

Proverbs 31

Sunday 6/14/2020

I. The Wise and Foolish Man: Considering the Field

Last week, we saw the key verse in the key chapter, in my humble opinion, of the Book of Proverbs. It was verse 16 where it says:

Proverbs 31:16

She considereth a field, and buyeth it: with the fruit of her hands she planteth a vineyard.

It would be safe to say that this one verse here is the end result, or at least it should be, of every child of God who finds the wisdom of God and gets the understanding of God. The prophecies of that, as I have given it to you many times, are found way back in Proverbs 2:1-5.

We know now and understand that the Book of Proverbs is about a wise man and a foolish man. We learned that very early on in the Book of Proverbs. The wise man and the foolish man, doctrinally, we know that will be the nation of Israel, which we are told in Exodus 4 that in a corporate sense as a nation is God's Son. We also know that historically this would be Solomon's own son, Rehoboam, who turns out to be quite the fool. Inspirationally, it would be a picture of us as God's Son, as His church, as His body. It is obvious that some of us turn out to be quite foolish, too.

In Proverbs 24, we find the fool in relationship to him and his idea of the field. Last week I showed you that every child of God, Christ died for the field, the world, as in Matthew 13. We are to consider a field and buy it with the same intensity.

In Proverbs 24:30-31, you see the fool of Proverbs. Unfortunately, many of God's people look at the field and see it as it says in Proverbs 24 and reject the concept of buying a field.

Proverbs 24:30-31

I went by the field of the slothful, and by the vineyard of the man void of understanding;

And, lo, it was all grown over with thorns, and nettles had covered the face thereof: and the stone wall thereof was broken down.

Then I saw and considered it well. I looked upon it and received instruction. That is the fool. Yet the Bible says that we can learn a lot by looking at people who refuse to do what God wants them to do. We can take instructions from them. Many times we are judgmental of them, and that should never really be. We should understand where people get into the problems they get into, but we should consider it well and then receive the instruction from it so that you and I do not wind up in the same place. That is the fool.

The wise man, on the other hand, will grasp the truth of God's Word. He will allow God to use us as His instrument to reach the world. We talked about that at great length last week, and I showed you how that down through history, God has done some incredible things through men who understood the concept of buying the field. The wise man will glean and gain and use all the

truth that he can get to avoid the pitfalls of life. Those pitfalls in the Book of Proverbs are clearly laid out by the laying out of the evil man and the strange woman. It is laid out so clearly so that we can buy a field and do all that God wanted us to do in planting a vineyard.

Remember now that the key throughout all of this that we have looked at is one verse in Philippians 1:6.

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:

I have hinged every message in Proverbs 31 on this verse because it is the truth. God saved you for a purpose. I have said it many, many times, but I am going to say it again. When He came down to Earth, He lasted three and a half years, or thereabouts, before He was taken back to heaven in Acts 1. During that time, He began the work that He wants us to finish. When He goes back to heaven, the work is not finished. It continues on through Him indwelling us through the Holy Spirit of God through salvation. Now, you and I buying a field, just like He bought the field, we buy a field and then commit our life to that and finish the work that God has for us.

I told you last week, my field was Kansas City. Your field is Kansas City, unless God takes you someplace else. I also showed you how that God establishes this through families, families who bring their children up to work in a ministry team, like so many of you have done or are doing, and then be used of God to finish that work. Of course, we do it one field at a time. We started here a number of years ago, and now we are literally around the world with people from almost every country who are gleaning everything they can from the ministry.

Remember, I also showed you that it talks about a vineyard, and the vineyard is like fruit-bearing trees back in Genesis 1:1-2, where the trees that were in the garden had seed-bearing seeds within themselves. You have one apple tree, and 20 years later, you have 20 apple trees because the apples fall to the ground, they have seeds in them, and that is how the trees grow.

In the Bible, one time in Mark 8:24, Jesus dealt with a blind man. He touched his eyes the first time and asked him what he saw. He made a tremendous statement.

Mark 8:24

And he looked up, and said, I see men as trees, walking.

From that point on, and through other places in the Bible, men are likened to trees. Men have limbs; trees have limbs. So do you. We talk about our family tree having branches going back in our ancestry. So do we. Men are like trees. With Christ as the center, as the Tree of Life, He is also called the Olive Tree in Romans 9 and Romans 11. In John 15:1, He is called the True Vine. It is us laboring together to build a fruitful vineyard that will simply bear fruit unto the Lord. That is all this church is all about. It is about people coming in. We started years ago with twelve or so, and here it is today. It is nothing more than you as a Christian getting the Holy Spirit of God in your life, getting what you need to get, and then realizing what your field is. Then you

bring somebody to church, you bring somebody here, and the field gets expanded; the vineyard gets expanded.

I showed you the five points that you have to accomplish whenever you decide to build a field, and in my personal experience about building a church:

1. Clear the field.
2. Plow the field.
3. Sow the field.
4. Protect the field.
5. Cultivate the field, knowing when the fruit is right to be ready to go.

A church is a lot like God's Garden of Eden back in the Book of Genesis. Psalms 1:1-3 follows the same line.

Psalms 1:1-3

Blessed is the man that walketh not in the counsel of the ungodly, nor standeth in the way of sinners, nor sitteth in the seat of the scornful.

But his delight is in the law of the LORD; and in his law doth he meditate day and night.

And he shall be like a tree planted by the rivers of water, that bringeth forth his fruit in his season; his leaf also shall not wither; and whatsoever he doeth shall prosper.

