many times: a life without purpose will be a wasted life. I have seen God's people all my life get saved, and I truly believe that they are saved, but they never find their purpose in life. They simply just waste their life. Well, they have kids, they get a job, they make money, they do all the things, they go on vacations. But that

is not what God saved you for. God saved you for a purpose. That purpose, without it, is what will lead to all kinds of problems.

Thursday night, somebody asked a question—Joy asked a question—on depression, bipolar, and all that stuff, manic depressions and all those areas. It simply comes down to, in most cases, no purpose in life. When we have no purpose in life, we have no goals in life, we have no directions in life, believe me, there is a lot in this world to get you depressed over. That is why I do not watch the news before I go to bed; I would never sleep at night. The world is chaos; the world is an insane asylum run by the inmates. It is at every level, in every area, it is just cast adrift. Without you as a Christian, in all of that sea of humanity, in all of that sea of confusion, if you do not have a purpose, you will get lost in it too.

Then I added the fourth one last week, and that is passion. Passion is simply the key to it all. Herb preached on this several weeks ago when he was here. That will be the fire that will drive you. That is what will keep you going when nothing else will. That will keep you from quitting when you get discouraged. That will keep you on a track that no matter what happens, you know that because you have a purpose and you are in the right position, you have the right perspective, you know you are not going to quit. These four areas will be the missing elements, obviously, in Christianity today. There is no question about it. You show me a child of God working with these four qualities in their lives, and I will show you something special, because that is what it really takes.

I. The Lost Art of Preaching

Now today, I want to add to last week. I want to talk today about the art of preaching. Preaching has many, many different aspects to it. I have had the great fortune to have been born in 1950, to grow up through the last remnants of the great preachers before we got into this sissified concept of Christianity today. I thank God that He allowed me to see some real men who could really hold the line with the Word of God and preach it. They are all gone now today. They are all dead. They all went home to be with the Lord. With their passing, we have lost the art of preaching. We really have.

I look at it like this: I have always been interested in military things and collected different military things down through the years. I have never collected these, but one of the most collectible items out there are Japanese samurai swords. The reason why they are so collectible is because most of them were in families for hundreds of years. They were passed down from generation to generation. I have seen them at military shows where somebody would bring one in, and a guy knows how to take the tang off and the handle off, and it will be marked there with the year that it was made. The craftsmanship was absolutely superb. Back then, making swords was an art form. It was something that you could take a samurai sword and throw up a piece of cloth and just hold it out and let it fall over, and it would just cut it to pieces. It was so sharp. But it was an art form back then. Nobody makes swords like that today. You go down here to that place on Nolan Road or 40 Highway, the House of Knives or whatever it is, you can buy a samurai sword for \$29.99 made in China. But it is not the same quality.

Preaching used to be an art form where the preachers were quality. Now they are \$29.95 fire sales. It has lost something. I want to talk to you about preaching, how it will, or at least it should, affect you. I want to talk to you about preaching, how God views it. I want you to see how I view it, and then obviously how you should view it. When the two verses that we are going to talk about today are laid out and developed, they will lay out for us an attitude toward God and the Word of God that ought to bring all these things into line.

Now let us read it together. Proverbs chapter 27, and we are going to look at verses 6 and 7 today.

Faithful are the wounds of a friend; but the kisses of an enemy are deceitful.

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

II. The Biblical Pattern for Preaching

In preaching, you have to have a biblical pattern that you follow, or at least you should follow. When you preach, you need to have a plan. You need to know where you are going, and probably more important, why you are going there, and probably more important than both of those, how you are going to get there. A lot of young guys and a lot of preachers who have been doing it for a while just think that you get up and you yell and you scream for 30, 40 minutes and you just let it fly. But there needs to be a definite purpose behind what you are saying. That is why it is called a message.

New Testament pastors are much like the Old Testament prophets, at least in one regard: they were God's man with God's message to God's people. That is really what preaching is today.

Proverbs 27:23, to me, is a great verse for every man that ever began to pastor or tried to pastor. That is probably the most unknown verse to any of them, or if they found it, they would not know what to do with it. But to me, it has always been an impacting verse, and I have got to be honest, it is in the back of my mind in everything that I do.

Be thou diligent to know the state of thy flocks, and look well to thy herds.

I always thought this verse was vital to at least my ministry. I really cannot speak for anybody else. But I know and I believe this: a good pastor will know where his church is at and have a feel for the spiritual temperature of his people. In doing that, there are certain things that you look for. There are certain things that you look at your congregation, and you love them, and you know them, and they are close, especially us. We are like a big family. My number one goal is to always try to meet your needs.

When you preach, the goal is not to go after unsaved people. The goal is not to go after saved people who are not doing what is right. The goal is not to go after people who do not come to church anymore, but you happen to spy them, so you are going to get them today. The goal is to give everybody something. Let the Holy Spirit of God take and minister to everybody what their specific needs are. It is a thing where you want to look for certain things within your congregation.

For me, one of the greatest spiritual gauges for spiritual temperature of any church, in my opinion anyhow, is Thursday Night Bible study. Watch who shows up, watch the questions, or listen to the questions that are asked, and it kind of gives you a spiritual feeling where everybody is at. Because the questions will always reflect what you are doing with the Word of God.

Now I know, I know. Some of you say to me, "Well, I want to ask the question, but I think it is a stupid question." Let me tell you something: there are no stupid questions about the Bible. Some of my answers may be stupid, but there are not any stupid questions about the Bible. Somebody said, "Well, other people have asked this before." I do not care how many times people ask it, because the price of learning is repetition. So, it does not matter. If it is something that you have a need and you want to know, then it is the most important thing on my plate at that particular point in Bible study, because that is where you are at.

