

Proverbs 27:21-23

Sunday 8/18/2019

SEC: Review of Foundational Principles

Last time we were together, you will remember, we had a great set of principles for each of us as individuals. We talked about how we see our reflection of who we really are, and most of us don't like that. The Bible says the Bible is a natural looking glass that we look into, and it shows us our natural condition. It says that somebody that is just a hearer of the word and not a doer, they go their own way and they forget what manner of man that they were.

The second thing we talked about was us as sinners saved by God's grace, how we see our reflection in the life of others. We all struggle with issues. And I talked about not developing an attitude toward other people or becoming self-righteous in our life with other people.

We looked at man's spirit and defined it as our mind. In the Bible, in Ephesians 4:23, it tells us that our spirit is our mind, and how that man's spirit or his mind will be the point of contact for the Gospel when God begins to touch us, or the world if you lend your spirit in that direction. We found that in Proverbs 20:27.

I talked about how that man's spirit either way will lead to man's heart, his heart attitude. What we align our spirit with will develop our heart attitude, and in time, the heart attitude will manifest itself within a lifestyle. When you put your spirit to the things of God, it will manifest it to a life conducive to following the Lord Jesus. When you give it to the world, then it will manifest itself that way.

In time, the spirit of man, the heart, the heart attitude will always lead to the action of man. We've talked about it in our people ministry and dealing with people and dealing with problems in people's life. One of the great concepts is attitude and action. Whatever your attitude is about anything will determine your action in time. It's just that simple.

I showed you how that people who never really build anything meaningful in their life will become an expert in destroying things. I'm talking in particular in the world, but also certainly in Christianity. You and I need to build our own relationship with Christ first. When we get to a point, then we help others build their relationships. And when we don't build anything in our lives, we become an expert in destruction, in most cases destroying things. In most cases, ourselves, our families, your marriage, your children. And it's as simple as that.

We talked about being satisfied. Nothing in the world will ever satisfy any of us. Therefore, we'll never have contentment. And you remember I ended last week with giving you seven great truths about contentment and satisfaction.

Last week and this week, and even next week, you're going to see how all of these move, all these verses that we're looking at, you'll see how that they all go together even though we're talking about them individually. They all go together to form a central thought or a central theme.

SEC: The Refining Fire of Praise (Proverbs 27:21)

Now today I want to look at Proverbs 27 and we want to look at three more verses: 21, 22, and 23. And here's what it says:

Proverbs 27:21

As the fining pot for silver, and the furnace for gold; so is a man to his praise.

Proverbs 27:22

Though thou shouldest bray a fool in a mortar among wheat with a pestle, yet will not his foolishness depart from him.

Proverbs 27:23

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

As I said, in the next couple of weeks and last week too, we're going to see how all this goes together in a practical way, and there's some great information here and some great things that we can all learn to apply to our own lives.

Let's look at verse 21 first. It says this: "As the fining pot for silver, and the furnace for gold; so is a man to his praise."

Now this is a great verse, and I know face value you don't maybe see it all, but let me show you how you develop this. In preaching or teaching, it's just as important for the pastor or the Bible teacher not just to give you the material, but it's important to show you how you get the material because sooner or later you're going to have to learn to get the Bible on your own, so this will be a good example for you.

Here's a great verse that will speak about a man's heart attitude toward God, and we saw this last week. A fining pot or a furnace will take silver and gold, and the furnace or the melting pot will purify it even more. What it does is, as you put the fire to it and it boils, it separates the dross or the impurities from the pure metal, and it makes the silver or the gold even more pure because all of the dross or impurities have been taken out of that.

We know from 1 Corinthians 3 that the Bible says that when you and I got saved, we laid a foundation in our lives. That foundation is your salvation the day you trusted Christ as your own personal Savior. Then it says the rest of your life, it's very simple, the rest of your life you build upon that foundation three things. We've talked about this many, many times.

1. Gold
2. Silver
3. Precious stones

That's a great passage that shows us that once we get saved, our drive and our motivation is to build something, not destroy anything, but to build something. And what we build on that foundation, first of all, is gold. We know from our past studies, gold represents the deity of Christ. We know that the silver represents the redemption Christ has, sold for thirty pieces of

silver. Now we know that the precious stones out of the Old Testament and again in the New Testament are people.

So what you do once you get saved, you lay that foundation. You learn more about Christ every day. You learn more about what He did for you every day. And then you take that to other people and you build it into their lives. That's what it's working, that's what He's saying.

When a man gets the right spirit after he's saved, when he gets the right heart attitude, when he gets the right mind, God's mind, then what he goes through in life—and we're all going to go through things in life, nobody is going to escape the downside of life, and in each life a little rain is going to fall sooner or later, and sometimes it's a storm. But when a man goes through those things and he has the right spirit, the right heart, the right mind, then what he goes through in his life, God will use it to perfect him in two main areas of his life that are absolutely vital.

One, he'll begin to understand who God really is in his life. There will be the gold being purified through the fire. The second thing, he'll understand better what God did for him in paying the price for his salvation. Now there's the purifying of the silver.

There are three aspects in my life, in your life, and God in the Bible in a very practical way. It's not complicated. We like to make it complicated, but it really isn't. The more complicated we make it, the easier it is for us to say, "I can't do it." But in reality, everything about God, the Bible, and your Christian life is as basic and simple as it could ever be. And there are three aspects to God in your life and my life in the Bible: it's simply what God has done for you in the past, what He's doing for you today, and what He's going to do for you in the future.

This lays the basis for the great doctrine found in Romans 8:28:

Romans 8:28

And we know that all things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are the called according to his purpose.

God puts us through the things that we all go through, no matter how hard they may be, even when it's because of our own stupidity. If a man will get the right attitude of heart, a man will get the right mindset on it, he'll get the right spirit connected to His Spirit, the Holy Spirit of God, not the spirit of the world, then he will better understand. Whatever he goes through, God will use that like a refining fire, like a furnace, to purge the impurities out of his relationship, and he'll come out better understanding who God really is in his life, and he'll come out understanding better what God did for him in his life.

