

## I. The Defining Chapter: Proverbs 31

Last week, we entered into Proverbs 31. We are working toward the conclusion of the book of Proverbs, and yet we will be in it for quite a while. Without a doubt, Proverbs 31 is the greatest defining chapter in the Bible that I know of, inspirationally, on the New Testament work that God has called us to do. I do not know of a place anywhere in the Bible that, in one concentrated place, goes into the detail of everything that we are to be and to do as a child of God. It is just one of the most incredible passages in the Bible.

I know from many of you talking with me and telling me this is your favorite chapter. I have been getting texts over the last couple of weeks from people who cannot wait to get into this chapter, and I totally understand it. It is very commendable that you want to really glean more out of it and get as much as you can from it.

Last week, I gave you a great verse in Philippians 1:6, and it truly is the verse that we want to keep before us as we move through the rest of this chapter.

*Philippians 1:6*

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

That is, without a doubt, a demanding verse for all of us. We see an incredible introduction to this chapter as Solomon's mother, Bathsheba, instructs him on his responsibility as a king. As a king, he had a job that he needed to do for the people. As Christians, the day you got saved, God initiated a work in you.

She warns him of the two things that will hurt him as a king, and behold, they are the same two things that will hurt us in our work. Of course, the first one was a strange woman. We know from the book of Proverbs that this deals with false gods and false religions, even though it can be a real woman. We talked about how that messes up so many young men.

Then, wine and strong drink. We saw how that is a picture of the world, an intoxication that perverts judgment, not only in the spirits that you drink, but also in being caught up in the world system and how it perverts everybody's judgment. One will steal your heart from God. We saw that in 1 Kings 11:1-2, where the actual women did that to Solomon. The emphasis is not so much on the women's character, which is very questionable, but on the gods that they had and followed, which they brought in, clearly showing you how that works. The other will cause us not to judge with a righteous judgment. We saw that in Proverbs 31:1-9 last week.

We saw the importance of understanding how, in the church age, we have actually taken the place of Christ. We really got into this yesterday in Hebrews 1 when we were talking about Christ being the express image of God's person. We talked about how it all fits into our life and our world as Christians, understanding that we have taken the place of Christ fundamentally to

finish the work that He started. I told you last week how, when Christ showed up, He was here for 33 years, but His ministry only consisted of a little over 3 years. In that time, He set the pattern and the model. Then God took Him back to heaven, instituted the church age, and now we get born again in the image of Christ, which is God. Now we finish that work. Right now, we do the work, and later, we will reign with Him as kings.

## II. Understanding the Times and Our Work

There is a great story in the Bible that is one of my favorite stories. I do not know if you know it or not, but the Bible talks about the parameters of Christ coming back. Nobody knows the day and the hour; we understand that. But the Bible is very clear that we should know the times and the seasons. This is oblivious to most people, but in your own Bible, you have five ways, five accounts, five stories that really show you in a general sense the time element that we have, that we can understand the day and the hour. Actually, there are six now that I think of it.

We find in 1 Peter 3 that God has a day system. He tells us in Genesis 1 that God created everything in six days and rested on the seventh. We know that is a picture that one day with the Lord is a thousand years, and a thousand years is one day. We know that is telling us that man is going to be on this earth for six thousand years, and then the seventh, the eternal day, is going to be the millennial reign of Christ. You can figure out all about the caveman stuff and man being here 40,000 years ago. All that stuff is to get you around the Bible.

The second way would be based on the New Testament, and that would be a three-day or a third-day system. Anytime you get into your Bible and you find something happening on the third day, you will want to watch it very carefully; that is a great key. Over in Mark 13, you have the watch system, four watches that actually bring you through the New Testament church. On the fourth watch, it is the second coming of Christ; it is incredible.

You have, where we are going to look right now today in Matthew 20, an hour system. We will get back to that in a moment. In the book of Revelation, the first three chapters, you have the seven periods of church history; you can trace it through that very easily. And then, of course, the one I forgot when I was doing my outline here, you have Matthew 24, which is the generation system. So there are at least six ways that you can fundamentally track where we are in relationship to what God is not only doing, but that He is coming back. I say this again: no man knows the day and the hour, but Paul says we should not be ignorant of the times and the seasons.

In Matthew 20, there is a great story that illustrates our work. It is one of the great stories found in the Bible, and it is one of my favorites. I want to read it for you here, Matthew 20:1-16, and then I will come back and show you how you put these things together. Keep in mind, the day you got saved, He began a good work in you and will perform it until the day of Jesus Christ.

*Matthew 20:1-16*

*For the kingdom of heaven is like unto a man that is an householder, which went out early in the morning to hire labourers into his vineyard.*

*And when he had agreed with the labourers for a penny a day, he sent them into his vineyard.*

*And he went out about the third hour, and saw others standing idle in the marketplace,*

*And said unto them; Go ye also into the vineyard, and whatsoever is right I will give you. And they went their way.*

*Again he went out about the sixth and ninth hour, and did likewise.*

*And about the eleventh hour he went out, and found others standing idle, and saith unto them, Why stand ye here all the day idle?*

*They say unto him, Because no man hath hired us. He saith unto them, Go ye also into the vineyard; and whatsoever is right, that shall ye receive.*

*So when even was come, the lord of the vineyard saith unto his steward, Call the labourers, and give them their hire, beginning from the last unto the first.*

*And when they came that were hired about the eleventh hour, they received every man a penny.*

*But when the first came, they supposed that they should have received more; and they likewise received every man a penny.*

*And when they had received it, they murmured against the goodman of the house,*

*Saying, These last have wrought but one hour, and thou hast made them equal unto us, which have borne the burden and heat of the day.*

*But he answered one of them, and said, Friend, I do thee no wrong: didst not thou agree with me for a penny?*

*Take that thine is, and go thy way: I will give unto this last, even as unto thee.*

*Is it not lawful for me to do what I will with mine own? Is thine eye evil, because I am good?*

*So the last shall be first, and the first last: for many be called, but few chosen.*

Inspirationally, this is a great picture. It is a picture about the restoration of the nation of Israel and the kingdom of heaven. But I want you to notice there is a steward involved here. We know from John 19:26 and Romans 9 and 11 that the church has become the steward of the nation of Israel. So what we are seeing here is an incredible picture. It is a picture that God is going to restore the nation of Israel, but during that church age, inspirationally, God has called workers into the vineyard, and that inspirationally would be us.

One of the amazing things about this story is you can actually break it down, like you can all the stories in the Bible. Here is how you do it. We have a 12-hour day, and it is broken down: early in the morning, the third hour, the sixth and the ninth hour, and then the eleventh hour. Then Christ comes back the 12th hour, 6 o'clock. So it runs from 6 in the morning to 6 in the evening. These times will represent for us an actual period in history. It is an easy formula to figure it out if you ever want to figure it out. Here is how you do it.

We know church history runs 2,000 years. That 2,000 years obviously depends on however God counts it, but fundamentally, whenever the Lord decides to come back, it will be 2,000 years based on how He is counting it. We may not understand how He is counting it. So we have 2,000 years fundamentally. Then we have a 12-hour day. To figure out how these hours break down into history, we divide 12 hours into 2,000 years, and that will give us 166.6666 years per hour, or if we round it off, 167 years per hour.