I think that your attitude toward working with people is a great spiritual temperature taker of our church, like in the people ministry. How many of you invest your life? You do not have to do that. I hear people all the time say, "Well, I am just, you do not know how busy I am." You are all busy. Is there anybody here that just lays around eating bonbons and watching the soap operas all day long? Everybody—other than Charles—we are all busy. Everybody is busy. You have to learn to prioritize things in your life. That goes back to the perspective, the purpose, understanding why God saved you and what you need to do and what God wants you to do.

I think the Bible Institute is another one. It shows me when you have a hundred people out there that are coming, they want to really learn the Bible on a level that we go into it, because it is a tough thing. It just helps me to see where you are at. I always want to be cognizant of the needs of my people. A pastor will see his church on different levels, and he will know that not everybody is going to be where he would want them to be. Some people do not progress through it as quickly as others. Some people honestly do not progress at all, but it is okay. You always want to be ready to help that person get to where they want to go when they finally get their head out of the clouds and decide this is what I want to do.

Mel Sabaka waited for me for almost 19 years before I got my head out of my clouds or wherever it was. He waited for me. That taught me a great thing. I do not have a lot of patience about some things in life. I go through a drive-through and there are people dinking around up there, talking to the person at the deal like they know them. I do not care if you know them. I want my cheeseburgers. I am in line. I have been waiting here. Then you get up there and they will say, "I will get a Diet Coke." "Well, we are out of Diet Coke." You know what? You have this big sign out there. Why do not you put up there, "We do not have any Diet Coke"? Now you are forcing me to eat what I love the best, two cheeseburgers. That is all. No fries, two cheeseburgers. Now I have to either have water or Dr. Pepper. Are you kidding me? I mean, I am not very patient about those things.

I drive someplace and, do not take this wrong, you find homeless people on every street corner. Now I can say what I say because two Sundays out of the month, I am personally responsible for putting this together. We feed, what, 600 homeless people? So I know homeless people. It is funny. Before we started our downtown stuff, you could drive downtown and never see that they

were there. Now I drive down, I will see one three miles away and I know he is homeless. It makes you aware of things. But I tell you, I realize that there are people out there who are really hurting, and I try to help them. But I am going to tell you, those street corner gigs are real money makers. A lot of those people, you know what, they have money for cigarettes. They are talking on a cell phone. Somebody, the light will turn green, and this guy is giving this guy 30 cents worth of change, counting out the pennies one at a time. I am getting impatient with that. I honked the horn. I honked the horn. You know what, I am not patient with things like that. I am really not. I am, you know, confess your faults one to another. Here I am, all right? I will just tell you, I save all of my gift cards when there is nothing on them.

But God has given me patience with people. So I have all the patience in the world with people, as long as you are not homeless. I mean, I do not care how long it takes for you. I have had people in my ministry that did not get it together for 10, 15, 20 years. You know what, I did not get an attitude about it. Because a pastor loves people whether they do what is right or not. I learned something else: you never want to shut the door in somebody's life. No, there are times when a door needs to be shut, bolted, welded, and put triple locks on it. But not very often. You never want to shut a door that whenever that person decides to figure it out, that you are not there for them. Because somebody was there for me. It took me 19 some years to figure it out. Where would I be today if somebody did not follow that?

So I have tremendous patience with people. I let them use me. I let them abuse me. I let them hose me. My wife goes crazy every time somebody sticks it to me. But you know what, it is what it is. I like having a good conscience toward God that no matter what you do to me, I know I did what was right with you. When somebody says to me and comes back and says, "Well, why did not you do to me what I did to you?" My answer is standard: "That is because I do not want to be like you." It is never wrong to do right. When you do not get your feelings involved in it or get your emotions involved in it, you can—hey, people are problematic because of their old sin nature. They are not going to get it turned around just like that. When you find one like that, well, that is great, but you do not find them very often. You have got to be there for them. You have got to wait for them.

So a pastor will see his church on different levels. His job is to try to find out how he can better help them, not to criticize them. Now, if you do something stupid, I am going to tell you it is stupid. But that does not mean I do not love you. You have to discipline your children. Sometimes the discipline is not pretty, but that does not mean you do not love them. A pastor will accomplish this by being one with them. It will not be like last week where the pastor thinks he is better than you are, higher and better than anybody else. You know, you cannot have access to him. I call this the Martin Bormann syndrome in most churches. Martin Bormann, most people do not really know who he was. He was Adolf Hitler's personal secretary. Everybody thinks that Adolf Hitler was the most powerful man in the Third Reich, but he really was not. He knew the most powerful man was Martin Bormann because Martin Bormann controlled who got to go see Hitler, because everybody had to go through him. So if he did not like you, you did not get in. If he did like you, you got in. Hitler had nothing to do with it.

Most churches are like that with most pastors. There will be a Martin Bormann. She is usually a woman, so her name will be Martina Bormann. But there will be his personal secretary who controls the access to him. He turns that over to her. You will never get his cell phone number. You can never just stop into his house. You have got to go through Martina. If she is in a good mood and she likes you, you will get in to see him, maybe. If she does not, you will never see him. That is the way it works today, and it is a tragedy. It really is. In truth, when people are close to the Word of God, the pastor and his people, he knows where they are at, but they also know where he is at. He also knows what they need. Through that openness, that relationship, they will build a bond together for one purpose: that is the ministry that God has saved us for. Just that simple.