As any Christian grows older—and these are just basic, fundamental truths, maybe you young kids don't get it yet, but you've been around for fifty, sixty, seventy years and you begin to understand—that any Christian, the older they grow and stay walking with God, he's going to face some tough times. Many times we don't like the tough times; we like the good time, but not the bad time. The Bible says that God is the God of the valleys just like He's the God of the mountains. And the same "Praise the Lord, Hallelujah" on the mountains is the same one in the

valleys. Whether we like it or not, whether we want to admit it or not, the older we get, the more we define ourselves, and life will be a defining process one way or the other.

The Bible says that we talked about it last week in 1 Corinthians 10:13 that there's no temptation such as common to man. We all go through the struggles in life. Nobody is going to be immune from them. No one is going to get through this life without any heartache. It just doesn't work that way.

I know in the charismatic world—and it is a real world—in the charismatic world, they talk about healing and healing and healing and all of those things, and yet people still die, people still get cancer, people still get this, they still get that. They can talk about all they want, but what really defines them is when push comes to shove, it simply doesn't work.

In God's people, you can say all you want to say about, "I love the Lord, praise the Lord, I go to Old Path Baptist Church or any Bible believer church you'll go to," but what really defines you is where you're at with the Lord today. And as a Christian sees his own reflection first of all in the Word of God, then in others, he has no illusion how bad he really is. But then he comes, as he grows and gets purified, he has no illusion how good God is to him and putting up with him.

Now you know why we can't put up with others? Because we don't understand how rotten we are to God and how much He puts up with us. And I'm telling you, it will develop a deep spiritual sense of appreciation in your life. Throughout the years, you'll learn to love God in a deeper way that you never thought possible when you first got saved. Why? Because when you go through in life, God proves to you what He, and you'll never forget what He's done for you by saving you, what He's doing to get you through what you're going through, and what He's going to take care of you in the future.

People talk about salvation, and I know the Bible says walk by faith and not by sight. Somebody says, "You can't see faith, faith is just blind trusting God." No, it's not. No, it's not. No, it's not at all. Whoever tells you that knows nothing about the Bible. Faith is the fact that you can trust God today because of what He did for you back here. And God didn't save you back here to dump you here. Now, He may have saved you back there and you dumped Him here, but He never saved you to dump you here. And I guarantee you, if He didn't save you back here to dump you now, He's going to be there for you in the future. And faith is the fact, in essence, you say, "So you say you can't see faith?" Sure you can. Look behind you. Whatever God did for you back here and did for you today, He's going to do for you tomorrow. But we don't see that.

Just as he joins his spirit to God's Spirit, and he develops an attitude of God's heart, God purifies him. God purifies the gold, that's the Christ. You learn more about Him. He gets more pure, loves you more, understand who He is. And the more you understand and get purified through going through the fire and the furnace, the more you understand who He is. You cannot help but understand in a greater way what He did for you, and He continues to get closer to God and make more like God in his thinking.

The things we go through in life, as you get older, I'm just going to tell you, the things we go through in life, the older you get, you're either going to grow closer to God or you're going to

grow farther away from God. You're never going to stay in the middle. Now I know we like to think we do. I had a guy tell me one time, "Well, I'm not really in fellowship with God, but I'm not really out of fellowship with God." No, you're in the Christian Laodicean twilight zone that doesn't exist. And the bottom line is this, as much as we don't like it, you either love Him with all your heart and your mind and your soul this morning, or you're His enemy. There's no middle ground. And we define ourselves the older we get. And the older we get, we should, we go through that purifying process in life. I've learned that you'll either give God what's right in your life, or you'll give God what's left of your life once you're done with it.

When we fail—and we all do, we're all going to have mistakes, we're all going to have bad days, we're all going to do stupid things—then God will use that if there's a base of truth in your life, if there's a foundation of truth in your life that has truly been laid, that when you go through what you do, whether it's your own stupidity, my own stupidity, or just life against you in general, then God will use that to keep us accountable to His mind, through His mind, through His Word, and through the Word of God. And God will purify us in the gold and in the silver.

There's more to this verse than that. The verse, it's a great verse because it shows us the real test of our attitude of heart toward God. The last part of verse 21 says, "So is a man to his praise." And that simply comes back to the real test of a man or a woman's mettle in their relationship with God: do you give Him the honor and glory of what He's doing or done in your life to God, or do you keep it for yourself? That's the real test for all of us. Are we doing what we do for Him or for ourselves? When praise comes our way, where do we place it? Do we put it at His feet or do we put it on our feet?

It's a great principle, the judgment seat of Christ, found in 1 Corinthians 3 and 2 Corinthians 5. Those are the two definitive chapters for it. And the Bible talks about in both places that those that have their works tested by fire and all of that. And if any man's fire abides—and again, the fire is up against the gold, silver, precious stone, or the wood, hay, and stubble for those who built nothing and destroyed everything—and the Bible talks about those who get a reward. In the Bible, you find that there are listed five crowns that in most cases, probably, you're going to find that these are the crowns that are going to be passed out at the judgment seat of Christ.

There's a difference between the rewards of the judgment seat of Christ and your millennial inheritance. They're not the same. Most guys teach they are, but that's because they don't know what they're talking about. There's a difference between the rewards that you get at the judgment seat and your millennial inheritance. And the Bible talks about five crowns:

4. An incorruptible crown in 1 Corinthians 9
5. A love of His appearing in 2 Peter 4
6. A feeding the flock in 1 Peter 5
7. The martyr's crown in James 1
8. The soul winning crown in Philippians 4

They're all based on not what you do, but your attitude of heart of why you're doing it. And the Bible says at some point, Revelation 4:10, once we get to the judgment seat of Christ and you get your reward, at some point once we get up into heaven, that we all bring those crowns that we

got and come into the throne room, and one at a time, Revelation 4:10, we lay those crowns down at the feet of the Lord Jesus Christ.

Revelation 4:10

The four and twenty elders fall down before him that sat on the throne, and worship him that liveth for ever and ever, and cast their crowns before the throne, saying,

The reason why we do that is because at the end of the day, He deserves everything. You may have served Him, but it was Him that saved you, gave you His Spirit. And in that day, as you stand there with your glorified body in the mind of Christ, and now you're everything that God wants you to be, you know where the honor and glory goes. So you take those crowns and you lay them at His feet.