That is the end result of a man or a woman, a family, a mom and dad, who simply understands the great principles and delights themselves in the Word of God. The Bible says that we are likened to that tree planted by the river of water. The only one tree in the Bible that is planted by the rivers of water is in Ezekiel 40-48, when the water in the millennial reign of Christ comes out of the Holy Oblation and comes down, and the trees are on both sides. That is what we should be. The Holy Spirit of God should flow right down the middle of this church. On each side of that river are the trees—you—who are the trees of life. This garden of God, this vineyard, continues to bear fruit, not because you and I are such great people, but because we are saved people that God transformed and brought into the kingdom of His dear Son. Now the Holy Spirit of God illuminates the people around us. Your life makes a difference. People see it. You will bring people in. People will come. They will get it; they will see. They are looking for the Bible, and they find it. It is all because this field keeps growing. It says that he shall be like a tree planted by the rivers of water that bringeth forth his fruit in his season.

There is a season to our fruit bearing. Apple trees do not bear apples in January. Right now in your life and my life, most of you, all of you really, are in the prime place of your life to really bear fruit in your life and in your season. It also says your leaf shall not wither. That is your family. It says, "whatsoever he doeth shall prosper."

There is a story we tell our children about King Midas. King Midas loved gold so much that everything he wanted, he asked that everything he touched would turn to gold because he just wanted gold. When he got that from the good fairy, he could touch everything, and everything turned to gold. He was ecstatic. His little kids ran in, and he grabbed them, and guess what

happened? They turned to gold. The story of the worldly version of that is the fact that it was a terrible thing that he wanted gold so much that he turned his children to gold. Let me put that in the spiritual concept for you. The greatest thing you could ever do is have the power in your life to turn your kids into gold for Jesus Christ. Because at the judgment seat of Christ, the first thing laid on that foundation is gold, silver, precious stone. That is what He is saying here. It is an incredible concept.

II. The Husbandman and the Withered Vineyard

In the Bible, you have the concept of a husbandman. A husbandman is a man whose occupation is to keep the garden or a vineyard. It is the first occupation found in the Bible in Genesis 9 with Noah. You find it in other places; Isaac is associated with it, Joseph is associated with it in his dream. But Noah is the first one that we are told that he is a bona fide husbandman.

In the Old Testament, in the Book of Joel, this concept is developed with Israel, who is now in deep apostasy. Israel was to be in the Old Testament the husbandman of the vineyard of the nation of Israel. You find this all through the Bible. In Joel 1:8-12, you find Israel's condition now as the nation of God, the husbandman of God's vineyard, and what has happened.

Joel 1:8-12

Lament like a virgin girded with sackcloth for the husband of her youth.

The meat offering and the drink offering is cut off from the house of the LORD; the priests, the LORD'S ministers, mourn.

The field is wasted, the land mourneth; for the corn is wasted: the new wine is dried up, the oil languisheth.

Be ye ashamed, O ye husbandmen; howl, O ye vinedressers, for the wheat and for the barley; because the harvest of the field is perished.

The vine is dried up, and the fig tree languisheth; the pomegranate tree, the palm tree also, and the apple tree, even all the trees of the field, are withered: because joy is withered away from the sons of men.

Let me tell you something. You and I, I will make a spiritual application to it. That is Israel doctrinally. You and I are just like that. We are God's vineyard. I want you to know the reason why the vineyard withered is because joy withered away from the sons of men. That joy in 1 John 1:4 is our fellowship with Him.

1 John 1:7

But if we walk in the light, as he is in the light, we have fellowship one with another, and the blood of Jesus Christ his Son cleanseth us from all sin.

1 John 1:4

And these things write we unto you, that your joy may be full.

You know what is wrong with Christianity today? You know why churches are not winning people to Christ? You know why there is no depth in them? You know why everybody is just kind of playing at church? I will tell you why: because the joy is withered away. That was Israel, and that is the church today. That is where we are at.

III. The Strength of the Loins: Truth and Mind

Today we want to look at a couple more verses and add to last week and all that we have seen in Proverbs 31 and literally all that we have seen through the Book of Proverbs. I want to read for you today Proverbs 31:17-18.

Proverbs 31:17-18

She girdeth her loins with strength, and strengtheneth her arms.

She perceiveth that her merchandise is good: her candle goeth not out by night.

First off, "she girdeth her loins with strength." This is the key concept because the strength of any man, and woman too, will be within the loins of the legs. You will see it in football when a running back is running down the field and he is getting close to the goal line, and three tacklers will hold on to him, but he pumps his legs, and he gets inside the goal line. That is where your strength is. You will find it in baseball; you do not hit with your arms, you hit from the strength of your loins. You find it in soccer. It is in every aspect of sport. The strength is in a man's loins or in his legs.

Remember in the Bible, our legs and our feet represent where we go for God, and our arms and our hands represent what we do for God. You want to remember that. Our loins will be the center point or the center mass for all of that strength. Again, weightlifters lift with their legs; they do not lift with their back. That is why you always see them with tiny waists, but their legs look like telephone poles. They are huge because that is what they do. I go to the gym up there, and they have bodybuilders, and some of the women bodybuilders, their legs look like Volkswagens. They are incredible because they are always lifting with their legs. They think it looks good. Let me tell you something, guys, never date a gal that can kick the crap out of you when push comes to shove. You just do not want to do that.

I want to show you something here. This is when you get in your Bible and you start studying your Bible. The Bible will go through stages of showing you something. In most cases, you do not want to just stop at one place because you want to get that trail of where it is going. This is a great example of this. It shows us that when you study something like this, you always let the Bible define it for you. Do not just stop where you are at and say, "This is what it means." Follow it through and see where it goes. That is incredible.