Today, in our megachurch concept, which we talk a lot about, when I talk about how it is the second round—it was back in the 60s and 70s and failed then, it will fail today—whatever happened, you are just a number on a giving record someplace. You are just a statistic.

A couple of weeks ago, I gave you the eight things that a pastor has to do well if he is going to build a church or people or do what he is supposed to do. He has to have the ability to relate to people. He has to have the ability to educate people. He has to have the ability to elevate people. He has to have the ability to motivate people. He has to have the ability to accelerate people, get them growing faster than normal. He has to have the ability to regenerate people, get them saved. He has to have the ability to duplicate people, build the process of building himself into people to replicate what they do. He has to have the ability to placate people. That is to put up with people, to help them realize that all our feet are clay, we are all flesh, we all struggle, we all do dumb things, we all say dumb things.

You know what? It is just where it is at today. Today, within what we are going to talk about, we are going to talk about three of those in particular. We are going to talk about elevate, motivate, and accelerate in your Christian life. Finding a way to get you to keep moving up the level of spiritual growth. I am going to tell you right now, there is one thing as a Christian—there are a lot of things that preachers preach on that Christians cannot do, and some of it is okay and some of it is stupid—but I will tell you as a pastor, one thing you can never not do: you cannot stop growing. Because the moment you stop growing spiritually, you are in trouble. We know the Bible talks about the seven stages of spiritual growth. The church's job is to do that.

The church has failed, and you hear me crack a lot about Bible colleges because of what they are, and I get that. But in their defense, and it is not much of a defense, Bible colleges came into existence because pastors failed to do their job. They failed to recognize that their goal was to train people, bring them up. The examples are all through the Bible: Paul and Timothy, Paul and Titus, Paul and Philemon. You can see it all through the Bible, Paul and all the people that he invested his life in. The model is clear. But churches and pastors failed to do that. So out of that, the Bible colleges came in. The ability and the biblical training of the young man in the local church, which was by God's design, now switched over to an educational facility that wound up being used by the devil to destroy man's faith in the Word of God. But that is how it started.

We have something else in Christianity today that in my mind is utterly, totally the goofiest thing on the planet. Everybody is getting into being a life coach. Find your certificate that you are a life coach now. I will take you for a mere thousand dollars and I will spend two or three months with you or whatever, helping you find yourself. I will be your life coach. I will help you find the true concept of life. I cannot think of anything more despicable for a Christian to do, and I am just being honest, than to try to charge you for something that God gave them free. Every pastor ought to be a life coach. You can call me whatever you want, and some of you do, but at the end of the day, by God's design, I am your life coach. I stand in the pulpit and I give you that and lay it all out. The idea that some man now is going to go get a certificate, or a woman, and they are going to go get a certificate, and they are certified now by who? I am not sure, but they can be a life coach and they can take your life now and put it all together for a thousand dollars or whatever the case may be. I guess if you do not have a thousand dollars, you come up with half, you will just find half of yourself, lower half or the bottom half. You can decide that, I am sure. It is stupid.

The job of every pastor in every church is to be your life coach, is to be there for you with no cost involved, is to be there for you, to give you the perspective, the purpose, and the desires and the passions, to build everything into you, and to know the state of your flock, know where you are at, and know what you need even when you do not think you need it. Maybe I think you need it, you do not think you need it, so I am smart enough to know that I cannot give it to you right now, but I will put it in my back pocket until you are ready for it. But that is what preaching does. That is what the local church does. Not a Bible college, nor a life coach. You do this by having a good balance in a church through your preaching and your teaching. Teaching will educate you and teaching will elevate you, and that is very important. But preaching will motivate you. Preaching will do what teaching cannot; it will motivate you. Preaching will give you your reality check. Preaching will make you look inside yourself and be accountable.

III. The Wounding of a Faithful Friend

Now, based on our two verses today, let us talk about preaching. I want to talk about an attitude behind preaching on the pastor's part, and then I want to talk about an attitude behind receiving the preaching on the people's part. Our verse today says, "Faithful are the wounds of a friend." I do not want to beat around the bush with this, and I want to make it very clear at the outset: the preaching of the Word of God will wound you by God's design.

The Bible says that the Word of God is like a sword.

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

In Matthew chapter 12, talking about John the Baptist, it will bruise you. We go back to Daniel chapter 2, it will crush you or smite you. Over in Romans 11:7, it will become a stumbling block. It will trip you over and break your leg or your neck on. In Acts 9:5, the Bible says the Word of God will prick you in your heart. Hebrews 4 says it will divide you. And Hebrews 4 says it will

pierce you. So I want to be clear that the preaching of the Word of God will wound you by God's design.

Here is what it will wound:

- It will wound your pride.
- It will wound your ego.
- It will wound your sinful lifestyle.
- It will wound your indifference.
- It will wound your attitude about life and all the things you think you have got to have.

It will bring you through the wounding to a reality check that you have to look at yourself. This faithful wounding of a friend to you will be exactly what you need when it is done right, to help you and not done to hurt you.

I know some of you do not see and understand maybe what I am saying today, and you probably will not understand what I am about to say right now. It seems to be when you kind of get out there, you kind of lose touch with the reality of things. Some of you younger kids probably, when you are dealing with your parents, at that age you are in right now, you probably may have a hard time understanding this, but I want to tell you something. I want your kid to listen to me, especially if you have good, godly parents that are trying to do what the Word of God says in your life. For you here who are sitting here in this church and there are people working with you, or even myself as your pastor, I want to tell you, the greatest friend you will ever have will be the person who loves you and will love you enough to tell you the truth. It is just that simple.