There's a song that says, "And must I go in empty handed?" And it's a song based on Revelation 4:10 of a child of God that is standing there while people are going in and dumping crowns at His feet, and you go in with nothing.

I know right now your sinful lifestyle and whatever you're doing, whatever you're doing on your own, I know it looks good and you think you're going to slide by. Let me just tell you, where do you stand in that quarter that day? And there's a line of people going in, and some of them are driving in gospel dump trucks for crowns, and they're dumping them at His feet. And then it's your turn, and you and I got to walk in with absolutely nothing to put at His feet.

In that day, you'll fully understand it because you'll have the mind of Christ. But I want to tell you, you ought to understand that now because you have the mind of Christ here that tells you that. And that's the great test for you and for me: what do we do with the honor and glory of what we get because we serve the Lord?

I know there's a good reputation that you should have, and I know that people thank God for you. But you know what the real mark of your spiritual maturity is? When somebody says to you, "Man, that was a great thing you did," you don't take it yourself. You just say, "Well, praise the Lord, brother," because it's because of Him. It's a great verse and a great principle.

SEC: The Unchangeable Fool (Proverbs 27:22)

Now here comes the downside of that, verse 22: "Though thou shouldest bray a fool in a mortar among wheat with a pestle, yet will not his foolishness depart from him."

The verse is simply saying, when you're dealing with a fool, the chastisement of God or what he goes through will have absolutely no effect on him. And we saw this in Proverbs about the fool over and over and over again. The fool will never even recognize God's hand in his life or consider it. He can't see God using the negative things to get his attention.

I have dealt with people like this all of my almost fifty years in the ministry. I mean, I ask myself, "What does it take for you to wake up and realize that God has tried to knock on your door?" But they're a million miles from God's mind, a million miles from His Spirit. They have

no heart for anything of God. Yes, they're in church every Sunday. They even got the right Bible. Completely oblivious to anything that God is trying to tell them.

You realize that you're going to find in Christianity, when you start dealing with people, you're going to find some of God's people who you can't tell anything. They know it all. You can't give them any piece of advice. You can't show them where they're wrong. You can't show them nothing. They're oblivious to any principle.

➤ Three Key Words in Proverbs 27:22

- First of all, we got the word "bray." That's an old English word that means to rebuke somebody very strongly, get in their face. You just get into them, you let them have it. It's not a mild rebuke like patting them on the back and saying, "Come on, you can do better." No, it's getting in their face.
- Then you have the word "mortar." That's a stone bowl, like a salad bowl. That's a stone bowl that in this case they put wheat in, and they beat the wheat in the mortar, in the bowl, mashing it and beating it and mashing it up.
- Then you have the "pestle." The pestle is like a stone hammer or a maul or something that you put the wheat in the bowl, take the stone pestle, and then you grind it and you beat it, you turn it around and you mess it up and mash it within the bowl.

The picture here is God taking a fool and through the chastisement of grinding him, using under the example of a mortar and beating him to get him right for the purpose of separating him from his foolishness. But as the verse says, it doesn't do any good. No matter what God does, nothing will change his mind, his heart, or his spirit.

We live in the Laodicean church period. It's covered in Revelation 3 leading up to the rapture of the church in chapter 4. And we're in that period of time. And we know as you come through the seven periods of church history that the Laodicean church period is the last period, and it's the period where the church completely goes into apostasy.

The greatest period in church history was the one before it, which is the Philadelphia, which runs from about 1600 to 1900 with the coming out of your King James Bible. And then in 1900, this whole world, especially America, England, of course Europe had already done it, but now everybody is moving away from God's perfect Word and developing a Bible that is by man and not by God.

I've told you many, many times that when you lose your Bible, you lose a lot of things. In fact, there are seven things that you lose. We won't have time to go through them this morning, but one of the things that you lose is the understanding of God's salvation.

There are some absolute non-negotiable items that have to come with a man or a woman's salvation. And what the Laodicean church has done, through the taking the Bible out of the hands of God's people and putting mealy-mouthed pastors in the pulpit—and if you think that's stretching it, you go back to the book of Jeremiah and you look at Jeremiah's day, one of the greatest books in the Bible that shows you where we're at today, and go to that key chapter, I

think at verse 23, where he takes the whole chapter and talks about Israel's problem started in the pulpit with the pastors not telling them the truth.

What we've done in the Laodicean church—and I'm fearful of this—what we have done is God's salvation laid out in the Bible has been reduced to a feeling instead of a doctrine. Now you go to a church someplace, they don't preach the truth, they don't give you the, when it comes to salvation, it's just every man bow their heads and ask, "Pray this prayer." And I'm telling you, there's more to salvation than that, but that's where we are at today.

I'll be very honest with you, I'm just going to tell you, I worry about a lot of people, I really do. I think that you have to have an answer why Christianity is in the mess that it's in today. 120 years ago, everybody knew that drinking alcohol was wrong. There was no social drinking. You wait until they legalize marijuana. It doesn't stop God's people now, but when they legalize it, there's already Christians waiting in the wings that have declared themselves that once it becomes legal, that's the spirit I'm going to join myself to. Something's wrong in Christianity.

God's people today, here's the problem: God's people today want a God that accepts their lifestyle. We've forgotten the concept of "Be ye holy, for I am holy." We've forgotten the concept that God has separated us from the world. How in the world, how in the world, how in the world do you get separated from the world and then your church or you go back into the world? Something is fundamentally wrong. What's the difference? Why did He even come down and die for? What was the point? Why did God separate us from a sinful world and then give us a church that takes us back into it?