If we start this at Acts 20, which is probably a safe place because that is where church history starts at the church at Ephesus, that is around 60 AD. So the formula is: when He sends the workers in early in the morning, that would be about 60 AD. When He comes on through and He says about the third hour, using our formula, that would bring us up in history around 500 AD. Continuing on, He says the sixth hour, using our formula, that would bring us up to approximately 1,000 AD, the middle of the Dark Ages. If we continue to use that, the ninth hour would bring us up to around 1,500, which is about the beginning of the Reformation.

Then the eleventh hour. I cannot tell you how important not only in the Bible but in man's history that concept of the eleventh hour is. The eleventh hour is always used as an urgency of what is going to happen when it hits 12 o'clock or 12 midnight. I do not know how many times I have dealt with marriage situations that were really in a bad way. Usually, in most cases, it is the husband's fault because he is an idiot, but not always, but I say 98% of the time, and he does not do what he is supposed to do. I say to him, and I base this off of what I am going to give you in a moment, I say to him, "Let us look at this: your marriage as a clock, and you are going to get a divorce and ruin your life at 12 o'clock. Right now, given where you are at and what you are doing and not doing, on this divorce doomsday clock, your life, your marriage, is right now at 11:58. You have two minutes left to try to fix this, or it is unfixable, and you are going to be in trouble."

I base that on the eleventh-hour concept. If we follow that here, then the eleventh hour started around 1837. In other words, you and I, understanding if we could put all these six things together, we are at the last few moments. If God is checking these times through an hourglass, I am telling you, the last few grains of sand are just about to come through. We are at the last few moments of the last shift of workers that went in, that God has called to do the work that He began in you the moment you got saved, to finish His work, and we are coming up to the end of it.

Out in Chicago, at the Scientific Institute of Technology, they have what they call the Doomsday Clock. You can get online and look it up. Just type in "the Doomsday Clock in Chicago." You will get all the information you want on it. It is a clock that they established after the atomic age started in 1945. On that clock is a 12-hour day, and they predict at 12 o'clock will be the end of the world. This is unsafe people. These are guys who reject the Bible, reject God, reject everything. Check it up online; do not take my word for it. I have not checked it lately. Sometimes, when the earth gets a little reprieve, it will go back an hour or so. But in 2019, with the world situation the way that it was, on the Doomsday Clock, without any kind of understanding following Matthew 20, in May of 2019, a year ago, it was two minutes to 12. The whole world knows that we are headed for a disaster. The whole world is holding its breath. The

Bible says in Romans 8:22 that this earth groans. It is groaning because of the abuse that it has suffered at the hands of unsafe people.

The last workers go in in 1837. Notice in our story here, when Christ comes back, He made an agreement with everybody for a penny. Some people are not happy with that because they think that the ones that went in early, who suffered great persecution in history, and then looking at the ones that would be us, from their standpoint, did not suffer any persecution, and they are thinking they should be paid more. Clear proof that this is about Baptists; there is no question about it. When you play it all out, the people that went through the terrible times under the persecution of Rome, this was physical torture, where today we are in much worse shape. The persecution of wiping out and killing everybody back in the Dark Ages and 500 up to the Reformation only made Christianity stronger. What we have today is no persecution, no Bible, and it has absolutely destroyed Christianity. In other words, we are up against a much worse thing than they are.

### III. The Process of Spiritual Growth: Knowledge, Wisdom, Understanding

Having said that, here is the moral of the story. This is where I want to focus today about the job that God has called us to do as we look at this great passage on the virtuous woman. The moral here is not what time did you go to work. The moral is, when you went to work, were you on the job? That is the question.

We talk a lot about the mind of God and how it is so important in our life. In Proverbs, you have the process of attaining that. You do it biblically through the Word of God in your relationship with Christ, building fundamentally three things in your life. This is all laid out in the book of Proverbs.

The first thing that you do is you gather knowledge from the Bible. The Bible says the beginning of knowledge is the fear of the Lord. Understand, you begin to get knowledge about who God is. Knowledge will be facts, truth.

The second thing, once you get the facts and you continue through this process that we are going to talk about here in a moment, then those facts and knowledge develop into wisdom. You already saw last week that there are two types of wisdom: there is the world's wisdom, and then there is the wisdom that has God in it. But wisdom is facts applied. In other words, you learn the truth in the Bible and then you apply it to your life, and you get wisdom through that. This is what we try to do in everything we do here. This is what the people ministry is. This is what the Bible Institute is. This is what I am trying to do today. This is what we do on Thursday night Bible study. This is why I take so much time and put so much energy into giving you everything I can and squeezing everything out.

The end result of getting facts and getting wisdom will complete the circle, and then you will get understanding. Understanding is simply knowing and seeing and comprehending exactly what God is not only doing, but what He wants you to do. It is His mind in you, being able to understand exactly in your life right now today, without any kind of question mark, without any

kind of reservation, without any kind of fear, knowing exactly what God saved you for and has called you to do. I get it; it is a process. But it is a great unknown process, and most of God's people never get there.

In our discipleship lessons, I think it is lesson six, we have a lesson on God's will for your life versus God's plan for your life. There are a number of things that, when you listen to somebody talk or what they speak, what they say really determines where they are at with the Bible. I do not know how many times I have heard a Christian get up and talk about, "I am a missionary," or "I am this or I am that, and this is God's will for my life." Immediately, when somebody starts talking like that, I know that this guy does not have a clue on really what it is all about when it comes to God's will versus God's plan for your life.

Listen to me. Everybody listening to my voice, if you are saved, and those of you few here today, let me just say this to you: God has a plan for your life. When He saved you, the Bible says, and we are going to camp on this verse, the Bible says that He began a good work in you. That is God's plan for your life. He has something that He wants you to do in some aspect to finish what He started. God's plan for all of you, all of us, will be absolutely different. God's plan for me will not be the same as God's plan for you. If you are listening to me this morning and your family is there, or you are in one of our groups of 10, I am telling you right now, God's plan for every one of you will be different.

Not only does God have a plan for you, but then God has a will for your life. This is where it becomes confusing. Where God's plan is different for everybody, God has a will for each one of you, and that will will be the same for all of us. God's plan will be different, but God's will will be the same. If you do not ever get to the place where you understand the difference between the two and how they are different, but that they are connected, you will never get it.

You see, God's plan is what He wants you to do, the good work. But God's will is what He wants you to be, spiritually, more like Christ. You only do what God wants you to do and get it done and accomplish the work when you become what God wants you to become. In other words, you fulfill the plan of God, whatever it may be, through the will of God that is the same for all of us, and that is becoming more like Christ every day of our lives. When we do that, when we focus on being something for God instead of doing something for God, that is where it breaks down. We are taught that when you get saved, you just need to start doing something for God, and nobody puts the emphasis on training and teaching people to be something for God before you try to do something for God. That is the problem.

The Bible says that we are to grow up into Christ.