We miss that. We miss that because at the end of the day, maybe where you are at right now, you do not want to hear the truth. I will give you this: there is a process, and we will see this as we get through this next verse, there is a process to getting to that truth. A good pastor in his preaching will only preach the truth and he will help his people. He will never preach the Word of God to hurt them. He will never have that in the back of his mind. He will never look at, "Well, so-and-so did this or said this about me, so I am going to take a cheap shot at him." No, no, if you are going to take a shot at him, do not take a cheap one. Just go to their face and deal with it biblically. But he never hurts them, he helps them, and he will be a faithful friend in that.

Sometimes it wounds us. I grew up with probably the greatest spiritual father a man could ever have. But I recognized quickly that one, God put him in my life, two, I had a lot of things I needed to learn, and I had a lot of rough edges that needed to be knocked off. The only way that was going to happen was to get some wounding done. It came down to my attitude. I could have been like a lot of God's people. I could have gotten mad about it.

We had a couple in our church one time, I will not tell you who it is, but you know, they—and I had no idea this happened, I found out about it later—they had bought a car that was a little sporty car. It was a Z something. I do not know what it was. I did not even know that they had got it. On my preaching, I am telling a story about how years ago, when I, before I got right with God, I was into that stuff. I liked it. I had a '64 GTO. I had a '67 GTO. I remember about a '71 or '72 Z28 Camaro. Oh, a heartthrob, man. I mean, that sucker would get up and talk to you. Then I

got right with God. I started going out to camp, helping out there. It is where God began to work with me. I would go to work and I would drive in it. The only car I had was that Z28 Camaro. It was black with silver stripes up the back. Oh, boy, I tell you, I had Mickey Thompsons on the back and the front, bigger ones in the back. My Craig Mags on it. Had headers on it. That sucker sounded like the death angel coming into Egypt when you fired it up. Straight pipes on it. Oh, it was incredible.

I remember going out and coming out to camp, and I parked there, you know, and it was senior high week, which was always a big week. I had pulled in there and I got out of the car, you know, you could hear me coming. I mean, it was, when you started up, it was incredible. I shut it off, you know, and I got out, and these high school kids were standing there. They were not from our church. They were from, I think they were from like Middletown, Ohio. One of them came over and said, "Wow, mister, that is really a nice car." And I thought, "Well, thank you." At this point he says, "He says, man, he says, what are you doing in a place like this with a car like that?" That was it. That wounded me. I asked myself the same question. Next week I traded that in for a Chevy Vega. Anybody remember the Chevy Vegas? You could not get farther from the world in a car than a Chevy Vega. It was absolutely the most benign, mundane car that you could ever have. In a four-cylinder, I went from a Z28 with a, what, with that having a 305, I do not know what it was, but it was a short stroke black engine. I mean, it was a screamer. I went from that to a John Knox Village grocery car machine for Saturday morning going to a Dollar General store.

I told that story. The people in the church that had just bought the Z car thought I was talking to them. I had no idea. Any man left the church. I do not know what to say to something like that. People, you think I did not get where I am at, if I am anywhere, by not being wounded? Old Mel Sabaka, brother, he saw in people and he knew that things had to be done to get them where they needed to be. He was not the most guy with the most finesse in how he did it because he was old school.

I am preaching at camp one time, and I am sorry, it was camp somewhere, but there is a bunch of people there, and I just started preaching, and I am going to town, and I am having fun. I got into Genesis and I was going to preach on the bums for a while. I said, "You know, by the sweat of your brow, you earn your bread." I am going to town, and right in the middle of my sermon, he stands up and says, "Book, chapter, verse." I said, "What?" He said, "Book, chapter, verse on that last verse you gave us." I opened it up and it did not say "the sweat of your brow." It said, "by the sweat of thy face." Right in the middle of five, six thousand, as far as I was concerned, right in the middle of the whole universe, he says, "Young man, if you are going to preach the Word of God, you quote it correctly." Is not that a little worse than a Z28 example? I did not leave the church. I did not even get mad. You know what I did? I made sure from that point on I quoted it correctly. You know why? Because I knew what he was doing and I knew I needed what he was doing. But see, that was a long time ago. We do not have that today. Guys going into ministry today, you may not see it. We criticize the Mormons for having lacy underwear. Most Baptist preachers have it too.

Sometimes it wounds us. We get out of the mindset that we think that that is a bad thing because it does not feel pleasant. It hurts. We know that the Word of God applied the right way from 2 Timothy 3:16, it will do four things.

All scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness:

First thing it will do, it will teach you what is right. Reproof, it will get you straightened out on where you are wrong. Correction, it will get you to the next level of showing you what is wrong with it, and then instruction in righteousness, it will keep you from making the same mistakes again.

A pastor has to be faithful in what he believes, but he has to be faithful in preaching it to the people. That does not mean you get an attitude about it that you go after somebody. No, you leave those things aside and you just preach the Word of God that God has given you, and reproof and correction will always come by wounding. The question is, is it a faithful wounding? It is the wounding we need to change.

The key to real spiritual growth and change will be us developing self-discipline in our lives. Nobody is just born with—maybe there is, I do not know—but most people are not born with that ability of self-discipline. They have to get motivated, they have to get elevated, they have to get accelerated, and through these things only comes the process of truth being preached, and they get to the point where they develop that discipline. That hurts sometimes. It is a wounding. But when the attitude behind the wounding or the preaching is for your own good, then it is good for us.