Here's the problem: today's salvation for a lot of God's people, I'm afraid, has been reduced to a feeling. And they got saved at some spooky time in their life that they needed something, and then they just made an emotional decision. Here's the problem: I see people who claim to be saved. I see people who claim to be saved, and you say, "Well, you don't have a right to judge." I'm not judging them. I'm just telling you, when you get saved, there's an evidence to that salvation. And if there's no evidence, you call the police and say, "There was a murder in my front yard." All the cop cars in Raytown show up to my house. They got their little flashlights out there. They're looking all around. And I said, "Somebody was killed in my driveway." They'll bring out the sniff dogs. They'll bring out the big lights. They'll bring out everything, metal detectors. And you know what they'll say? "Well, Mr. Alexander, nobody was murdered here." "Well, what do you mean nobody was murdered here, sir?" "There is no evidence of a murder." And my problem is, I don't think people are saved here. You know why? Because there's no evidence of that salvation. You don't get saved and then just live your life like the world. I'm sorry.

Here's the problem: it's not about what a man says. It's not about what a man claims. It's not about you getting up and talking about your experience. The real issue is, where's the evidence? I mean, you say you understand God enough to get saved, praise the Lord, but you don't understand God's Word enough to live your life for Him after you get saved.

Now, putting all of our self-delusion and our self-deception aside for a moment, that can't happen. That's impossible. You can't get salvation and not get a changed lifestyle. In this

Laodicean, godless, perverted Christianity, they tell you you can. I'm telling you, you can't. If any man be in Christ, he's a new creature. All things are passed away. And it doesn't say when you get into a church that accepts him, you can bring it back in again. When you're out of it, you're out of it. There's a heart transplant that takes place. Repentance is the fact that you turn from which way you were going and you go another way. It doesn't mean you counter-repent after you repented. Getting in Christ and not becoming a new creature is a Laodicean salvation. It's a farce. There has to be a change in us. Something has to be different. Some things have to go. We can't get saved and then live our life the same way and doing the same things and pretend to everybody around us, "Look at me, I'm okay." You have deceived yourself, and it scares me. You cannot get salvation and not get a changed life. It doesn't work that way.

When there's no evidence of no chastisement, and God's people just go on adding to their lifestyle, having fun, doing what they want to do, Hebrews 12:8 says that it talks about the fact that there has to be chastisement.

Hebrews 12:8

But if ye be without chastisement, whereof all are partakers, then are ye bastards, and not sons.

You're not a real child. You're deceiving yourself. And this is where we're at, the Laodicean church. This answers the fundamental question why so many of God's people claim to be saved and live like the world. And now you got pastors in the pulpit condoning it. They tell you it's okay to do this. They tell you it's okay to do that because they've lost the Bible. They've lost any sense of moral compass.

I'll tell you what's wrong with America. It isn't the Democrats. It isn't the Republicans. I'll tell you what it is: it's the pastors in the pulpit who dump this book that aren't preaching the holiness of God anymore and letting God's people live their lives anyway they want and giving them the God that accepts their godless lifestyle. There is absolutely no way you can get truly saved and it not affect your life and you just keep going on applying to your godliness, your lifestyle, and from all practical purposes, God just leaves you alone. And I'll tell you, He leaves you alone because you're not really His. And we've deceived ourselves.

We reject the Word of God. It means nothing. "We're saved, we're saved. Oh, I'm saved. You're not talking about me, I'm saved. I don't even like him and fairy dad, I'm saved." But you know what? You say you're saved, but the Word of God means absolutely nothing to you. You spent all last year never read through it one time. If we gave you a wide study margin Bible and pulled it out three years from now, it'd be blank pages. The Word of God means nothing to you, but your feelings and your emotions do. Your whole life is not based on what that book says. Your whole life is based on how you feel about it.

So you reject the Word of God. You reject the church. Some of God's people show up every two months, every six months, every four months, whenever it's convenient for them. It means nothing to them, the very established institution that the Bible says Christ loved and gave Himself for. It means nothing to you.

We reject ministry. God saved you, every one of you. God saved you for a reason. He saved you for a purpose. It wasn't to sit in the pew you're sitting in this morning and soak it all up and then go home and do what you want to do. Some of you came this morning to get the Word of God. You shouldn't have. You should have come here this morning to get a word from God in your life, what He wants you to do, what He's telling you personally. "Oh, I went to church today and it was a great show." What did it do for you? What did you get out of it?

Walk with God means nothing to you. "You'll have a walk with God." "Oh, I'm a Christian." No walk with God. Bible says he not walked with God was not for God took him. David walked with God. Abraham walked with God. But, "Oh no, you're a child of God, you just have no walk with God."

I'll tell you something else, there's no Holy Spirit of God guiding you in your life. "Oh, He lives inside me." Had a woman tell me the other week, she says, "Oh, I got it in my heart, but I just don't do anything with it." That is Laodicean mindset. "Oh, I got God in my heart, I just don't do anything with it." That's impossible. If you're truly saved, what's the matter with you? What planet do you live on?

There's no calling or purpose of God in your life. You exist for yourself. You exist to do what you ought to do. You couldn't sit down and pen out where you're going with God and what God wants you to do and what your plan is for God and what ministry in and where you're headed. But yet, I get it, you've rejected the Word of God, God's church, God's ministry, God's walk with God, God's Holy Spirit, God's calling and purpose, but yet you're saved. Wow, what a reality check it's going to be for you when you wake up, close your eyes to the sleep dumb night, wake up in the lake of fire.

Listen, salvation is a changed heart based on your turning your life to another direction. It's called repentance. It's that simple. It's leaving your margaritas behind. It's leaving your lifestyle away. It's leaving your drugs aside. It's leaving the booze aside. It's leaving the lifestyle aside. It's simply, "I'm a new creature in Christ Jesus. All things are passed away. All things become new." That's the direction. And we have kidded ourselves. That's why He can put you into a bowl with a pestle, and He can beat you up six ways to Sunday, and it will not separate a fool from his folly. And if you didn't get God's heart, that's why nothing has changed. You're just a Laodicean Christian with a Laodicean salvation that pretends it's all real, but there's nothing about you and there's no evidence at all. And I feel sorry for people like that.