Turn over to Ephesians 6. We know that this is the great chapter on the whole armor of God, and there are seven pieces of armor that every Christian should be equipped with. Paul uses, as I told you a couple of weeks ago, the example of a first-century Roman soldier. So he is laying it all out. We want to see this. Look at Ephesians 6:10-14. I want you to see how it says one thing back in Proverbs, but then it defines what that strength is.

Ephesians 6:10-14

Finally, my brethren, be strong in the Lord, and in the power of his might.

Put on the whole armour of God, that ye may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil.

For we wrestle not against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this world, against spiritual wickedness in high places.

Wherefore take unto you the whole armour of God, that ye may be able to withstand in the evil day, and having done all, to stand.

Stand therefore, having your loins girt about with truth, and having on the breastplate of righteousness;

There it is, verse 14. He just defined back in Proverbs when it says the strength of a loin. Now he just told us what that strength is: it is in the Word of God, truth. So that is what you do. You start back here and then you say, "Now I am going to see where this goes," because strength is a broad thing. So let us see if we can narrow it down. What do you do? You just work through the Bible. This is where you can use a concordance if you want, and you look up the words "loins" or whatever and see where it goes. It would be a great way to do that. What you have here is now he has defined for us that the strength of our loins is the truth. Loins girded about with truth.

As you know, the loins are the center of gravity, the mass, the point of our strength. You see here that that strength in the Word of God is given. He tells us four times in what I just read you for us to stand:

> *Be able to stand.*

> *Be able to withstand.*

> *Done all to stand.*

> *Stand therefore.*

This is what you have to do if you are going to buy the field. You have to take a stand at some point in your life on some things. When our loins are fixed in the foundation of God's truth, then we are steadfast. We are unmovable. We are anchored to God's truth. When we consider a field and then we buy it, like last week, that is where you take your stand. We talked about it Thursday night when Tony asked a question about suffering. I told you the suffering is not giving up anything, though many people think that it is. The real suffering for Jesus Christ is when you take your stand, and you are going to pay a price for that. I told you then God's people today will either take a stand for the wrong things or they will take no stand at all. When you do that, in either case, then you fall for everything.

Let me show you something else. We are not done yet. I went from strength, then to loins girded about with truth. Now I am going to continue my study. I am going to narrow it down even more than that. The Bible defines strength as the truth of the Word of God. Now we will define loins in a little deeper way. Turn over to 1 Peter 1:13. This is how you use the Bible to let the Bible

interpret itself to get not only the answer of what you are looking for and get into a deeper study, but how it just all comes back in everything that we need in our lives. We have seen "loins of strength" and then "loins girded about with truth." Now watch this.

1 Peter 1:13

Wherefore gird up the loins of your mind, be sober, and hope to the end for the grace that is to be brought unto you at the revelation of Jesus Christ;

So now we see that this strength of your loins is really in your mind. We see that that is the mind of God that we have been talking about. "Let this mind be in you, which was also in Christ Jesus," Philippians 2:5. "We have the mind of Christ," 1 Corinthians 2:16. This is Isaiah 55:8-9 when it says, "For my thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways my ways, saith the LORD." We need to bring every thought into captivity to the obedience of Jesus Christ. This is 1 John 1:7 again: "Walking in the light as He is in the light, having fellowship one with another." There will be no fellowship with God outside walking in the light. That light will be your strength. That light will be God's truth. God's truth and God's light in your life will only become part of you when it makes it into your mind.

I told you last week about the battleground that exists for our families: the families in this church, the families across the world, and the families across this country. You can see it in every aspect of society. Families have lost their kids; they have lost their children. It is a situation where that should never be when it comes to God's people. It should certainly never be in this church. I know that some of you came in later in life as your kids were already struggling. I get that. I am talking about you young couples right now. That battle in the beginning will never be a battle of flesh and blood; it will be a spiritual battle. But in time, later on, when they hit 16, 17, and 18, then the blood will start to flow. Then you get into the flesh and blood battle. Then you get into the knockdown drag-outs. But it all goes back to where it started. You have got to see the importance of those early years, going through those five stages that I have given you so many times, so that you, in that early aspect of your life, can structure their minds against all that is coming their way. You can strengthen their minds with the Word of God. By doing that, you shape their will of where they are going in life.

By the time they get to five, six, and seven, I know they are still young yet. I know you still have a tremendous advantage in them if you have done up to that point what you should be doing. But I want to tell you, the real battle begins when they go off to school. The real battle goes in when you lose 100% control over what they see and what they hear. Now you hope they get a good teacher. You hope they get good friends. Now you are going to be put in a mix with people, kids who are their age, that do not have any parents who do anything for them. Now you are going to run the risk of getting a teacher who does not care about anything except the worldly, progressive mindset of a liberal. This is where the battle has to be. This is where it is going to begin. You have to be already firmly entrenched in their mind.

My war was the war of Vietnam. It was not a popular war. It was unlike any war that America ever faced. I do not know if you know it or not, but America had a great victory in World War II. We defeated the Nazis in Germany and the Japanese in Japan. It was a great victory. The next

war came along was Korea, and it really came along too soon after the big one. Nobody really cared about that. We did not win that one. We just drew a line in the 38th parallel over there between North and South Korea and called a ceasefire. We are technically still at war with North Korea; we have just... but we did not win it. That one was a draw. Then the next one that came along was Vietnam, and we lost miserably in Vietnam. We were fighting in Vietnam to stop communism. When we pulled out, if you would go to Vietnam today, South Vietnam, Saigon, and all those places are all communism. We lost our shirt in Vietnam. We had over 25,000 boys die to turn it over to the communists at the end, and we cut and run.