A great example of this will be found in Paul's two letters to the Church of Corinth. Paul started this church. He loved these people. But he is gone now, out doing his deal, when he gets these reports that the church has really went sideways and it is really in a mess, much like the church today. He writes them a letter, 1 Corinthians, and in that letter he wounds them. But the wounds were from a faithful friend, faithful to the truth of God and what they were not doing, faithful to the people that he loved to help them get them back to the truth that they lost.

So we see in the book of 1 Corinthians, what a messed up church. In chapter 1, they are arguing your spiritual level based on who baptized you. If you were baptized by Paul, then you are somebody. If you were baptized by this guy over here that nobody knew, then you were not as spiritually good as this other person. In chapter 2, he takes them to task because they are not following the Word of God. In chapter 3, they are doing with who won who to Christ, the same thing they did with who baptized who. "Who won you to Christ? The Apostle Paul did back there. Wow, you are really spiritual." "Who won you to Christ? Ralph Schwartz, who is he?" They were tagging a spiritual level to the person who won you to Christ. In chapter 4, he takes them to task that they are not being stewards of the mysteries of God. We know that there are seven of them. Seven for the church, there are 12 for the nation of Israel. In chapter 5, there is sin in the church and they are doing nothing about it. In chapter 6, they are having issues in the church. Instead of dealing with it as Christians, they are taking it to a civil court and Judge Judy is dealing with it. In chapter 7, they are all messed up on the aspect of divorce and remarriage. In

chapter 8, they are, again, messed up on meat given to idols. Some of the people are going down to the market on Monday morning and getting the meat that was used in the pagan sacrifices for a dollar cheaper a pound because it is, and some of the brethren are having a tough time with that because in their mind, they are eating demon-possessed meat. Chapter 9, they are messed up on their liberty in Christ. Chapter 10, they are not following the Old Testament examples. Chapter 11, they are messed up on the Lord's Supper. Chapter 12, 13, and 14, they are messed up on spiritual gifts. We have been there a lot. Chapter 15, they are messed up on a resurrection. In chapter 16, they are not doing the collection of the saints the way that they should.

1 Corinthians is a great example of "faithful are the wounds of a friend." Paul loved these people. He loved this church, but he is not going to stand by and let them not do what the Word of God says without telling them. Chapter by chapter, he wounds them. He deals with their lack of spiritual growth and how it is holding them back. He calls them a bunch of spiritual babies. He loves them. He wants them to grow, but he knows that they are in a place right now that is not good.

Over in 2 Corinthians 2:12, he says to them, "You know what? I am sorry I wounded you, but I am glad I did it because it got you right, so I am happy that I made you sorry." You will find that the eight qualities that I gave you a little bit ago and a couple of weeks ago are found in the book of 1 and 2 Corinthians because based on the wounding of 1 Corinthians and 2 Corinthians, they get right with God. Now you see the result of him wounding them. In chapter 1, he shows them that through suffering. He makes it very clear that I am not the great Apostle Paul and you are down here. He tells them in chapter 1 that we are in this together, and a pastor becomes one with his people through suffering with them. He talks about the closeness. Chapter 2, he lays out the forgiving spirit of the minister. In chapter 3, he talks about the real proof of a man's ministry. It is not what he says or how many people he hires around him. The real proof of a man's ministry is the lives that he himself has invested in. Chapter 4, he defines for them what the ministry is. It is manifesting truth. In chapter 5, he talks about the perspective of the ministry, and that of course is the judgment seat of Christ. In chapter 6, he talks about the fellowship that we should have in ministry, and there again that is we are in fellowship with the sufferings of Christ. Chapter 7, he talks about the promises to the church or the minister, and of course that will be the principles that we talk about all the time. Chapter 8 and 9, he talks about the heart of ministering. Chapter 10, he talks about the mind of the minister. "Let this mind be in you, which was also in Christ Jesus" is the verse that we would add to that. Chapter 11, he talks about the wisdom of the minister. In chapter 12, he talks about the humility of the minister being a servant. In chapter 13, he closes it out, and to me it has always been a great two books because in chapter 13, he goes back to the brokenness of the minister. Brokenness for his people, wanting them to do what God wants them to do, that they can be all God wants to be, that they will receive the full reward.

Paul is a great sample of "faithful are the wounds of a friend." These two books, 1 and 2 Corinthians, will show and illustrate Proverbs 27:6 incredibly well in our verse today. Through the faithful wounding of a friend, it led to this church getting back to God. I have got to tell you, the book of 2 Corinthians is probably without a doubt the greatest book in the Bible as the handbook of ministry. In fact, it is interesting to see how the order of the books go. You have

Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John, which all deal with the first coming of Christ in Israel. You have the book of Acts, which is that transition from the Old Testament Jew to the New Testament church. Then you have Romans, which is the doctrinal handbook to the church. Then you have 1 Corinthians, which shows you the kind of church you do not want to be. Then the next one, 2 Corinthians, shows you the church that you want to be. It becomes the handbook for us for ministry. But it never would have been. There never would have been a 2 Corinthians if Paul would not have wrote 1 Corinthians and wounded them. So what I am saying is, out of the wounding will always come some good things.