It isn't necessarily your fault. I'm telling you, the judgment seat of Christ is going to be a barn burner for a lot of pastors who stood in that pulpit and the people trusted them. You may not like what I'm saying today. You may not even like me. And you may be a visitor here or somebody that's popped in a few times to say, "Well, I ain't coming back." I'm sorry about that, but go out of here knowing this: at least I told you the truth. I could lie to you like they all do. They lie to you because they want something from you. No bucks, no Buck Rogers. I make it very clear when I start before we even get into the message, I don't want your money. God doesn't need your money. Pastors get up there, "Look, if you don't give today, the church is going to close the doors. We're going to lose the light. We're going to at the lips of staff people go." Then let them

go. You know why? Because God always orders what He pays, pays for what He orders. Like you got there, like, "Well, they're going to shut the lights off in heaven if you don't give." Are you kidding me? No, but God will come down and shut your lights off. We're so caught up in this age, the spirit of this age. It's like the book of Judges, that there's no king in Israel, and every man's doing what's right in his own eyes. Terrible situation then, now.

SEC: The Pastor's Diligence and the State of the Flock (Proverbs 27:23)

Okay, I gave two verses, and some of you are smart and a little bit smarting. Now the next verse I'm going to preach to myself. You gave two to you, one to me, but I'll preach twice as long to me because I need it. You say, "Well, I'll pray for your brother Bob." Good, you need to. I need to pray, and you need to practice. Keep doing it.

Now look at verse 23: "Be thou diligent to know the state of thy flocks, and look well to thy herds."

We've come through this thing, and we've talked about what you need to be and what you should be. But I'm going to tell you, and I said it before, the problem in the Laodicean church and the problem with the people today who have not got the truth, that have deceived themselves, it goes back to the pulpit. It goes back to the man who stands in that pulpit and whether he preaches the truth or whether he does not. Where he tells you how wonderful you are, he tells you how beautiful you are, he tells you how this and that and gives you all that you want to hear, but he's afraid to tell you the truth because if he does, you'll get mad and leave. And no bucks, no Buck Rogers.

He can't do all the mystical, magical things that he wants to do. He can't support the praise band. He can't support the light show and the smoke coming out from under the pulpit. He can't support all the great lavishes of his church. His Starbucks will go out of business in his church. McDonald's will have to close its doors in his church. But we don't have that problem here. We do have a Starbucks on Thursday night, but it runs out pretty quick. We had a little restaurant for a while, but you gave up on it with the hot dogs. When I was going out food, people have to bring in their own food. What you need to study is the miracle of the loaves and the fishes.

This verse is to me, and I take full responsibility for it. All the verses last week, today, and next week will be opening up our understanding of who we really are. I get that. And now we have a verse here that's aimed right at me as your pastor, for it says that I should, as your pastor, know the state of my flocks.

You have to love how the Bible will connect the Old Testament stories to the New Testament principles. I've told you many, many times, the key to the Bible are the words. Bible never violates its own principles. The Old Testament types and pictures and words reveal the New Testament doctrines. No Greek or Hebrew needed.

Now he says we are to know the state of our flocks as pastors. In New Testament Christianity, one of the single greatest doctrines, which is probably one of the great unknown doctrines today, will be the doctrine of standing and state, which 120 years ago every pastor knew and understood, every Christian knew and understood it. But today, in the Laodicean church age,

because we moved into a feeling salvation, we've moved into a salvation that I feel I'm saved, or tomorrow you'll feel you're not saved.

There are days in my life where if I had to get to heaven on how I felt, I probably wouldn't make it. Thank God I don't have to work on my emotions. I know whether I'm throwing up or I'm out there on a porch throwing up in the middle of the night, sick as a dog, or I'm having a good day. The neighbors are filming that by the way while I'm doing it. I want you to know my salvation is not based on how I feel because my feelings change every day. That's why you're so up and down. That's why you can't get a base handle on anything in life. You're in and you're out, you're up and you're down. You're like that verse in Proverbs, you're a city broken down without walls because you have no rule over your own spirit, and you're busted, you're broken, and it just pushes you like the wind and water every way it goes.

I thank God whether I get up tomorrow morning and I feel good and I feel same, or I get up in the morning and I couldn't get to heaven on my feelings, it doesn't matter. I got an absolute book that tells me no matter how I feel, my foundation is laid in my life. That's called your standing. It's found in Romans 5:1-2, the great beginning in Romans chapter 5 of God explaining salvation for the New Testament church.

Romans 5:1

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

Romans 5:2

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

There's your standing. Your standing in Christ Jesus is your foundation that you built, and you're fixed on that foundation. That's your standing. Your standing is unmovable. You're seated in heavenly places. You're standing.

Then the child of God has a state. That's found in Philippians 4:11:

Philippians 4:11

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

You see, your standing is your eternal salvation in Christ Jesus, which is fixed and it never changes. Your state is your walk with God every day of your life that will change. Where one is absolutely fixed, your standing, Romans 5, the other one is your state of mind that changes from day to day unless you renew that mind, let this mind be in you, which was also in Christ Jesus. Philippians 4:11. State will be your spiritual condition in your life.

Of course, you might guess, in your NIV, it took the word "state" out and put the word "condition" in, so it would destroy any cross-references back to Proverbs. But that's what they do with the Laodicean church age. And it says to look to the state of thy flocks.

I want to tell you, a pastor will never become an expert with the Bible. No Christian ever will. There are no experts when it comes to the Word of God. They're just men and women who are in different levels of being a student. But a pastor should be an expert on human nature. As you grow and you get involved in people's lives, you too, because the Bible will clearly lay out the patterns of human nature. And as you learn those patterns, you learn to see where people are. This is why he says to know the state of thy flocks.

Somebody says, "Well, you can't read my heart. You don't read my heart. You can't see my heart." You're absolutely right, I can't. But you know what? I don't need to. I'll just watch the patterns because out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaks. You are where your heart's at today, and it's just that simple. The patterns are infallible. They're invaluable. They never lie. Some are good and some are bad, but at the end of the day, it defines us. And any pastor who knows his Bible, he understands he's to look to the state of his flocks. And when you learn, when you see these patterns, you learn them, you catalog them, then it gives you tremendous insight into the state of the people that God has given you to help them.