I am not against the war in Vietnam, but what I am against is getting into any war when you do not win it. America could have won Vietnam in six months or maybe a year. But we got politics involved. You know, every time politics get involved, you are going to lose. You know in your life, when politics get involved, you are going to lose. It is just that simple. You cannot fight a war with politics. There were guys over there, situations over there, where you got fired on, and you had to call for permission before you could fire back. There was a situation where you could not bomb Hanoi. They stocked every weapon that they had in Hanoi. It went up like a Fourth of July. But because of politics, we could not cross that line to bomb the enemy city, but they were free and footloose to bomb us everywhere they wanted to. I called one time, and the guy says, "Oh, we are going to blow up this bridge because they are crossing over in mass." He says, "Well, you know, the order came back, 'You cannot blow up that bridge. Now, maybe you can just blow up the one end of the bridge.'" The commander said, "In all my 40 years in the military, I have never learned how to blow up just one end of a bridge." But that is what we were up against.

They came up with a failed strategy, really a biblical strategy, but it did not work for Vietnam. They decided not to beat the Viet Cong on their own turf. They decided not to just destroy everything and bomb everything. There were places when they would not even bomb them. You could see at night the lights and torches of them coming down the Ho Chi Minh Trail, hundreds of them reinforcing. They could not touch them. So they adopted a failed policy. Instead of wiping them out and defeating them that way, they thought that they could win the hearts and minds. That became the slogan during Vietnam: "the winning of hearts and minds." Their philosophy was that in every Vietnamese, there is an American trying to get out. So if we win their hearts and their minds, they are all going to come over and see the light, so to speak, and want to be an American. Nothing could be farther from the truth. We lost the Vietnam War on that mindset right there because the winning of hearts and minds was not what they were interested in. The war in Vietnam was not like World War II; it was not even like Korea. It was a war of ideology. It was a war of thinking. Instead of going to battle and winning, we decided to go a philosophical route and try to win their hearts and minds. When you have a guy who gets up every morning and he is raised from the time that he is four years old, and by the time he is five, he can strip an AK-47 down and put it back together blindfolded, and he goes to military school when he is nine, and he learns all of his life how to sneak in and kill you and cut your throat while you are sleeping and smoking dope on patrol, let me tell you something: you are not going to win his heart and mind. There is only one thing you can do: kill him. In Jesus' name, but you kill him. I am just telling you, you want a war? Okay, I do not like war, but if you are going to

have one, win it. It is not this idea, "in case it rains today, the war will be held in the auditorium." That is not going to work. You have got to go get them.

The battle today, as I have said, is for your family. Here is where it will work, because you will win the battle for your family if you as parents will go after their hearts and minds. It would not work in Vietnam, but it will work because that is a biblical principle. Romans 12:2 says, "And be not conformed to this world: but be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind." You transform those kids' minds. You win their hearts and their minds, and then in time, you turn their heart and their minds into God, where God is. This war with your family will be won by you developing in your children, as in 2 Timothy 1:7, a sound mind. When you get their mind, you will get their attitude of heart. They are at that early age that you can gird their minds in the strength of the Word of God, the winning of hearts and minds.

IV. Brainwashing: A Biblical Process

I cannot even tell you how many times we have been marked, as we talked about this Thursday. Our church, any church who believes the Bible today, is outcast with all the other churches. We get labeled as a cult. I do not know how many times I have heard somebody say, "Well, I do not know if I want my kid to go into that church," or "I do not know if I want to go to that church. I do not want him being brainwashed." Brainwashing has such a negative connotation because of all the other cults and everything that is out there. But I want to tell you something now. Brainwashing originally is a biblical process. He says by the washing of regeneration, you know the first thing you need when you get saved? You need your brain washed.

Your mother went halfway when she used to say in the old days when you used to cuss, "I am going to wash your mouth out with soap." But that never really worked. In my case, I developed a taste for it after a while. The bottom line is it was not your mouth that needed to be washed out; it was your brain. You needed to be brainwashed. By washing every generation. One time, years and years ago, this lady came in, and she had a teenage boy, 17 or 18. She says, "I really need some help with my child, my kid." I said, "Okay, what is going on?" He was just a normal kid. He was hanging out with the wrong crowd, getting in trouble at school, and all those things. I said, "Well, I would be glad to help you." This kid came in. I worked with him. Nice kid. Helped him. Got into the Bible just like that. He was an easy mark. He really, really wanted to do what is right. He just wanted somebody to help him. He got into the Bible, loved the Bible, started coming to church every time we had something. He was really a good kid.

Then his mom calls me up again. Now she is complaining because I brainwashed her son. She says, "All he wants to do is stay home and study the Bible." Like, God forbid! She says, "You know what? He is not a normal kid anymore." Well, just eight months ago, you were here complaining because he was a normal kid. Now we have made him a model kid, and now you do not like that. She said, "You brainwashed my son." I said, "Absolutely." I said, "I took the Bible, and the Bible says in Ephesians 5:26 that you change somebody's mind by the washing of water by the word." We took the Word of God, it is like water, and we washed out everything that was bad and replaced it with all of the things that are good. I do not understand why you have a problem with that. You come here, I guarantee you, get it on tape so you can go out and just cut

the episode out. You are going to get brainwashed if you stick around here very long, but praise the Lord.

This church is like a gigantic washing machine. Every Sunday you get thrown into it like dirty laundry. You know, you come in here on Sunday morning, you are not all as clean as you should be. You know that. I mean, you should be, some of you are, but most of us are not. We come in here with some dirty laundry, do not we? So here you are. I am the Maytag man. You come in, and you put it in there. When you wash your clothes, ladies, you know it is the same thing. You put your clothes in, you fill up the washer, you put the soap in. But you know that does not get your clothes clean. Your clothes do not get clean until you turn the agitator on. You can watch right in your washing machine; it is beating those clothes back and forth. That is what gets the dirt out. The Bible is great. Praise the Lord. It is the water of the Word of God. That church is like a washing machine. But you will never get clean until you get the agitator in your world. When you get a tough stain that just will not come out, you have to go to the cupboard and get that bottle of Shout it Out. You know what is wrong with every one of you, or most of you, this morning? You are brainwashed. It is just that simple.