IV. The Deceitful Kisses of an Enemy

Yet I have got to tell you this, in a church that is going just like today, not everybody was happy with Paul dealing with them. There was an element in that church, as there will be in most churches, that will resist the preaching of the Word of God to change them because they do not want to change. They will go to a church, and you know you have seen it. Most of you have worked with people like this. They will go to a church, they will begin to grow, and they will go to a point. But then when they are faced with really the reality of who they are, and now it is more than just the fun times of eating out and playing softball and doing this, now the Holy Spirit of God is looking into your face and the Holy Spirit of God is showing you these things need to change. And you do not want to change.

People will resist change. I mean, I do not like change. The older you get, the less you like change. You young people are excited about moving into a house. You know, you had an apartment or you got a little house, and now you are excited about maybe getting a chance to get a bigger house. I will never move ever again. My home is not my castle. My home is my fort. I would never think of boxing everything up again. Are you kidding me? In all of the universe, there is not enough boxes for what I have. Going to the place where you start all over again. I do not like change. I do not like to try a lot of new things to eat. I have never had a glass of iced tea in my life. I have never tasted another piece of pie ever other than apple or strawberry. If I went to your house and you would have coconut cream or mousse or some kind of, I just politely say, "I am good, thank you." I want to die. I do not like change. I know what food is good for me. I know what I like. I do not need all the other stuff. If it is not in my little world, I am not interested. Now that is me. That is stupid. But the older we get, when you get to be my age, you are not going to want to change. You are going to get set in your ways. But the problem with God's people is they are a lot younger than I am, and spiritually they do not want to change. They will change in the world all kinds of stuff. They will change this, change that, but when it comes to changing their life to be what God wants them to be, they resist that just like I resist your coconut cream pie. It is probably great.

The attitude in receiving truth does not match the attitude by which the truth is given to them. Now look at the last part of verse 6 here. "But the kisses of an enemy are deceitful." That is somebody pretending you love somebody when you really do not. That is somebody who goes along with the truth, but in pastor preaches or whatever, in discipleship or whatever, just in your

daily relationships, going along with the truth but never really accepting it. Not allowing it to change you.

Again, two great examples of this in the Bible, and you probably already figured them out. The first one would be Judas Iscariot. My goodness, what a great example he is. Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John, the man who betrayed Jesus. They are sent out in Matthew chapter 10. They all go out and do the same thing. In fact, Judas goes out with the 12. He heals the sick, raises the dead, does everything that the rest of them does. But he winds up betraying them. Then you have the second one back in 2 Samuel 15, Absalom, David's son. He pretended that he went along with the king, and he pretended that he was faithful and loyal to David, and all the time he is trying to usurp David's authority in his kingdom. He is down there at the gate, trying to build a following of himself so he can overthrow David.

Both of them went along with what they were doing, but underneath the surface they were subversive. They were trying to do what they could do. In both cases, they were all around kissing people. When Judas betrayed Christ, he went up and kissed him. You will find in 2 Samuel 15 that Absalom kisses people.

In the Bible, you will find, and we have studied this before on Thursday night, there are seven kisses in the Bible. If you want to study kissing, and you ought to do that, AJ and Sean over here, you know what, there are seven kisses in the Bible. There is a kiss of romance. But one of the seven kisses is the kiss of deceit. That is this one. They will kiss you on Sunday and betray you on Monday. They will gain your confidence and then in time they will use your own ministry, subversively underneath, against you to hurt you. I want to tell you, in almost 50 years of ministry, I have been kissed by a few Judases and a few Absaloms. But it is just the way it goes. You do not throw your towel in and say, "I am done, I quit." It is just part of it. You understand it. But it is true. There are people who will accept the preaching when it is done right, and there are people who will reject it no matter how right it is done.

V. The Full Soul vs. The Hungry Soul

Now look at verse 7, here we go. "The full soul loatheth a honeycomb; but to the hungry soul every bitter thing is sweet." The first part today was about an attitude behind preaching, the pastor. Now the second part here will be, we will look at the attitude of God's people in receiving that preaching. "The full soul loatheth a honeycomb." Loathing means to hate with a passion. I have always thought it interesting that there is no real middle ground with God. You will either love the Word of God with a passion or you will loathe it with a passion. But it is hard to believe that there is any place in between. I mean, it may work with your mother-in-law, your father-in-law, or your friends when you say, "Well, I kind of like him or I do not." But when it comes to God, you are either in or you are out. The honeycomb obviously is the Word of God. The full soul will be somebody who is full of the world. All the things that you have replaced God and His Word with.

Let me just say this, the mark of a true child of God, right with God, will simply be he enjoys getting the faithful wounds that come to him from a friend. I will tell you why he does, because

he loves truth that much. He has matured to the point in his life where he knows for absolutely sure that the faithful wounds of a friend will be far better than your self-inflicted wounds from the world. But there are some people that will just never get that. One will lead to your healing, that is the faithful wounds of a friend. The other one will lead to your destruction.

I know it is a process, but you find many of God's people get to the point because of the relationship with God, because of what they understand and they see God and what He is doing and the only is there for them, they will actually learn to enjoy the rebuking, the correction. Even the chastisement because he knows he needs it, first of all, reality check, and second of all, he knows it is coming from a faithful friend who at the end of the day just wants him to get a full reward at the judgment seat of Christ. Honestly, there is nothing wrong with that. He has got a perspective on life. He has got a purpose in life. He has got an understanding of what God has called him to do, and from time to time his passion may wane because of all the other things, so he appreciates somebody telling him the truth to make sure that passion stays where it needs to be, so when there is a day coming he stands before the judgment seat of Christ, hey, he stands where God wants him to be. He knows the key is self-discipline, and he knows that self-discipline will come with a price. It just does not happen. It only comes through a structure.