The Bible's filled with them. You got Adam and Eve, what a great example they are in patterns. Cain and Abel, Enoch, Abraham, Lot, Esau, Jacob, David, and Sodom, the kings of Israel. They're all through your Bible. Patterns of human nature are laid out because human nature is always the same. I don't care if it's the Old Testament before the law, during the law, New Testament, and the tribulation. Human nature never changed. It's the one fixed thing about us that when you get the principles involved, it never fails. That is so important because you can fake Christianity. Boy, can we. Boy, can we. Boy, can we fake Christianity. We all do from time to time, and some are better than others. Some is a practice that really well, some got it down. They know the terminology. They know the right Bible. They know what to say. If you would call it him to pray, they'd pray a beautiful prayer. It would just be wonderful.

The reason why they're so important is because you can fake Christianity, but you can't fake the patterns. 1 Corinthians 8:3 says:

1 Corinthians 8:3

But if any man love God, the same is known of him.

This verse, it is in the Bible, but I'll put it in as a postscript as everybody else does. If any man doesn't love God, it shows too. Why? Patterns.

We have pastors that listen to what people say. I never listen to what anybody says. I've been lied to so many times. People will deceive you. They'll put forth some kind of facade. You don't listen to what they say. You simply watch the patterns and see if it lines up with what they say, the evidence.

A new Christian or one that begins to grow in the Word of God, I mean, they can be saved for quite a long time and never grow. You know that. We have them come in all the time, and we help them. You will grow through five basic patterns of maturity. Just that simple. You can always know the state of your flocks. You just watch where the person is at. You watch their attitude about it. You watch what they're doing. Going up through those five levels will require

us to fix some things. You can't go up through these five levels and just stay the way you are. I'm sorry. They're foolproof. You can't move up through these five levels unless you want to get rid of some things. And if you don't, then you're not going to go up through them. You can't go through these five levels without changing some things about ourselves.

This is the dilemma of a mega church. Nobody cares where you're at. There's nobody looking at your spiritual growth. We want you there after we take up their offering. If you want to leave, it's okay. Nobody's there to make sure you get what you need. Nobody's there to know your state.

I've spent my whole life dealing and working with people to try to help them be better. And I can say that the Bible is 100% correct when it says one thing: that there are two kinds of people in this world, there's wise and then there's foolish. The wise man will move through these five stages and levels and get to where God works through him and brings him to where he needs to be, and it's an incredible concept to watch. The fool will start somewhere and never finish. They'll always bail out long before. They won't even make it through the first level. They'll come to the place that the moment they start to get into the Bible, the moment they start to realize there's some things in their life that they have to change, they're not going to want to change.

My job when working with you is as quickly as I can determine where you're really at so I can better help you. I tell people all the time when I start to work with them, "Just tell me the truth. I don't care what you did or what you didn't do, just tell me the truth because if you lie to me, you're going to send me down a road to help you that's the wrong road. I got to have the bottom line here." But people won't always tell you the truth about themselves, and I get that. I understand that's human nature. I get it. But I need correct information to get the right plan to help you. So I just rely on the patterns. When I see a guy or a gal coming up through and they're growing and they're getting those five things working in their life in stages, they're coming up through those levels, do you know where their state is?

You got people that are in this church or any church, been there five, six, seven years, and you're no farther along than the day you came in. Something's wrong. Don't you understand? Now maybe you're okay with that. If you're okay with it, I'm okay with it. But I'm telling you that isn't the way it's supposed to be. My job is to help you begin to navigate up through those five levels. And I know people say, "Well, you know what, you can't read a man's heart." You're absolutely right, I can't. Don't want to after the objective book of Jeremiah. I don't want to. But I will tell you this, I don't need to. You will define yourself by the patterns and your state.

The Bible will always show you what you really have. When we started the people ministry a number of years ago, we probably got seventy or eighty people in there who I have taken in, who work with me in dealing with people, and I've trained them. I basically started in Genesis, and I don't even where we're at now, but we're someplace in the Bible, and I'll figure it out before we get there next time. And all I did is start in Genesis and lay out every pattern that I thought that they needed to see because they work with me.

Young couples will come in, they'll have marital problems. I'll put them with somebody. Somebody will want to have marital counseling. I'll put them with somebody. Somebody comes in with issues. I'll put them with somebody. I put them with people because I trust them, because

they understand, and I understand that I've trained them the way I wanted to handle it, and they'll handle it that way. And I've taught one of the greatest principles anywhere in the Bible is the Solomon principle. And it's a simple little deal, and most people, they just look at the story and they don't really get it.

It's that story back there when the two harlots came to Solomon, and Solomon didn't know who they were. And the two women come in and he said, "What do you need, ladies?" And he said, "Well, we both had children, babies, and last night my baby died, and her baby died, and so she took her dead baby and put it in my bed, took my live baby and put her, now she's saying that the live baby is hers and the dead baby's mine." The other woman says, "No, no, no, no, your honor, it's just the other way around. It was her baby died, and so she did that to me, and she's got my baby." And the other one said, "No, no, no, your honor, she's got my baby, this is my." Well, Solomon didn't know who they were. He'd had a clue. They're both harlots, so you can't trust either one of them. So what do you do in a situation like that? It's a lot like when people come in, you don't really know what you have. You don't know what you got. They'll tell you anything you want to hear.

So what does Solomon do? Solomon didn't know who was telling the truth. There'll be many times in dealing with people that you don't really know if you're getting everything. You don't really know the state. So the fastest way to get to the state is what Solomon did. He said, "Come in here, bring a big sword." And he brought a sword in. And Solomon said, "Take, give him the baby," and the guy said, "Okay." And he says, "Cut that baby in half. Give half to her, give half to her. You guys decide which half you want." And he took that sword. About that time, the real mother said, "Oh no, no, no, don't do that. Let her have the baby. I'd rather have my baby go to a stranger than you kill my baby." The other woman whose baby it was, said, "Oh, let's cut that little sucker up in pieces." And Solomon said, "She's the real mother." Now you know that was a chancy, iffy thing. I mean, both mothers had a bad attitude that day. That little baby would have been cut into pieces. But it's a great principle because he called for a sword. And the Bible says in Hebrews 4 that the Word of God is a sharp two-edged sword. So when I don't know who's telling the truth or I don't know where a state's really at or I don't know what somebody really wants to do, you know what I do? I just put them under the sword because the Word of God, once I put you into the Bible of being disciplined, being worked with, where you're told what you got to change, what you got to do, trust me, that sword will produce the truth just like it did for Solomon. And I don't have to say, "She's no good, he's no good." I would never say that anyhow. But you will prove and define where you're really at when you're up against the sword because it takes the emotions out of it. It takes everything out of it. It comes at that point right back to the book and what it says. And it's an incredible principle called the Solomon principle.