When you have your loins girded about with strength, truth, the loins of your mind, then it will strengthen your arms. Arms are what you do God's work with. Arms will be the strength of your hands. It is a lot like the thing you will all see with a big buffed-out guy walking in the house. When he comes in and he takes off his chest, he has a little skinny chest. He rips off his arms, and he has little... You see now what? That is most of God's people. All the strength that they have on is fake. Or better yet, you are like the two moving guys that are moving those things, and they have him on the truck like this. The lady says, "We should have had those guys." He said, "We are those guys." The picture on the truck adds 50 pounds to our arms. It is fake. You walk around church puffed up, buffed up, big arms and all that stuff. But when you get home, you take the chest off, and you have the skinniest little goofy chest the world has ever seen. You take your arms off, peel them off, you have the tattoos on the big arms, and you take them off, and you have little matchstick arms.

I used to watch people arm wrestle. They have regular contests where they do that. They will get on there, and they will lock hands like that. It is not the hands that win; it is what you have in your arms. I love Joe Christensen. He is an independent police officer. I always kid him because he never wears his gun to church. He never wears his guns anywhere. He is tired of wearing it all day long. I love him because he is kind of a martial arts guy. You do not want to mess with Joe. Joe puts you down, and he will not put his knee on your neck, but he will put you down, I promise you. I am going to clarify that. I told Joe one time, every time I hug him, I always reach around to feel if he has his gun on. I said, "You do not have your gun, do you?" He says, "I do not need it. I got these guns." I like that. It is in his arms and his strength, and he will put you down.

It is the great concept in the Bible of attitude versus action. The mind is your attitude. When you get the strength of that mind in the Word of God, and your mind becomes the strength of the Word of God, and that is your loins girded about with truth, then your arms will be the action. When your attitude is where it needs to be, girded in truth, then your action will be exactly where

God's work wants him to be. The strength will be in your arms all the way down to your hands, based on the attitudes you have, of the perception that you have of things, and understanding what is going on. Letting the Word of God give you the right attitude, and then us doing the right work.

I like to study people. I am a guy who, when they used to go to Disney World, I never rode anything. I did not care about that. We used to go to Worlds of Fun. I never rode anything. Some of you guys were upside down half your day, and those were right. I just like to sit and watch people. I go to the airport; I like to watch people. People are a great study. I have always liked it on a closer level. I have always liked looking at how people deal with situations that come into their world. Attitude and action will define who we are very quickly. I tell people all the time, whatever your action is will be based on what your attitude is. When you get the wrong attitude because you got the wrong information, then your action is going to be wrong. It is just that simple.

V. Perception and the Candle's Light

Proverbs 31:18 says:

Proverbs 31:18

She perceiveth that her merchandise is good: her candle goeth not out by night.

This goes without saying that your merchandise here will be the Word of God. We saw it back in Proverbs 31:14: "She is like the merchants' ships; she bringeth her food from afar."

The key word here is "she perceiveth." To have perception when it comes to God is to understand, to have your mind, loins, strength, and truth in the Word of God. Then you understand exactly what you have when you have your Bible. It says that she perceives that her merchandise is good. She knows what she has in the Word of God. She perceives that it is the truth of God from afar, and she knows what she has, and she knows that it is good. She knows that the book that she has is her absolute final authority in everything in life.

People think the Bible is a religious book. The Bible is not a religious book. The Bible is a history book. But it is not a history book about what man is doing, and a lot of people think that. The Bible is a history book about what God is doing, why He is doing it, when He is doing it, where He is doing it, and what the end result is going to be. When you have that, you have perception. You do not look at your life in just a little tunnel vision anymore. You see it now through the scope of what God is doing.

Then it says, "her candle goeth not out by night." I think that this is probably one of the premier studies anywhere in the Word of God. Each of us, when you come through the New Testament in the Book of Matthew, each of us is likened to a candle. We are a candle that is a light that shines in the dark world. Genesis 1:16 says that we are the lesser light that lighteth up the night.

The light of your candle will be the Holy Spirit of God in you, the virtue that you have that others see. Matthew 5:13-16 says:

Matthew 5:13-16

Ye are the salt of the earth: but if the salt have lost his savour, wherewith shall it be salted? it is thenceforth good for nothing, but to be cast out, and to be trodden under foot of men.

Ye are the light of the world. A city that is set on an hill cannot be hid.

Neither do men light a candle, and put it under a bushel, but on a candlestick; and it giveth light unto all that are in the house.

Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father which is in heaven.

There are a number of things here. First of all, he says that God's people are the light of this world. We will talk about the salt here in just a little bit. He says God's people are the light of this world. We are like a candle. You take a church of 300 people, with everybody's candle being lit, people are going to see that. The idea is you get God's people, each one a candle, and it is lit, and you have a thousand of them or 500 of them in a dark world. People are going to be drawn to that. I want to tell you right now, I know we are in the apostasy. I know we are in the Laodicean church age. I am telling you right now, I believe there are still people out there who want the truth. I believe there are still people out there that are looking for the truth. I get calls from them all week long. I get emails from them all week long, all over the world, all over the country, who are on the website. They are buying books, they are buying tapes, they are getting this, they are getting that, they are going through studies. There are people out there who want the truth. But the only way they ever found the truth was because this church, where the majority of the people had their candles lit, and they saw the light.