*Ephesians 4:15*

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

Everybody reads that, "growing up unto Him." It did not say "growing up unto Him"; it says "growing up into Him." Every day you should be a little bit more like Christ, coming to the day

that you are going to get the body that you are going to be Christ. Every day you are to grow up through God's will into Him, being more like Christ. It is a great unknown teaching today.

Hebrews 12:1-2 actually shows us the process to get this done.

*Romans 12:1-2*

*I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that ye present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God, which is your reasonable service.*

*And be not conformed to this world: but be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind, that ye may prove what is that good, and acceptable, and perfect, will of God.*

There are a couple of things here I want you to see, and then I am going to show you how this works. First of all, I want you to notice that you and I are to be a living sacrifice for Him. Here is the key: He became a sacrifice for you and me, and He died on the cross, and God ended His life. God ended His life because in God's mind and in Christ's mind, you and I would get saved, and we would become a living sacrifice to fulfill what He did on the cross as my sacrifice for my eternal life. That is so powerful in God's mind.

Look what He says: "I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that ye present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God, which is your reasonable service." There is your work. God thought it was only reasonable, after He became a sacrifice for you on the cross, that we would become a sacrifice for Him in our lives. To God, that is a reasonable thing. Our problem today is we think it is unreasonable. We want to get saved; we think that is reasonable. But when God asks you and me to be a living sacrifice, "Oh no, no, no, no, no, no, no, that is too unreasonable." I want you to know, in God's mind, it is reasonable that after He became the sacrifice for you and me, we become the sacrifice for Him.

Look at verse 2: "And be not conformed to this world: but be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind, that ye may prove what is that good, and acceptable, and perfect, will of God." You see that? The first thing I want you to know, it says, "be not conformed to this world." This is the reason that you do not become the reasonable sacrifice: it is the world. Because you are a Christian with one foot in the church and one foot in the world, because you could care less about, in this time of being separated, getting into a group, getting into the thing, staying tight in as best you can. You are just flapping out there in the wind, and that is going to be a disaster for you if it has not happened already. The bottom line is, you think what God has called you to do with your life, the work, is unreasonable. You know why? Because you have conformed yourself to the world. The world will always think that anything that God asks is unreasonable.

He says, "be not conformed to this world: but be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind." There it is. The renewing of your mind is every day becoming more like Christ, understanding the will of God in your life, and then redefining your mind every day, renewing it, becoming more like Christ every day, building, adding things into your life that He had. Then He says this: "that ye may prove what is that good, and acceptable, and perfect, will of God." There are over a thousand sermons on Romans 12, and everybody gets down there in the good, acceptable, and perfect will of God. Everybody has their own idea on it. I am not fighting it. A lot of good

sermons are preached, and inspirationally, it is probably good. But let us look at the context today. Let us look at the context of Romans 12 based on Philippians 1:6, that God has a work for us to do. You and I have got something to prove. You and I have got something to prove. Let us talk about that for a moment.

Here is how it works, the good, and acceptable, and perfect will of God. We are just going to use the Bible. This is the biblical approach. I do not care how somebody else teaches it. I have heard it many ways, and it is good, fine, does the job, praise the Lord. Let us get back to the context here. Here is how it works: at salvation, we already know now, it says that good. That is where it starts, the good will of God. So at salvation, the Bible says that He has begun a good work in you. There is the good. The good is that the moment you got saved, He began a good work in you, and you have to prove yourself in that. You prove yourself that you understand that, and you take the work that God has given you that is a good work. As you grow with that good work, as you grow, you will prove yourself. Galatians 6:4 says, "every man proves his own work."

We see this example in Acts 11 and 12 with Paul and Timothy, and Barnabas. They are in the church, they are doing the work, and through that work, the body recognizes who they are and what they are doing. There is your acceptable. You got saved, started with the work, you are proving yourself with a good work, and through that process of growth in the church, not out there flapping in the wind someplace, in the church, under the structure of the New Testament, now you become acceptable. The church recognizes who you are. It is a process of spiritual growth based on the good work that God starts in you and you understanding that you are to be a living sacrifice, and you come into the place where you prove that.

As you allow God to transform you through the renewing of your mind, when you take the Word of God, Romans 12:2, and you understand now that God has a plan for you, there will be times in your life early on where you do not understand the plan. I remember my own life when I got right with God. I was doing the ministry and helping out where I could, and I was still pretty young yet, and I was pretty confused about what God wanted me to do. There is not going to be out of the chute a clarity of what God wants you to do because you have got to go through a process. So where the plan of God may not always be crystal clear, it will come in time. But where the plan of God may not be crystal clear, the will of God is always crystal clear. I did not know what God wanted me to do, but I sure understood what God wanted me to be, and I went to work on it. It was through that that in time God revealed what He wanted me to do, and voila, here I am. That is exactly what God will do with you. Through the work of God, the Word of God, it will do this for you.

Here is the perfect, good, acceptable, and perfect. He says that the man of God, 2 Timothy 3:17, "the man of God may be perfect, thoroughly furnished unto all good works." There it is. The good, acceptable, and perfect will of God has to do with the work that God has called you to do. When you put those things spiritually in your life of God's will, then it perfects you for the work. It is just that simple.

He says, and I cannot pass this up, "that the man of God may be perfect, thoroughly furnished." All the new Bibles take the word "thoroughly" and turn it to "thoroughly." They take the word

"furnished" out and put some other goofy word in, "equipped." When they do that, that is what your New King James Bible does. When they do that, they destroy the whole concept of the will of God in your life. Because God will build some furnishings in your life. When you go back to the tabernacle, which is a picture of your body in the book of Exodus, there are seven pieces of furnishings that represent the seven things that God wants to put in your life. Through that, God perfects you. He does not perfect you to be sinless. He goes through the process of starting a good work in you. When you get into the church and you do the work, it is acceptable. Then, as you let the will of God change your life through the renewing of your mind, the work becomes perfect. Perfect in the sense that you are doing exactly what God wants you to do.

Honestly, how many of God's people today, how many of you listening to me this morning, how many of you, as God's people, really know for sure what God wants you to do? You have been in flux all your life. You have been in question all your life. You have been banging around like a bullet ricocheting off of a steel box inside. You have just been bouncing off of everything. There is no security in your life. There is no assurance in your life. You are just bouncing everywhere, where it goes with everything that happens and everything that falls you, you are just ricocheting off the walls. How many are God's people? Let us be honest. Most of God's people will never get to this place. They never will. It is a tragedy because, as I have laid it out, how hard is that? Well, it is really hard when you do not want to not conform yourself to the world. It is really hard when we, as God's people, think becoming a living sacrifice for Him, after all that He has done for us, is unreasonable. It is unreasonable.

I am telling you, the same areas that Solomon's mother, Bathsheba, warned him about will be the ones that will take us out of the work. False religion will stop us. The world will stop us. Both, unfortunately, are married to Christianity today. I was driving down 470 the other day, and I just happened to look up. I know where it was. It was not 470. It was coming down the back way to meet Danny and the guys over there for the offerings. I came by this big church who I think they bought the property off of 470, but it is the World Church. This is nothing against the World Church. I do not care one way or the other. But I thought to myself, "Man, the World Church in the Laodicean church period has a whole new meaning, does it not?" The church is married to the world. That is the problem. Christians are married to the world. So a church that calls itself the World Church, they would like us to believe that they are reaching the world. But when you go to one of their services, I guarantee you, you will see the world running it from one end to the other. Whole new meaning today.