At the gym I go to, and I'm sure this is true at every gym, they have what they call personal trainers. Personal trainers, and I don't mean this in a bad way, I mean, I'm sure this is not totally true, but from the ones that I've seen up there, there are people who need help and can't get motivated by themselves. You can always tell when the people who have a personal training, you see the guys over there, man, they're pumping 350 pounds. They're working out. They're doing this. They're running. They're jumping. They're doing all this stuff. They're picking up big tires

and putting them up. They're doing all things. And you got somebody else over there to just stand in there and the guy's having them stand on one foot and they're just saying, "How am I doing?" I'm the guy over here in the mirror. It's actually one of those carnival mirrors that looked bigger than I really am. I get it. And there's certainly nothing wrong with that, and hopefully they'll pick it up on their own. But obviously most the guys, girls go in there, they don't need a personal trainer. They're motivated. They know what they're going to do. They know what they got to do. They're there because they know they're going to be there.

In Christianity, we have people just like that. They need a personal trainer. They can't see it. And so they need somebody to help them. But I know it's true at the gym, but it's also true in Christianity. I'll give you a personal trainer to help you, but let's not fall under the illusion the personal trainer is going to fix you because the problem that you have is not one of a personal trainer. The problem that you have is one of no self-discipline. And all the personal trainer can do, whether it's at the gym or whether it's here, just teach you to be self-disciplined about what you've got to do for yourself.

Certainly you don't, and maybe it happens in the gym, I mean, they guys get like \$200 a week or a month or something like that. They make pretty good money on it. Certainly you wouldn't want to have a personal trainer for the next forty years of your life. And in Christianity, you don't want that either. At some point, you need to go through those levels of maturity, and you need to become a coach for somebody else's life. And it's just that simple. Getting what you need based on where you're at, your state. And the Bible says a pastor should know the state of his flock.

I'll tell you something else, a parent should know the state of your children because you as a father, you're the pastor. That's your church. Just as I'm supposed to know the state of my flock, you better know the state of yours. And when you don't, you know what happens.

I meet with parents all the time. I've had several in the last week since camp to help sit down with them to get a direction for their kids. And it's been some great times we've had. We really enjoyed it. Bring the kids in, when we sit down, the kids are fired up from camp. Mom and Dad want to be part of the process. The accountability groups are going well. I try to get moms and dads, you stay into that and get in touch with it. The kids seem to be doing really good, going to make all the difference in the world.

I meet with you singles. You singles are out of high school now, and you got a direction in life. You're not sure you want to go. Some of you want to do this, some of you want to do that. And I try to help you get the direction. I meet with married couples to help them either pre-marital counseling or after they're married or if they're having issues, to help them get a plan for their life. Why? Because I'm going to know the state of my flocks.

I always thought I was entering here, says as a pastor, I'm to know the state of my flocks. I never said anything about the number of them. The judgment seat of Christ will be like what most churches should be: it will be about quality, not quantity.

Then the last part of verse 23, "look well to thy herds." My job is not only to teach you, but to look out for you. There's a unique relationship that needs to be between pastor and member of his

church. The pastor should understand why God gave you to him and his responsibility to you. There's no accident that you're in this church. It's no accident that God brought you here. Most churches don't think that way, but when you know the Bible, you know that that's true. There's a reason that God brought you here. He wants you to do something. And there'll be people to try to pull you out of it all along, and it's a thing where you got to be smarter than that. You got to realize that God could have put you anywhere that He wanted you to go, and He put you here. Why? Because you've got some things He wants you to learn. So the pastor understands why God gave you to him and his responsibility to you.

In that, the church member has the perception and understands why God gave you the pastor He gave you, and you use him to fulfill all God has for you. And that brings up to an interesting scenario because you'll use the pastor one way or the other. You'll use him to get all that God wants for you, or you'll use him to get all you want to get. The first one's okay, the second one's not.

The pastor should have the ability to see where you're at and to see what you need when you can't see it for yourself. There'll be times in your life when circumstances cloud your vision. There'll be times in your life where you're going through something that this may look like the thing to do when it's the worst thing you could do. There has to be a relationship and a bond. If you trust the man that God gave you to be the pastor in the church, then you understand that's where God puts you, and they all use the Bible together. That's the safest spot to be in.

Years ago, a hundred years ago, the two safest places on earth was in a mother's womb and a church. But now that's both changed because they rip babies out of the mother's womb through abortion, so that's no longer safe. And you go to the church and they teach you some goofy system that has nothing to do with God and the Bible, and that's no longer safe. So the only safe place you can have is to get a church that teaches you the Bible, that believes the Bible. And that's the only place you can have that believes the Bible where you have, and I'm just not saying me, I'm talking about a pastor who understands where you're at, where God has put you, and you two work together through those things.

He sees you as God sees you. He should. He sees your potential, not necessarily your weakness, though he knows you have them, but he will perfect you through those weaknesses, not castigate you, not isolate you.

I tell people all the time because we have people come in here that get pretty beat up sometimes, and it's just one of those things where it happens. Some of you've been in churches where you got treated terribly and you got burned really bad. Chris Piscano and his wife are two of the finest people on the planet, and I love them with all my heart. But you got beat up where you were worked in. They kicked you guys everywhere from six ways from Sunday. And I watched you come in, sweetheart, and you were very skeptical of everything, and I don't blame you because you got burned. But I remember telling your husband, who I loved, and she's just invaluable to this church as you are. You did a great job at camp and all and all the things you do. Now don't cry, I'm not telling you this to make you cry. We're out of Kleenex.