In wartime, during World War II, and any wartime really, in the Navy when you were on a ship, at nighttime they had a blackout. They had the windows all shaded out because they wanted to stay in darkness. It was absolutely forbidden to smoke a cigarette on deck because it was assumed and said, I do not know if it is true or not, but I would see that it is, it was said that you could see a lit cigarette on the deck of a ship ten miles away. That may be hard to believe unless you have ever been on the ocean at night, and it is so pitch black. You cannot see the hand in front of your face. What happens is, the darkness will illuminate that little light because it is so dark. There will never be a time in the history of the world where the world is in more darkness than it is right now. There is just one little candle. If you allow God for you to be that candle, God will take your little candle, and through the massive darkness, let that darkness illuminate your light, and people will see it.

I remember one time years ago, and you know me, I am not into this kind of stuff, but I thought it was pretty impressive. I was with the church, and I was a nobody back then, and I am just a somebody nobody now. Anyway, they had a candlelight service at New Year's. There must have been 3,000 people at the church service. As you came in, everybody got a candle. The guy that spoke preached on, "Let your light shine." It was kind of impressive. It really was. I mean, I am not going to do it, but we would burn the place down, but it was pretty impressive. What they did is they went through the crowd, and if there were 2,000 people there, every 100th person got

their candle lit. Then they turned out all the lights, and all you could see was just a candle here, a candle here, a candle here, a candle here—total darkness. Then at the command, the person sitting next to that person lit their candle, and they lit their candle, and within 30 seconds, the whole place lighted up with 2,000 candles. The illustration was that a church needs to get just one or two people on fire, and that being on fire, lighting your candle, will infect other people. Pretty soon, the whole church got their candles lit. That is what it takes to reach the world. It takes one person caring enough to have a candle that is not going to go out, lighting other people's candles, and then other people lighting other people's candles. Exactly what you do here. Everybody, almost without exception, gets saved in this church. They get saved because somebody else worked them, brought them, plowed the field, got them here, and then used their candle to light their candle. That is the way it is supposed to be. I would not have it any other way. It is just that simple.

I get guys asking me all the time, "Well, how come you do not give an invitation?" "The Baptist church I went to gave an invitation every week." I will just be honest with you. I am so sick and tired of people in the invitation, people coming down and claiming to get saved and then never seeing them again. I am just telling you, we get more. I am not against giving an invitation. I will give one every once in a while. I gave one here a couple of weeks back. God tells you to do it, you do it. But this idea of just giving one because Baptists are supposed to give one. I have seen them sing ten stanzas of "Just As I Am." Nobody is coming forward. The pastor, he wants people to get saved, which I get. But you never want to force people to get saved. You never want to manipulate people to get saved. When we give an invitation here, I do not have anybody sing a song. I do not want the song to motivate you to get saved. You know why? Because if my preaching did not do it, and the Holy Spirit of God using my preaching did not do it, then you do not need to get saved. So I will just say, "Every head bowed, every eye closed. You want to get saved right now, stand up." Boom, boom, boom, boom. They pop up all over the place like mushrooms in springtime. You just get your bucket and go pick them. I have watched this. He will sing ten stanzas of "Just As I Am." The pastor says, "Okay, we are going to change songs now to give you one more chance. Let us sing 'Almost Persuaded.'" Because you are supposed to sing now, you have not come forward yet, you are almost persuaded. I mean, that is just stupid. I will get a third song, "She'll Be Coming 'Round the Mountain When She Comes." Come on. It is just ridiculous stuff. I am not going to beg you to get saved. I am not going to manipulate you to get saved. You know what I want? I want you to light your candle, keep your candle lit so that all men can see it. Do not hide it under a bushel basket. I want you to light somebody else's candle by letting God's Holy Spirit use you in their life. We get more people saved that way than we do just singing a thousand stanzas. It is just where it is at.

It says that her candlestick goeth not out by night. We are all that. I want you to notice here that Matthew 5:16 says, "Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works." The light of your candle will be in your good works that you do. That is the finishing work that Christ had for you.

VI. The Laodicean Church and Lost Light

Here is the problem with Christianity today, basically three things: no book, no truth, and no light. That is where they are at. I have given you many times, we have talked about it on Thursday night Bible study, the great example in 1 Samuel 3 with young Samuel back there, where he is called into the ministry. I have told you how that is one of the most incredible, rarest places in the Bible where God just kind of lifts that whole story out of the Old Testament and seemingly puts it into a New Testament context, even though it is still in the Old Testament. When you go back there, you have a picture of the Laodicean church. It is the only place in the Bible in the Old Testament anyhow, where during Samuel's time with Eli as the priest, that candlestick goes out. Leviticus 24:2 and Exodus 25:31 tell us clearly that candle was never to go out. That candle was to burn forever because it is a picture of the Holy Spirit of God's light within the tabernacle of the nation of Israel. Yet here is a place where the light goes out.

1 Samuel 3:3

And ere the lamp of God went out in the temple of the LORD, where the ark of God was, and Samuel was laid down to sleep;

It is a perfect, perfect picture of the church period that we are living in right now. You realize that when I was looking at this a while back, it kind of jumped out at me. In 1 Samuel 3:1, it says that there was no open vision when this story starts. That is not true of the Old Testament, per se, because visions were all through the Old Testament. But here is a period of time where God shows there will be no open vision. Then in 1 Samuel 3:21, the last verse, he says, when the Lord finally did appear to Samuel, He appeared to him through the Word of God. Samuel did not have the Word of God. He might have had Moses' books, but he did not have the Bible as we do. In the Old Testament, God spoke to them through prophets, through dreams, through visions. But here is a place where all that is gone, and he says, "now there is no open vision." God appeared to him through the Word of God. We live in a day and age called the church age where there is no open vision. All God is going to use is a more sure word of prophecy. I am going to tell you right now, when God speaks to you, when He calls you like He did to Samuel, He is going to do it through the book you are holding in your hand.