As I begin to lay out this chapter, the work of God defined for us in this chapter, I am telling you, every aspect. I want you to understand how I am doing this. I am going to do this a little differently than I have done the rest of the book of Proverbs. In Proverbs, I came through verse by verse or verses by verses in little sections. Remember, I told you how I did that. But now I am not going to do that. Now I am going to change up the whole process, and I am going to come through this chapter, this last chapter, in these last verses, concept by concept, job description by job description. I do not want to miss one aspect of what our work of God should be. So my message is, just so you know, I know this will make a lot of you happy, my message is maybe a little shorter, but they are going to be a lot deeper. I want to take each aspect of this. I do not

want to take two a week. I want to take one a week. If I preach to you in 10 minutes and I am done, you are good. Do not count on that. But I am just saying, you understand my point. I want to not miss anything in this chapter, and I want to develop every aspect of it because we are looking at the greatest place in the Bible, the greatest place in the Bible that will define for us what Philippians 1:6 says: "that he hath begun a good work in us and will perform it until the day of Jesus Christ."

## IV. The Virtuous Woman and the Definition of Virtue

With that, Proverbs 31:10 says, just a small verse, but voila, here we go.

*Proverbs 31:10*

*Who can find a virtuous woman? for her price is far above rubies.*

AJ, would you ask God to bless the preaching this morning? Finally, after what, six, seven, eight years, finally, we find the woman we have all been waiting for. Historically, Solomon looked in vain for a virtuous woman. This guy had a thousand wives, and he is combing through them, looking for somebody that has virtue, and we understand from what is said about these women that they did not have virtue. Then he finds her. Not only does he include her in Proverbs 31 of this great book for us, but then he writes a whole book about her, the book of Song of Solomon.

Of course, inspirationally, what you have here, doctrinally, she will be a picture of the nation of Israel. But inspirationally, it is a great picture of the body of Christ. As you should be well aware by now, both Israel and the church are likened to a woman. Both have a work God has called them to do. Israel in the Old Testament with the physical kingdom, the kingdom of heaven. The church in the New Testament with the spiritual kingdom, the kingdom of God. Now we will start our study of this woman, and we are going to look at it from our aspect as the church in the concept of the good work that God has begun in us.

I cannot help but, coming down through this chapter, that he lists these things in the order of some importance. I caught that the moment I started to put this together. I want to look at the first quality that God mentions about this woman first, and it is her virtue. She is a virtuous woman. The first words out of his mouth: "Who can find a virtuous woman?" He did not say pretty. He did not say hot. He did not say old. He did not say young. He did not say middle-aged. He said a virtuous woman. We are going to talk about an unknown word today as it will be defined in the Bible. Like so many key words, the real biblical meaning has been lost today. We are going to talk about the word virtue.

You know me. I have spent my whole life not only going through the Bible, but my whole life finding definitive passages that support the teachings of the Bible. When we are going to talk about virtue, the first thing I want to do is give you the definitive passage on it, which is found in Luke 6:17-19. So if you would, turn there with me and let us look at the definitive passage on virtue because virtue is an unknown thing today. People get a general idea of what it is, but they do not understand how it works in the Bible. I want to show you how the Bible defines it. Then I

want to show you how it works in your life with the work that God has called you to do as you prove it is that good, and acceptable, and perfect will of God in your life.

*Luke 6:17-19*

*And he came down with them, and stood in the plain, and the company of his disciples, and a great multitude of people out of all Judæa and Jerusalem, and from the sea coast of Tyre and Sidon, which came to hear him, and to be healed of their diseases;*

*And they that were vexed with unclean spirits: and they were healed.*

*And the whole multitude sought to touch him: for there went virtue out of him, and healed them all.*

That is an incredible passage. That begins to lay out for us and tell us about virtue. Virtue, now we know based on the definitive passage, will be the character qualities of Christ, not your character qualities or your mother's, which may be great. But a Bible definition of virtue has nothing to do with the world, though you may find women out there who have a worldly virtue. In our study here, this is not about the world. This is about virtue being the character qualities of Christ that we will build in our lives through that process of proving the will of God in our lives through the good, the work He starts, the acceptable, the work within your church, and the perfect, the finished product of the Word of God, of you getting it into your life.

I want you to notice verse 19: "virtue went out of him." Virtue will be what you have in you that you give to others. When you minister to people, you give to them. I am not talking about physical things, though at times you give them physical things. We give the people on the street hot dogs and clothes. Some of you have helped people with money. That is a physical thing. But I am not talking about that. Virtue is the character qualities of Christ that you have inside you that you give to others.

What we have just defined in the first aspect of this, we are talking about the work that God has begun in you, and we are going to look at that work as it lays out for us as ministry. We know we have just defined what ministry really is. There are people that think that if you sing in a choir, that is ministry. There are people that think if you drive a bus, that is ministry. There are people that think that if you do something, that that is ministry. I am not saying those things are not vitally important, but let us not lose, in the middle of service, which is a necessary thing, what ministry really is. Because you will find people in the choir that think that they are doing the ministry, singing to everybody out there, but in reality never get into real biblical ministry because they kid themselves into thinking that that is a ministry.

We know that ministry is defined in the Bible. What it really is, is simply this: ministry is nothing more than you giving to others what God has given to you. That is ministry. Now we know why we define a second aspect of it. Now we know why people do not minister. You know why? Because it is something to give. Talk about you. Your life is so problematic, and your life has so many issues in it, and you are in so many deep problems, and you have so many things with your kids and your families and your personal life that you can never get to that point. You see, it is putting yourself through your relationship with Him into somebody else's life. That is

ministry. Ministry is putting yourself through your relationship with Him into somebody else's life.

Virtue will be the spiritual strength and the stability that you have built into your inner self. Your soul was connected and sealed with the Holy Ghost at the moment of salvation when God began that good work in you. Now, through the process of the good, acceptable, and perfect will of God, you bear fruit. That fruit is the nine fruit of the Spirit in Galatians 5. When you teach, deal with, or minister to someone, this is what you give them. The greatest character quality of leadership is virtue. Virtue is that when everything else is falling down around Christianity, leaders stand up and lead. You do not lead because you are a great guy. You do not lead because you are a great woman. You lead because you have built into your life the character qualities of Christ that other people have not, and when tough times come, whether it be their family or the time that we are living in, you can lead the way because of the strength and the stability that you have on the inside. It is what you have stored up in your own life, and now you give it to others who need it.

Last week, we talked about two aspects of us opening our mouths. Of course, when they opened their mouth back then, it was to proclaim the truth of God. In Revelation 3, you have the church of the open door. It is called the church of the open door because it was opening its mouth through the Word of God to the world. Look at verse 19 again. When virtue goes out of you, it will have a healing effect on somebody. That is what God intended it to do. You have virtue in you that you have stored up because of what you have got from God, and it forms your strength and stability that others do not have.