But I told him, I said, you know what, because I know him, I baptized him. He was just a little kid, and I baptized him. And I remember I asked everybody, I said, "You know for sure you're saved?" And it was a big church, must have been 2,000 people there. And I had this little guy here, and I knew he was a street preacher at that point in time. And I said, "Do you know for sure you trusted the Lord Jesus Christ?" You over here, "Yes, I did." "Shut up, kid." Put his head on the water and hell he went on the water. But I told him, and I've told other people here, "This church will never hurt you. This is a safe place. I'll never get an attitude against you. I'll never go behind your back. I'll never cut your legs out from under you. I'll never sandbag you. I'll never hold you back from what God wants you to do. You'll never be a threat to me. This church will never hurt you. Now you may hurt yourself, but we won't hurt you." And I gave you guys all the freedom, and look what you've done in our church and all. And so many of you have done the same thing. You know why? It's because we all got issues. If I just focused on all your problems, we never get anywhere. So I put those aside. I watch you what you want to do with those levels. I watch you get the right spirit, get the right mind, get the right heart. And it's a relationship that we have to have, and I'm sorry that it's not that way, but it should be.

A pastor has to see you as God sees you, your potential, not your weakness. And he'll take your very weakness and work with you and perfect you through it. Your personal relationship with God and your personal relationship with the pastor, your personal trainer. Bible says in Hebrews 5:4 that you are to exercise your senses to discern both good and evil. Okay, I'm your personal trainer. You're being disciplined by somebody, or somebody's working with you. That's what they're doing.

Where's Lauren? Lauren Brackenat, is she here this morning? Oh, yeah, yeah. She works at Scooters. Scooters is my favorite place in the morning. I go through there before you started working there, and I know the girls up there, they're nearly sweet kids. And so when you started working there, I told him about you and everything, and you told him I was your pastor, right? So I drove through there, and I call you by your name. These girls in there could not believe that a pastor would know your name. Is that not correct? They couldn't believe it. I mean, your pastor knows your name. Your pastor actually knows who you are. That's the mindset today. You know why? Because that's the way pastors are. Now I thank God I remembered your name because I'm terrible with names. "Hey, hey, buddy, how you doing? Hey, Ralph, working today?" "You mean Lauren?" "Oh, yeah, Lauren, Lauren, Lauren, yeah, that's her name. Lauren Ralph, that's her middle name." You see.

This is the importance of any pastor commending his life to where God sends him because everybody today wants to play musical churches. They don't want to build a church because they don't know how. So they want to go to a church for three or four years, hobnob with a fellowship, and then when the music stops, get another church that's a little bit bigger. That's how it works.

Proverbs 31:16 says that you consider a field and you buy it. The book of 2 Corinthians, which is really the handbook of ministry for the New Testament church, in chapter one, every chapter talks about a different aspect of the ministry. But in chapter one, it starts out that the pastor should be one with the people through suffering together, a lifelong ministry built on lifelong relationships to build a church with a lifelong ministry. That's what it takes today.

A guy who gets at a place where he's been in the ministry twenty, thirty years, he gets to be sixty, sixty-five, and he actually just comes at a place where he really is valuable. Now he's learned a lot of things. He should be at the place where he's at his peak now. Now they all want to go to the dinosaur graveyard down in Florida, retire, turn it over to a younger guy. Really? You're going to get it to where you're at and you should really know what you're doing now. Now you're going to get it to that point, turn over somebody who doesn't know what they're doing? You know how you know when you retire? When God kills you. God takes you home. Then you know for sure it was time to quit.

When God's people move up those levels of maturity, as they do, the whole church moves up those levels of maturity. And in time, both will get to the place as individuals and as a church that God will use them mightily, and God will continue to open the doors of opportunity.

There are two great patterns for this in the New Testament that I follow very rigidly. One of them is obviously we talk about the church at Antioch in Acts 11:12-13. And there you'll find that that's where they're first called Christians. In Acts 11, the church at Antioch shows the attitude of the people, and it goes through six things that they knew. The second church is found in Acts 20, and that'll be church at Ephesus. In Acts 20, it shows the attitude of the people in their relationship with God, and it shows their six things that they do. Where one shows the six things that they know, the other one shows the six things that they do. Two great models.

These are some great principles today, last week and next week too. One spirit, one heart, one mind, growing up through the levels of maturity, being a wise son and not a foolish one, understanding that salvation, the day, the nature we live in scares me to death, and pastors, the church being there for you in all things.

Paul told Timothy, and I leave you with this. Paul told Timothy, who was his son in the Lord, and that's another great model and example. But he told Timothy in 1 Timothy 4:16:

1 Timothy 4:16

Take heed unto thyself, and unto the doctrine; continue in them: for in doing this thou shalt both save thyself, and them that hear thee.

Now he's not talking about saving somebody for salvation. He's talking about saving somebody from being deceived. He's talking about saving somebody from getting back into the world. He's talking about bringing somebody up through the New Testament concept of what a pastor should be, what a church should be, and what the people in the church should be of helping each other. The state, the standing.

Then he says in verse 15:

1 Timothy 4:15

Meditate upon these things; give thyself wholly to them; that thy profiting may appear to all.

There's evidence of your relationship with Christ. I can't stress that enough. There has to be evidence in your life that something changed. You can't go through your life as a Christian five,

ten, fifteen years and struggle with the same things you struggled with before you were saved or say you're saved. You can't go through life and not get a handle on the things of life and just letting your life just blow you every which way. There has to be a process of defining yourself through the levels of maturity that your profiting may appear to all, that they see in you, "Yeah, you're not perfect. Yeah, you can be a jerk sometimes. Yeah, most of the time." But there's evidence you're not the same person you were. You handle things differently. You look at things differently. Your family's different. Everything about you. And even when things go wrong within your family, you deal with them biblically. That's the key. That's what the church is all about. That's what our relationship together has to be.

Most pastors want to be dictators. They want to tell you what to do and tell you what to do when to do it and everything. That's not my style. I'll just preach to you the truth and go after your heart. And when God gives me men and women who want to line their heart up with God, we're good to go, and I'm ready to get it done. But you're going to find in any ministry, all my life, wherever you go, it wouldn't matter, this church or any other church, you're going to find people who simply don't want to do that. They're like the fool in the example in the mortar that God just keeps grinding and pounding them, but He cannot separate their foolishness from them because they've chosen to be that way.

Let's hold up and pray.