Then 1 Samuel 3:3 says, "ere the lamp of God went out." It was not a lamp. If you go back to Exodus, it was a seven-pronged candlestick. But here he does not call it that. He calls it a single lamp because in the Old Testament, as in Revelation 1:4, God operated through the seven spirits. That is why he had a seven-pronged candlestick back in the Old Testament. But he did not say that here because this is the picture of something different. Now it is a single lamp. That would be the New Testament when the Holy Spirit of God is now in one body after the resurrection of Christ. He is in you, and you are the lamp of God. Psalms 119:105 says, "Thy word is a lamp unto my feet, and a light unto my path." This is the only time that you find it where the lamp goes out. All of these things are a picture of our candle not going out during the church age.

All this is a picture of where we are at today in this Laodicean church period because Revelation 1:20, when he starts to talk about the seven churches, tells us very clearly that you have seven angels that are connected with seven stars, that are connected with seven candlesticks that represent the seven periods of church history from 60 AD to 2000, as found in Revelation 1-3.

Each church period, from what he says there, seems to have an angel that is connected with a candlestick, the Holy Spirit of God, that is the light of that church through the Word of God for men to do the work of God.

In Revelation 2:5, we are told that, just like in 1 Samuel 3, God will take the angel and remove the candlestick out of any church that loses its first love, which is the Word of God. When you get to Revelation 3:14-22, you will find the Laodicean church, the church of the closed door, as in Revelation 3:20. It is very clear that that church has lost its candlestick. A church that thinks that it has it all. A church, as we see in Revelation 3:17, has need of nothing except more money.

Revelation 3:17

Because thou sayest, I am rich, and increased with goods, and have need of nothing; and knowest not that thou art wretched, and miserable, and poor, and blind, and naked:

They think they are rich, but they have no true riches, as in Luke 16:11. They are increased with goods, but it is all the wrong merchandise, as in Proverbs 31:17-18. They have gymnasiums, they have restaurants, they have basketball courts, they have walking tracks, they have a \$200,000 sound system, they have rock bands, they have breakdancing for Jesus on the stage, they have light shows, smoke comes up when you start the service, and everybody gets lost in the fog. They are okay with social drinking. They have all the elements. They have everything that Saturday Night Live has. You can go to church now and say, "Wow, what service do I want to go to? Do I want to go to the traditional, or do I want to go to a contemporary, or do I want to go to a progressive service?" You get to choose. You go to one, it is like it used to be a long time ago, still no preaching. You go to the second, and it is worldly, and you go to the third, and it is moving right along with all the world. The Bible says, "and knowest not that thou art wretched, and miserable, and poor, and blind, and naked." You know what the problem is? No candlestick. No light. Churches without lights are run by pastors with no light who are filled with God's people with no light. They have lost the book. They have lost God's mind, the Word of God, and they are now unstable in their own, and they have lost their minds. They need to get brainwashed, and they will never buy any field.

Revelation 3:15-16

I know thy works, that thou art neither cold nor hot: I would thou wert cold or hot.

So then because thou art lukewarm, and neither cold nor hot, I will spue thee out of my mouth.

There goes the angel. There goes the candlestick. There goes the church. Exactly what we have today. Lukewarm churches. No doctrine. No preaching. Run by lukewarm pastors. No preaching of the truth. Filled with lukewarm Christians who would not walk across the street to buy a field for the Lord Jesus Christ. Today in Christianity, as told in Revelation 3:20, it is the church of the closed door. That is a great contrast if you go to the church before, the church of the open door, and see the difference between the two. Mega churches and small churches with no light, no word, and Jesus on the outside knocking, trying to get back in.

What a powerful chapter Proverbs 31 is. Not only does it show us what we should be, but it shows us the real issue of what our Christianity is today: no light. Our candle has gone out, just like in 1 Samuel 3. We have dumped the book. We have dumped everything, and we have got a form of godliness, but there is no power in preaching. There is nothing that we are lukewarm. People still get saved, but there is no power. There is no purpose. There is no perception.

VII. Colossians and the Church's Misdirection

The Book of Colossians in the New Testament is one of the best examples of this. In Revelation 1-3, we are told that John writes to seven churches. In the New Testament, we know that Paul writes to seven churches. What most people do not know or never figure out, and believe it or not, it is a great study to see how the seven churches that Paul writes to and the seven churches that John writes to, they match up. If you want to match each one of those up, it is an incredible study on its own, but we do not have time to do that today. The Book of Colossians will match up with the church of Laodicea, the one we are in right now, the one with no light.

The Book of Colossians has four chapters in it, and it deals with the apostasy of where we are at right now.

6. In Colossians 1, it goes through this incredible refocusing on who Christ is, because the church today has lost who He is.
7. In Colossians 2:8, he talks about the issues that we have to face in Christianity that have destroyed us. It shows that the church today is built on four things: philosophy, vain deceit, traditions of men, and the rudiments of the world, and then clearly says, "and not after Christ."
8. In Colossians 3 and 4, once he lays out those two things, then he shows us what I am supposed to do and carry out my ministry in that time frame.