I have tried to build my whole church this way. Thankfully, the majority of you people have done that, and that is why you are spread out all over this world and all over this country and all over this city, constantly working with people to try to make them better. But you do not make them better because you are a great person. You do not make them better because of your friendly smile. You do not make them better because of the fact that you are just one of those people that everybody wants to have at a party, much like myself. You make them better because of the strength and stability that you have built in your inner self, that when they are hurting and they need something, you give it to them, and it heals them. You see it, do you not?

How many times has somebody come to you, and you have worked with somebody, and they have had a problem, and they have an issue that they are dealing with, and you take them to the Word of God? I do it all the time, and I know many of you do. You take them to the Word of God, and you show them what the Bible says, and they all say this, "Wow, I feel a lot better now." You know what you have done? The virtue that you have had stored up in you, you have given to them, and it has a healing effect. Of course, I never will underemphasize, nor could I overemphasize, the aspect and the importance of ministry to others. That is my goal. My goal is to build young men and young ladies, moms and dads, who will become that living sacrifice that will build into the life that good, acceptable, and perfect will of God. Then, through that, build the virtue of character qualities of Christ in their life that they are willing to give out to somebody else.

Virtue does not know people you do not like or people you do like. If Christ's virtue was depending on Him liking me and me being a good person, I never would have got it. But sometimes we want to hold back that virtue for somebody. "Well, I do not like this person, I do not like that person." What does the Bible say? You need to do good to somebody when you have it within your hand to do it. People who are hurting need what we have. Holding that back is a wrong concept. Most of God's people in the world today, and even people in our own church, care nothing about ministry. The importance of ministry means nothing to you.

I have found this is true all my life in Christianity, that a lot of people are just takers. A lot of God's people. I have talked for a long time; one of the great concepts that I use many times is the sponge concept. Most women are familiar with sponges because they clean up messes with them, and guys do too. But a sponge is an amazing thing because if you spill something, it has the ability to absorb. The problem with the sponge is that it can only absorb so much, and then it will not absorb anymore. When a sponge gets to that place in its sponge life, it is worthless. God's people who are takers, you just keep them taking it in, absorbing it, and absorbing it. But it is like the sponge. You have got to wring that sponge out before you can pick up any more. For you and me, we just keep getting it. Let us face it, you get a lot of Bible around here. I do not hold back with giving you what. Amen, Missy? Did you say amen, grandpa? Okay. Say amen, grandpa. Say it. Amen, grandpa. Thank you very much. You have got to wring it out.

Ministry is you filling yourself up with the virtue, but then allowing God through ministry to wring it out of you and to give it to somebody else. There are people that all my life in ministry, since the day I got in it, back in Ohio, here, wherever I have been, I have seen Christians that were just takers. They cared nothing about really investing the life of becoming a living sacrifice. All they wanted was what they could get.

Truman Dollar, I worked with Truman Dollar for many, many, many years, and he taught me a lot. I am eternally thankful for all the things that he showed me. At times, he took helping me. He said something one time that I never forgot. He said a lot of things that I never forgot. He had a wisdom about him because he had been in it and he had seen it. He said to me one time, we were driving down to Springfield, and we were just talking back and forth. He just dropped these little things on me, and I always listened to it because he knew more about it than I did at that time. He said, "You know, Bob, people will never remember what you did for them yesterday. They are just going to want to know what you are going to do for them today." That is so true of God's people. God's people forget all that you have done for them. All they want to know is, "What are you going to do for me today?" Because they are takers. They are takers. They are like that sponge. They get filled up with everything, but they never get wrung out, and ministry is wringing it out, taking the virtue that you have and giving it to somebody else.

We have here a discipleship program that we offer, and we take people through. We actually have a discipleship one and a discipleship two. But discipleship one is based on about 10 lessons. Each one of those lessons we look at as just a fundamental entry into giving you some basic understanding about things. As I said, lesson six is about the kingdom of God or God's will and God's plan for your life. But long before we get into the lessons, I teach people that it really is not about the lesson, though it is because people need to know that. But there are four goals

behind the discipleship. You would think that if you have 10 lessons, if you did a lesson a week, you would be done in 10 weeks. In my mind, and I tell people this all the time, you are done with discipleship not when you hit the last lesson, but when you have accomplished these four goals in it.

1. The first goal, obviously, is to establish them in the Word of God. They are all basic fundamental things that every Christian that just gets saved needs to learn. That is why I encourage everybody to go through discipleship.
2. The second goal is to establish them into our church. That would be to get them into a prayer group, get them into Bible Institute, whatever, help them navigate through all the things that we do here, get them into the sports program that we used to have, get them into all the things that are connected with our church.
3. The third goal is to establish them with the people in our church. You will bring them to events, you will have to get together and bring them in with people for them to get to know. Generally, just making everything, I call it the Christian shoehorn effect.
4. The fourth goal will be to establish them in the ministry of this church. That brings it full circle. When somebody gets discipled and they finish that, I usually will give that person who just discipled them somebody else to disciple. Many of you, I do not really give anybody anymore. You pick your own, you get your own people, you are going to town on it. What you do is you will get somebody and you will say, "Bob, is it okay, I got this so-and-so at work or this person is coming to church, can I disciple them?" I will say, "Absolutely." I will say, "Take the person that you just finished discipling and bring them on board to be a part of your discipleship team and let them teach maybe one or two lessons that are easy." Why do I do that? Because I want to bring you full circle. When I am done with you in discipleship, I want to find you right where you need to be. That was in the good work that God began in you and bring you right back into the ministry because the ministry is people. That is where it has to work.

In the book of Acts, which really forms a great pattern, nowhere in the New Testament Christianity do you find a Christian who has not put three things in their life. These are the three things that I look for.

5. First of all, all of them were baptized. The first thing they do in the New Testament, when they get saved, they get baptized.
6. The second thing is that they all join a New Testament local church. They are not one of them that just out flapping in the wind.
7. The third thing they do, they all minister and do God's work through that church.

Those are the three things that I look for. We have a lot of people that are flapping out there on their own, and they get all these crazy ideas about God and the Bible and all this stuff. To me, credibility about what somebody says determines how serious I take what they are talking about. If I have somebody that has this great thing about the Bible, and yet they are under the accountability of no church, they are under accountability of no pastor, and they are not making themselves accountable to the structure, and yet you have got some great thing that you want to lay on the Christian world, your credibility is shot with me. I would not waste five seconds with

somebody like that. The reason is because they have violated the basic fundamental scriptures that takes them out of whatever they think they have got to say. The bottom line is, what it proves is that these kinds of people always pick and choose out of the Bible what they want. I have no use for that.

Building virtue in your life is found again in a little simple format in 1 Corinthians 3:10-14, where it is a simple formula. He says, the day you got saved, you laid a foundation in your life. Then the rest of your life, you build up on that foundation to three things. Really, there are six things, but three good things. We will not worry about the bad things.