When a boy goes into the military or a girl goes into the military, their goal is to train them to be whatever end result they want that soldier to be or marine to be. In most, a lot of guys in the past have looked at it that were undisciplined and unstructured, and many people think that going into the service, going into the military will be that cure-all for that because they will give you what you need to grow you up. I will be very honest with you, that is true in some cases, but I will be honest on it, it is not true in other cases. When I was in back in the day, you went in and you were a screw-up and you did not want to, a lot of guys went in that way. I mean, I got a kid one time, gave a testimony, he said, "I grew up in my home and I was against my dad, my dad and I fought, my dad was, you know, tried to get me to do what is right and go to church and I fought him and I was against everything he did and I just could not get away to go out of the house. I fought with my mom and my dad, I did not like the rules, I did not like the things that made me do, the times I had to come in at home, so I fixed them, I went away and joined the Marine Corps." Yeah, that was smart.

Back in my day, if you did not do that, they put you back in what they called a motivation platoon, and the word means motivation platoon. They motivated you. Now they just send you back home, it is all different. You do not like it now, you are way back home. I mean, it is a thing where, you know, it may be true or it may not, but my point is this: you only get to the point for the guys and the gals that make it and come out a picture Marine or soldier or airman or Navy guy and now they have the self-discipline, they just did not get that out of a can of C-rations. That came through a structure of wounding them, taking everything from them. In fact, I have always thought the military is just like Christianity. I mean, the first thing you do is lose all your identity. That is what a Christian ought to do. You get a haircut, all your beautiful locks go off, and now suddenly you just look like everybody else. You are all bald-headed. I mean, they march around in all the same color uniforms. You cannot tell one from the other. You lose all your identity, and they tear you down, and then they begin through a process, a structure, to build you

back to give them what they want so they can send you wherever they want to send you to do whatever they want to do with you.

Well, that is what Christianity is. When you got saved, you lost all your rights. You got your haircut. You lost everything with the world you are supposed to, and now the structure of the New Testament church is to build you back with a purpose through a structure to give you the self-discipline to be everything that God wants you to be. Many of God's people, many in our church, you counted that cost and you said that is what I want.

VI. The Transformative Power of Truth

The great key question for all of us today is simple. I mean, I could have saved all this time on a message, but since I put so much time in it, I thought I better go ahead and do it. But I can just ask you one question: How hungry are you today for truth? Because that is the real question. I mean, are you a hungry soul or are you full of everything in the world and you do not need it?

The guy now knows that the Christian life is about change. That is what it is about. It is about change. It is about a transformation of our lives to be like the Lord Jesus Christ. That only comes through a wounding. It comes through growing through adversity. It comes through correction and rebuke and admonishment. Change of what we think we are to understanding what we really are and then changing it. The Word of God through the preaching, being cut, being stabbed, being pricked, being pierced, being wounded in your pride, in your attitude, in your indifference, your arrogance, your stupidity. And actually, believe it or not, there comes a time when you enjoy that. I mean, you will say, "Well, I really needed that today. Thank you." Really? Somebody else gets mad over the Z28 issue and they are gone. You see the difference?

I will tell you why. You have realized and understand that for you, that in your life, the chastisement of God in your life comes through wounding.

Furthermore we have had fathers of our flesh which corrected us, and we gave them reverence: shall we not much rather be in subjection unto the Father of spirits, and live?

For they verily for a few days chastened us after their own pleasure; but he for our profit, that we might be partakers of his holiness.

Now no chastening for the present seemeth to be joyous, but grievous: nevertheless afterward it yieldeth the peaceable fruit of righteousness unto them which are exercised thereby.

You know that the wounding is not pleasant at the time, but you learn to like it because you know what it is going to lead to. He says in Hebrews 12:10, "He wounds us for our profit that we might be partakers of his holiness." He is faithful in that to us. You know why? Because He is the best friend we ever had. Where a pastor may get out of whack and say something to hurt you, He never will. So when you build that relationship with Him, you learn to trust Him and you learn to enjoy the preaching that He gives to you. You learn to look at yourself and constantly realize that we need to be refitted in a state of change. We know we get out of whack sometimes, and we know that the only thing that will get us back in whack is a little tap. When a little tap does not work, a swift boot in the rear end will help you even more.

Two of the greatest verses of the Christian life are right here before us today. Yet just like every time, every week, some of God's people today did not even bother to come to hear it. For them it will be what we talked about a couple of weeks ago, tomorrow, almost putting off changing to be what God wants you to be, procrastination all through the things of God that we do not want to change in our lives. But for so many of God's people, we know that the attitude of heart will be everything. Because of that, even the bitter things become sweet. You realize that at the end result, it is going to be okay for you because life is about change.

The attitude of a pastor is to love his people, look to his flocks, and give them the truth even when it wounds them. The attitude of God's people is to take that truth even when it wounds them and allow God to mold them, grow them, and take them through the level of spirituality that He wants them to be, and to grow and change about them whatever they need to change because "faithful are the wounds of a friend." When you get to that point in your life, the wounding, even the bitter things become sweet. You love all of the Word of God, not just when it tells you how good you are, which if we are honest would be a very short sermon because we all have our struggles. The pastor faithful in putting out the truth, the child of God faithful in receiving and then applying the truth. Through the right attitude, the pastor and his people, truth then does her perfect work in our lives to change us, to transform us into the person of the Lord Jesus Christ.