In the Book of Colossians, you will find toward the end that the city of Laodicea is mentioned five times. Hence, this book lines up to the Laodicean church period. Here is the key, the warning for all of us that Christianity has failed to heed today. Colossia was a major city. It was a trade route. I told you that last week, I think it was. But just 11 miles south of Colossia was the city of Laodicea. It is like Kansas City. We are in Independence right now. But if you just drive a half a mile down to the Quick Trip, you are in Kansas City. If you just drive a little farther east, you are in Blue Springs. If you drive this way, you will get into Sugar Creek, and we are surrounded. If you do not see the sign that says you are leaving Independence and moving into Kansas City, you are not sure where you are at. You miss a sign telling you, and you are not sure what city you are in. The laws in one may not be the laws in the other. It is so easy. If you do not have your loins girded about with truth, you are going to miss the signs. Just as it is hard for me or you to drive down 40 Highway and to tell for sure if I am in Kansas City or Independence, it was really hard for people to leave Colossia and drive 11 miles south and know when they were in Laodicea. That is the problem in the church today. Churches miss the road signs. They still think they are in Colossia when they are in Laodicea. That is one of the most prominent examples anywhere in the Bible.

There are two books in your Bible that will define those for you. The Book of Acts will define for you the road signs you need to look for. The Book of Revelation will be your actual roadmap of how you are going to get where you want to get. Without the book, without the Word of God, without the perception, without the light that guides you through those things, so many of God's people today think they are one place when actually they have transferred into Laodicea. It is a very short trip. It is a trip that there are no banners or lights that tell you you have now entered in. It is so subtle you just go from one to the other. That is what churches have done today.

VIII. The World's Insanity and the Church's Role

This is the world. It is in the mess that it is in today. I make no apologies for it. The world and this country are in the mess that they are in today. Churches are in the mess that they are in today. There is no salt and there is no light. Matthew 5, the salt, the preservative that would have preserved this country if pastors would have stood in the pulpit and preached it. But they did not. They went the easy route. They went the big church route. They went the money route. They went everything they did except standing in the pulpit and giving their people the absolute truth of the Word of God to keep their lives and their families together. That is what preserves a nation, a family, you as an individual: the salt of the Word of God. But the salt today has lost its savor. When the salt went, the light went.

I had forgotten this week that this was the anniversary of the 1955 Le Mans race in France. That was probably the worst auto crash in the history of auto racing. Sixty-five years ago, I think Thursday was the anniversary of it. It popped up, and I kind of watched it. I had known about it. I had used it many times and thought about it, but I had forgotten all about it. There it was. This is 65 years ago, 1955. This accident is such a picture of a disaster that America is in today, and really the whole world. It was unbelievable. When I saw it early on in my life and saw it years ago, it just struck me: "This is Christianity today."

There is a movie you all want to watch. You do not have to watch the whole thing, but it is so true. It is called *The Big Red One*. It is a movie about the First Infantry Division and how they got the title of "The Big Red One." There is one part of that that I just, if it is coming on, I will just tape it and watch that one part and erase it because it is so true. These guys in this squad are sneaking in to try to blow up this self-propelled gun. They go into this insane asylum that the Germans are occupying. They are sneaking around in there, and the Germans are eating, and all these socially retarded kids and adults are in there. You can imagine, they are all nuts. They are in there, and the Germans are eating on one side, and the crazy people are eating on the other side. So the Americans are going to wipe them out. What happens is, they bust in, they start shooting the Germans, and the people over here, and the Germans start shooting back, but the people are caught in a crossfire over here. They are eating things. So they knock down enough Germans, and this crazy guy, he picks up a Schmeiser 9mm machine gun, and everybody is firing all around him. He starts shooting his own people. He shows the crazy people falling out of the floor, and he is blowing up people. He says, "I am sane! I am sane!" He thought being sane was killing everybody with a machine gun. That is what the world is today. They are running around killing everybody, doing the stupidest things in the world, and they are saying, "I am

sane! I am sane!" The world is insane. America is an insane asylum run by the inmates if you have not figured it out yet. It is our fault.

Anyway, in this Le Mans race, these cars were going 160 miles an hour. Le Mans, France, is where they weave through the thing now. There were about 20,000 people in the grandstands. They are coming down the straightaway, and this one car banged into the car in front of him and sent him airborne into the air. He goes over the stand where all the people are sitting. It explodes in flames. It spread the gasoline and fire and pieces of the car like shrapnel through the whole crowd. It killed over 80-some people. People are screaming. They are running. They are on fire. They are running out the tracks. You have got to see it. It is on YouTube. It just explodes everywhere. All the fire just comes down and descends on all the spectators. People are screaming and smoking. You see people running on fire. Everything is the most chaotic disaster that you ever saw. While all that is going on, somebody did not shut the music off through the sound system. While people are dying, screaming, burning to death, being ripped to shreds by hot metal, through the sound system, they are playing circus music. I am thinking to myself, if that is not a picture of the world. People are dying. They are screaming. They are being burned alive. They are dying and going to hell. They are without hope. They are losing their families. They are losing their marriages. They are losing their lives. They are losing everything. The world is playing circus music through the PA system.

I am telling you, it simply comes down to you and me being that light. This church will only be as strong as its weakest link. It takes you and me letting our light shine. Then as a church, the light shining on a hill that all the world sees and knows that there is light here. You are going to have the greatest King James Bible on the planet. You can have the greatest classes that you could ever want. If you and I do not understand and get the perception that the merchandise you have is good and determine not to let your candle go out by night. The only time it did was back in the Old Testament, where it is a perfect picture of where we are at today. Samuel got called into the ministry. I have taught it to you many times, just like God will call every one of you into the ministry if that is what He wants you to do. It all starts with keeping the candle on, letting the world see the light that is in you, that God lit the day you trusted Christ as your own personal Savior, and let the world, as Matthew 5:16 says, see God's light through your good works. Because "he which hath begun a good work in you will perform it until the day of Jesus Christ," Philippians 1:6.