*1 Corinthians 3:10-14*

*According to the grace of God which is given unto me, as a wise masterbuilder, I have laid the foundation, and another buildeth thereon. But let every man take heed how he buildeth thereupon.*

*For other foundation can no man lay than that is laid, which is Jesus Christ.*

*Now if any man build upon this foundation gold, silver, precious stones, wood, hay, stubble;*

*Every man's work shall be made manifest: for the day shall declare it, because it shall be revealed by fire; and the fire shall try every man's work of what sort it is.*

*If any man's work abide which he hath built thereupon, he shall receive a reward.*

The first one he says is you build on gold. The second one is you build on silver. The third one is precious stone. When you go back to the Bible, when you look that up in the Bible, gold represents the deity of Christ. So the first thing you build on that foundation is who He is. Silver is the price of redemption all through the Bible. So the second thing you build on it is what He did for you. I am going to tell you right now, there lies the secret to getting the virtue of Christ and the qualities in your life. When you do, the third thing you build on that foundation is precious stone. That is people. My point is this: you cannot get to know who He is and cannot really understand what He did for you and not tell somebody else about it. The reason why you are not involved in ministry today, nor will you be, is because you have never built those three things on your foundation, if you even have a foundation.

Let me say this about virtue. When virtue goes out of you, when you are teaching or you are preaching or you are ministering to somebody, it will fatigue you. You will get tired. Wringing out will drain you, especially if you do it on a heavy load. If you teach somebody the Bible and you go a couple hours with them, you are probably pretty tired when you are done, or at least you feel like something has went out of you. That is why Luke 6:19 says that Christ feels it going out of Him. He knows. There is a place in the Bible where a lady just reached up and touched the hem of His garment, and He knew immediately that somebody had touched Him because He said virtue went out of Him. Virtue drains you. You are tired after teaching or preaching a long time. As you get older, you learn how to build it up, and you can do multiple things, but it still goes out of you.

I always looked at us as Christians like a portable battery charger. You and I jumpstart people. We are a portable battery charger. But you know as well as I do, you can only jumpstart so many cars, and then you need to be recharged yourself. This is the renewing of your mind, Romans 12:2. This is being filled with the Spirit of God, Ephesians 5:18. This is the difference between the great doctrinal teaching on the indwelling Holy Spirit of God. That is what happens the moment you get saved. He comes to indwell, He seals you. But then on a daily basis, you need to be filled with the Holy Spirit of God. That is called the infilling. Where the indwelling is an eternal thing, the filling is a daily thing. We are to keep ourselves on the charger 24/7 so we can jumpstart anybody who has got a dead battery, spiritually speaking. The woman here, her greatest quality is her virtue. The rest of the chapter, as we will see in the weeks to come, is about her nothing more than giving it out to others. By doing that, with getting the verses in Philippians and the verses of Romans 12 and understanding God's will and God's plan and understanding the good, acceptable, and perfect will of God, we now find the defining of the work of God in our lives as a living sacrifice.

## V. The Price of the Virtuous Woman and Our Current Reality

Then it says in Proverbs 31:10 that "her price is far above rubies." The key word here will be price, "price far above rubies." Of all the precious gems and stones, there is one that is set apart from all the rest, and that is the pearl.

*Matthew 13:45-46*

*Again, the kingdom of heaven is like unto a merchant man, seeking goodly pearls:*

*Who, when he had found one pearl of great price, went and sold all that he had, and bought it.*

Inspirationally, that pearl of great price is the church, you and me. The Bible says that the price tag was far above rubies. That is because the quality that sets a pearl apart from all the other gems is that a pearl is a living organism. It is alive. You could take a jeweler or a craftsman, and you can take a diamond and you can cut it in half and come up with two perfect diamonds. You can take a ruby or a sapphire, and you can cut it in half, and you come away with two perfect halves that you can do whatever you want to do. You take a pearl and you cut it in half, both halves die because it is alive. We are called lively stones in 1 Peter 2:5-9. So when Christ found this pearl, you and me, the Bible says that He sold all that He had and bought it at a great price.

*2 Corinthians 8:9*

*For ye know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that, though he was rich, yet for your sakes he became poor, that ye through his poverty might be rich.*

There is a great illustration of this in Song of Solomon 1. As I have said, Solomon had a thousand wives, and he could only find one that had virtue. When he writes about her in the Song of Solomon, and of course the last chapter here in Proverbs 31, she has no name. Every time you find some story in the Bible where a woman or somebody has no name, the reason he does that is

so he wants you to put your name in there. That is just simple. Yet when you go to Song of Solomon 1:6, you will find that she is a black woman, which has led a lot of people to believe that, based on the interlude that you have in the Bible there, that it was the Queen of Sheba. Of course, there is no proof to that, but I will tell you this, in Acts 8, when a black Ethiopian eunuch was going to Jerusalem to look for Solomon's temple, he is coming out of Africa, and he has obviously heard the stories that she went back and told many centuries before that. So who knows? Anyway, she is black. Yet she is a pearl. A black pearl is the rarest of all the pearls.

One time I asked a jeweler about pearls, and I said, "Is there such a thing as a black pearl?" I remember asking him, "How rare is a black pearl?" Without hesitation, he said, "Oh, one in a thousand." I said, "Amen." He said, "What did you say?" I said, "Oh, never mind." It is a thing, one in a thousand. What a great truth that is, that God's people getting the work done, getting God's mind, wisdom, and understanding, unfortunately, probably is no more than one in a thousand. That is why it is hard to find virtue. Boy, does that answer a lot of questions. Being filled with God's virtue and giving it out to others is the job of every child of God.

In life, there will be many issues that we have to face. When we do not understand the work that God has called us to, those issues will pull us off the job. For us today, while we are facing the virus and all that is going on in the country and our world, we are at a defining moment. I will tell you what you are seeing is probably only the beginning of trouble. As I said earlier, Romans 8:22 says that this whole world is groaning. She has been abused, she has been beaten up, she has been misused, and she is tired. She is about ready to give it up.

God's people are so weird because the fact that they have no work, they have no real relationship, they have never built the good, acceptable, and perfect will of God in their life. Yet if somebody would have, and this happened, I mean, I got, I do not know how many people, when the Super Bowl came, there were people that got tickets to the Super Bowl, and how excited they were. How excited would you be if you got a front-row seat to the Super Bowl right there where the game is going on? You would be ecstatic, and you would tell everybody about it, and you would be the happiest guy in the world, and that is all you could think of, dream of, and be part of. Yet as a Christian, in the time that we live, God has allowed us to have a front seat on the front row of the end of the world. Because we know it, and you are concerned about it. You do not like it. You know why? Because you have never taken the sacrifice that He did for you and applied it to you being a sacrifice for Him. So your personal world now has been impacted, has it not? Your personal little life now has been discomfited, and you do not like it. It did not matter that His world was discomfited when He hung on the cross and cried out, "My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?" You have a little discomfort now because of what we are going through. You are done with it.

We have a defining moment in our world today, and I will tell you what you are seeing is probably only the beginning. I must confess to you, and please, I do not mean this, I know we have sick people in this city in our own church and older people who need to be very, very careful. Getting this virus is just like you have got to be careful getting the flu or some other respiratory ailment. It will kill you, and you have got to be very, very, very careful of it. I get that. But honestly, I must confess to you, the idea of a Christian sheltering in place is offensive to

me. It really is. I get it. There is no question today that 99% of God's people live their lives in fear, and fear rules the day in their world because they do not understand the sacrifice that God made for them. How are you going to put yourself at risk? I understand that. Again, you older folks and the older people, I get it, man, stay home, stay alive, but I am telling you. I am not saying you break the law. I am not saying that you do something foolish. No civil disobedience. Romans 13, I get it. But I want to tell you something, if the work of God is real in our lives, how do you just stop and shelter in place? I do not understand that.