As the Bible says in Ephesians 4:13, that we grow up not unto him, grow up into him. It is a simple issue. Like everything else in life, we like to make it more complicated, but you can see today how simple it is. I took a long way around just to give you a simple little ending. How hungry are you for the truth? Because that determines it all. How well will you take the wounding? You leave the church when somebody says something that you do not like because you know you are wrong and you do not want to admit it, so it is easier to leave than to change. I know how it works. How hungry are you for the truth, the real truth about life? How hungry are you for the real truth about God? How hungry are we for the real truth about the world? How hungry are we for the real truth about His Word? And then the ultimate question, how hungry are you for the real truth about ourselves? Because that is where it has to start.

I have told you this story many, many times, and I must confess it is probably one that I heard so many years ago that impacted my life, and I have used it a thousand, a hundred thousand times. It is so perfect, and yet there will be people here today who will never hear it, so it is okay. Speaking of truth, wisdom, understanding, and all the things that we ought to want and be hungry for.

The story goes that over in the Middle East centuries ago, there was a—in every village had one—there was a wise man who everybody in the village went to. This man was spectacular in his ability to give information, to solve problems. His wisdom was seemingly endless. There was a young boy that grew up in that village who stood in awe of the old man, who was really up in his years by now. He wanted the knowledge that that old man had. He reveled in the thinking of someday being like that where people would come to him with their problems and he would always give them the wise answer for everything that they were dealing with.

So one day he goes to the old man and very humbly knocks on his door, and the old man invites him in, and he sits down and he begins to explain to him that he stood in awe of his wisdom and his ability to knowledge that he has. He said, "I really came up here today to ask you if you will take me on as your apprentice. I do not mean this in a bad way, but you are up in years and you are not going to be around forever, and somebody is going to have to take over, and I do not know anybody or see anybody, and I was just wondering if you would consider even sharing with me all the wisdom and the knowledge that I could just follow you along and listen and learn and do everything that you do, and then someday I could be the wise man that you are."

Now the old man looked at him and he said, "Yeah, I think that is a great idea." He said, "I will tell you what, be back here at three o'clock this afternoon and I will begin the process for you." Well, the old boy, he thought, "Man, that was easy." He was elated. He thought, "Man, I mean, you can imagine a little guy going home. I mean, he just met the great guru, and now he is going home thinking, 'I am going to be a guru too, also like him.'"

So three o'clock came around, and the little guy could hardly wait. He comes around three o'clock, and he comes up to that day, and the old man is standing on a porch just like this. The young boy says, "I am here, I am here, sir, I will do whatever you want me to do." He did not say anything, he just motioned him, put his hands on his shoulder. There is kind of a lake there, and he walked him down, and the kid is thinking, "Man, this is going to be some ceremony here." You know, he is going to do something spectacular. You know, maybe people are going to walk on water. So he takes him down, you know, and he takes him into the water, to the knees up there, and he gets this guy, and the old man was tall, he gets this kid with the water. He was just right about here, right under his mouth. He is looking up at him thinking, "Oh boy, this is great, he is going to give me one of these deals, you know, or he is going to, you know," and about that he began to open his mouth to say something, and about that time the old man put his hands right on his head and shoved him under the water. And he just stood there.

Now the kid did not get a mouthful of air when he went under because his mouth was open. So he is drinking a lot of swamp water. He is kicking around, jerking around, the old man just standing there, holding him under that water, just holding him around, just holding him down, kids screaming and, well, not screaming, but he is kicking around and all that stuff. The old man held him under for about 90 seconds. Just about the time that kid was ready to succumb and drown, he pops him up. The kid is gasping, choking, puking all over the place. The old man grabs him by the thing and lays him right on the beach and stands in front of him like that. The kid is coughing, choking, spitting up, and he is trying to get his words out, and he is infuriated. He says, "This is some kind of joke to you. I came to you wanting the secrets of wisdom and knowledge and to be able to help people and have the knowledge that you have. And this is what you do, halfway drown me?" He says, "You are a phony, you are a farce." He says, "I want nothing to—" and he is going through that, "I want all this stuff, you know," and then he just looks up at the old man and he says, "What is with you?"

You know what the old man said? He says, "Son, you want wisdom? You want knowledge? You want the wisdom? Well, until you want it, just like a few minutes ago, you wanted a breath of air,

you will never get it." You want that book? You want to know it? You want to have—well, I will tell you something. Until you want it, like you want your next breath of air, you will never get it.

"Faithful are the wounds of a friend." You will come to the place when you see that and understand that and allow God to change you, to transform you, to make you everything God wants you to be. You will then come to the place on Sunday morning, Thursday night in your prayer groups, driving down the road, listening to a sermon on the radio or in your CD deal. You will realize that because you love truth and you love it and want it more than anything else on this planet, even the wounding and the bitter things to your soul will be sweet things because you realize and understand that is what it takes to make you what God wanted you to be.

If you could really understand and look at it, you look at the sufferings on the cross, all the agony that He went through, He went through that for you. He took it for you, and then we get in one little business meeting or one little church service, something goes against our little, our little frail way we are, and we leave the church. When He hung on that cross and took the agony and the abuse and everything the devil had for one reason, He wanted to spare you from going through it so you could be everything that God wants you to be. He took the hard stuff so all you would have to do, as Paul said, the light affliction.

Attitude in the pastor putting out the truth, your attitude as a person in the church receiving that truth. Right motive from him putting it out because he loves you and wants you to be everything God wants you to be, right attitude in you taking it, realizing that and allowing God to change you so you can be whatever God wants you to be.