It is the difference in my mind. I have been driving by churches when I see it on the marquee, "Closed till further notice." I am going to be honest with you. This thing could go on for a year or two years. We look at the disease, but the impact is in every aspect of our life. It is safe to say, listen to me, it is safe to say that six months ago, three months ago, life on planet earth as we once knew it is never going to be the same again. I am just telling you that. For me, it is the difference between a work for God, which most churches have, or a work of God, which very few churches have. When it is a work of God and not a church for God, then the work has to adapt. It has to adapt to any circumstances. It has to redefine how it does things. The idea is we throw up our hands and everybody hide under the bed is not the answer to the world today.

I get it. You have got to be careful. I understand. I carry two masks in my bag when I am driving around, and I am careful. I do not wear them when I go into the bank. But it is a thing where, if I go to someplace and they say, "You have got to have a mask," I put one on. I do not like it. I had one on the other day, and I had it upside down. I did not even know I had it on right. The thing you push on your nose was on the bottom. So I just tied it around my chin. I thought that worked pretty good. But you do what you have got to do. Christianity, when it is a work of God, will carry on in any time of trouble. You have to follow through. You cannot just say that He began a good work in us until life got really tough. God's work in any circumstance, anywhere in history, God's work will always find a way.

I told the people Thursday night about Mary Reed. I wonder what Mary Reed would think about what we are all facing today. You know who Mary Reed was? She lived from about 1854 up to 1943. Mary Reed decided to be a missionary to the lepers in India. How much more dangerous can you get in a disease than going to a leper colony? I suspect their favorite song was, "What is Eating You?" But I do not know. The bottom line is, did you like that, Jamie? Okay, you did. You did not get a little smile on your face. Okay, good. She goes into this leper colony, and she spent all her life there. How many of God's people today would just think that is so awfully terrible? How could you ever do that? What if you get leprosy? Well, okay, here it comes. She got leprosy. Mary Reed was obviously one of those rare people that thought and understood that the sacrifice that God made for her was reasonable for the sacrifice she had to make for Him. Boy, where are God's people at with that?

How about Bernice Lee, 1907? She did the same thing, missionary to the lepers. I think the Waldensians, during the Black Plague, 100 million people dead in Europe. Not like we have now. This is a pittance to what happened in the Black Plague. They are saying today that out of every 100,000 people, only 90 people die. Are you kidding me? Are you kidding me? When in Europe, the Black Plague swept across with no antidote, nothing to fix it, and 100 million people died.

There was not enough people alive left to bury the dead. Did the Waldensians say, "We are not doing this?" They understood that God's work always finds a way, and we are not responsible for the cards that get dealt in a world that is facing God's judgment, but we are responsible that God began a good work in us, and we have got to find a way to do that work.

I think of the terrible times of the Inquisition, where hundreds and thousands of people were ripped out of their homes in the middle of the night, and when you went to church back then, you just did not get a little slap on the wrist and a citation. You got put in and got tortured. Your kids got thrown into eating alive by pigs while you had to watch it to deny Christ, and yet they went to church. The work went on. I think of Paul, where he said in 2 Corinthians 1:9-10 that we had the sentence of death on us, but he did the work.

*2 Corinthians 1:9-10*

*But we had the sentence of death in ourselves, that we should not trust in ourselves, but in God which raiseth the dead:*

*Who delivered us from so great a death, and doth deliver: in whom we trust that he will yet deliver us.*

I will be honest with you, in one way, and I know this is just me, and I am about as weird as a \$3 bill, but in one way, shutting down the churches in the country was a great idea, because it defines each of us. We now, will we carry on finding a way with what the government does give us or what God allows us, or will we shelter in place? God's work never stops. It is God's people who stop. When it is real, it is your zeal. The real proof of what we have, the real proof of what we have, is not when everything is going good, and there is no risk of coming to church. There is no risk of being in the same building. There is no risk of going out. That is not the real proof of Christianity. The real proof of what you and I have, the virtue, the good work that we have in us, is defined when everything goes to hell in a handbag. I do not know what a hell in a handbag really is, but it sounds good. My mama used to say it all the time, "It is going to hell in a handbag." My mom did not even have a handbag. But if you would ask my dad, he would say, "Well, living with her is like hell in a handbag." I would not go get in a bag.

I guarantee you, I am telling everybody now, across the city, across this country, maybe in our own church, there were people who will never come back to church. They never will. They are going to be afraid all of their life. This thing, as I said, could last two years. You might as well get over it. The way of life that we once knew it is gone. There will be no packed crowds at the Super Bowl with those games. The saddest part, there will probably be no more hot dogs. No more nachos. There will be no more high school football games. There will be no more track games. The kids will have no more graduation deals. It will all now going to change. When you fly on an airplane, you are going to wear a mask. There is going to be a bulletproof window between you and the next person, and it is all going to change. But we will emerge out of this with maybe less people than we came into it with, but we will persevere, and we will come out much stronger because the work of God will go on. We will adapt. We will readjust. We will do whatever we have got to do, and we will let God be God and look for the areas where God opens it up for us to do what we can do.

What we are facing right now is a redefining of life as we know it. The redefining of America and Americans' way of life. If you look back just a few short 30, 40 years, you see it. You saw the process. In 9/11, when the Twin Towers went down and Flight 93 went into the Pennsylvania Woods, from that point on, it redefined life in America. When all the school shootings took place, and boy, how terrible and tragic those are, Sandy Hook and all those places, it redefined everything in America for our kids going to school. But now this great global pandemic, it is redefining everything. A redefining of life.

It is comical to me five, six, seven, eight years ago, even a year ago, I would get up and I would preach about the coming this and coming that and how we are going to have to have some tough times or do some tough times. "Amen, Brother Bob, amen." But when it comes, where are you at today? You are sheltering in place. I preached to you for almost 50 years that this was coming. Really? Because the job of God has for us does not quit just because the situation gets tough. I told you Thursday night, as a child of God, we do not find a way around this. We find a way through it. We can let this time redefine America. We can let this time redefine the world as we know it. But we as God's people should never let it redefine who we are or the work that God has called us to. A workman need not be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth. God has called us to a work. God's work will find a way.

For 17 years in this church, I have tried every message I have preached, everything we have done, everything I have tried to gear this thing to is to build that virtue in you that when the world was hurting and the world was cracked and it all fell apart that we would not. But when you really never had a real work of God in your life, I understand it. I said when this whole thing began to unfold that God's people, I said God's people who have no stability in life before all this happened will certainly have no stability in your life after it happens. They will always let fear of what is going on around you override what God wants us to do. Because fear will blind you. God's people will not be back in the work of God, most notably when not doing nothing when you were here. So what is there to come back to? There is no urgency for most of God's people in churches today. They are not doing anything. So there is no urgency. If you have a work of God in your life and you are doing what God wants you to do, and that is the predominant thing in your life, you are going to find a way. But "shelter in place" is going to be on T-shirts, I guarantee you, sell them in a bookstore. You respect it all. You are foolish if you do not.

When I saw this coming and there was no way around it and there was no vaccine for it, I realized my job and my responsibility, and I did two things. It is the only two things I could do. The one thing I did is wash my hands 100,000 times a day. My fingernails are not real. They are fake because they all came off about a week ago. The second thing that I did was to bolster my immune system by eating everything I could find that did exactly that because that is the only way you can fight it. God is either in charge or He is not. You live your life like He is. Somebody would say, "Well, what if you get it?" He is still in charge. Ask Mary Reed. Listen, I said this Thursday night. I would rather get it doing something for Him than never get it and having nothing for Him. I am just telling you.

I want to show you what Paul said here in closing. Turn over to 2 Corinthians 1. If there is ever a verse or passage or two verses that we need today to help put steel back in our backbones, to get

you to get into a team, get part of the process, because at some point the door is going to open a little bit, and we are going to be able to go back to some kind of work. We will be able to open up the things that we cannot right now, and at some point, we have got to be ready for that. So here is the verse for you.

Paul said in 2 Corinthians 1:9-10:2 Corinthians 1:9-10

But we had the sentence of death in ourselves, that we should not trust in ourselves, but in God which raiseth the dead:

Who delivered us from so great a death, and doth deliver: in whom we trust that he will yet deliver us.

There it is. He says we had the sentence of death on us, just like a lot of us think that we do today. Tough time for Paul, much tougher than ours. You do not see him quitting. You do not see him ever sheltering in place. You know what he said? Very great things here. He says we are going to trust in not ourselves, but we are going to trust in God who delivered us from such a great death, past. And doth deliver, present, in whom shall we trust that He will yet deliver. There is tomorrow for you. If you do not take those three promises and realize that He is God to deliver you, He delivered you past, He will deliver you today, and He will deliver you tomorrow in whom we trust and not ourselves. That is where we should be.

A pandemic of 100,000 people dead in the United States, probably going to go 150,000 by the end of the summer. People are not going to quit dying from it. If you look at the statistics of who is dying from it and the places, it puts a lot of light onto it for you, but news media does not want to give you any peace. They want to scare you. Our economy is shut down because of that. Thirty-three million people in America out of work. Almost 15 percent and adding three million every week. The lockdown, which is beginning to recede a little bit, but the lockdown. The people who are revolting and the riots and going against it. Now we have the meat shortage, the meat packing plants are shutting down because of the workers that are getting it. It cannot work. So now when you go to Hy-Vee, you can only get four packs of meat. Everything is limited.

Last but not least, if that was not enough, now I heard last week that killer hornets are invading the United States. They call them murdering hornets, whose sting is ten times worse than the average hornet, just like the coronavirus is ten times worse than the average flu. They are invading. Yes, they came from the Middle East too, or China. Here they are, big suckers, invading America. They say that they started and are sweeping across America, and if something is not done, imagine being chased by a big hornet. Hornets are crazy.

I want to tell you a story real quick here. Years ago when I was in Ohio, me and a bunch of guys were down in this backwater swamp where we used to get turtles and frog legs. We all had AR-15s. About 100 yards away was this huge hornet's nest. Big, gray, that big. Have you ever seen them? They are huge. It was hanging in a tree. We are young and dumb and stupid. So we decided we are going to unload on this hornet's nest with our AR-15s. We all had 30-round mags, and six, four, five mags in your pocket. So we lined up, and everybody was a good shot, and we were ripping that hornet's nest. Those AR-15s were just tearing it up. All of a sudden, this dark cloud came out of that hornet's nest. There were a lot of hornets in there. You know as well as I

do, if you have got a gun, a bunch of guns, you can shoot a bullet through all the time. What are you going to kill, two hornets? You may not believe this, but those hornets will find their way back to whoever is doing the damage to them. It was like they came out of that thing, and they were swarming. It was almost like they were coordinating. Then all of a sudden, that whole thing started coming to where we were. We sheltered in place. We got out of there, man, and got to the car. They lost us somewhere in the process. That was the dumbest thing we ever did. No, it was not. It was one of the dumbest things I ever did.

My point is, we have a pandemic, we have unemployment, we have the lockdown, we have the meat shortage. Now you go into a restaurant or clothes. It is never going to be the same. It is going to be where you have got to go out, wait in your car until 10 people leave, and then they are going to text you, "You can come in." It is crazy. It is absolutely crazy. You have got to wait to go into the store. There is a line six feet apart. You go to the grocery store. Now you have got, it is like a highway, one-way places. Now you have the killer hornets invading America. If this is not the plague and pestilence on a biblical proportion, I do not know what is. The question is, in spite of all that, are you on the job? Are you sheltering in place? He hath begun a good work in you in the performing in the day of Jesus Christ, and there is no exit clause in that. He says there is no discharge from this war, whether it is a pandemic or a bunch of hornets chasing you down the road, or whatever. There is no discharge. God began a job.

Our time right now, looking at everything around us, knowing what we know from the Bible, I am not saying that right now in this time is the beginning of the end. But I am telling you that it is probably the end of the beginning. The final grains of sand are falling through God's hourglass. We as God's people were saved to do a work. We are the last workers who go in, and we are in the last part of that shift. I am telling you now, get in a group, get in a team, get going back into it because of God's laws.

Paul told the church at Galatians 6:17, in his closing to them, he said:Galatians 6:17

From henceforth let no man trouble me: for I bear in my body the marks of the Lord Jesus Christ.

If you are in the fight, if you are doing the work, you are going to have some bruises. This old world is going to leave some marks on you. My advice to you is, do not go to heaven without some marks of this world being left on you and some bruises because you were in a fight. This church will finish the work God has called us to do with you or without you. A real work of God will allow God to show you the way, focusing on what He has given us, not looking back and whining about what we do not have anymore. We have to adapt. We have to change whatever tactics we have to change. We have to keep the work going because we are the last workers in the last minutes of the last hour to do the job that He saved us for and began in us. We now, all of us, need to prove what is that good, and acceptable, and perfect will of God as we do the work of God.

Let us pray. Father, we do thank you and praise you for the Lord Jesus. We love you. Thank you for today. Thank you for the good folks that have tuned in. Thank you for the Word of God that will guide us through this time. Lord, I cannot speak for everybody. I would not even try to. I can

only speak for me. You began a good work in my life and speak for my family. You began a good work in my life and my family's life. All my kids are saved. All my grandkids are saved. Lord, I have two greatest son-in-laws on the planet, and all our families are together, and you blessed us with that great thing, Lord. We just have such a great ministry together, and we know, Father, that no matter what, we will never quit. I know that in this church, there is a host of men and women who are going to take up and take the stand, and we will work together. We will have to find a way to change what we do to get what we get done. We will do that because we understand this is a work of God and not a work for God. God's people have no business sheltering in place. We have the business of doing God's business, but just finding a different way to do it. We will thank you and praise you in Jesus' name, for His sake we ask it. Amen. God bless you. You are the best. Amen.