

I. The Mind of God in Proverbs

If you have your Bibles this morning, let's turn back to Proverbs chapter 31. We are almost done with this great chapter, a couple more weeks, and we will have come through this incredible book that I have enjoyed so much. We know now that what we have here is an inside look at God's mind through the Book of Proverbs.

Somebody said one time that the Book of Ecclesiastes represents the mind of the Spirit, and it does, because if you go to the first chapter, it talks about the Spirit of God going in that circular pattern. They also said that the Song of Solomon is the mind of the Lord Jesus Christ, and it certainly is, because you can see there how He looks at you and me and how we should look at Him. But they all said that the Book of Proverbs is the mind of God, and no truer statement was ever made.

When you go through this book, you have God's opinion on everything that is going to formulate itself into some kind of issue of life. Everything that you and I need now to be able to identify a situation, deal with a situation, or fix a situation, is now laid out in that book of just understanding how God looks at it and what His opinion is of it. We have talked about it many times, how that in the Book of Isaiah chapter 55, the Bible makes it clear that we do not think like God thinks, that He is on another thinking plane than we are. And that is part of the transformation process where you get saved, of washing out the way we think of things normally and then seeing everything in life from God's standpoint. That is what the Bible calls understanding.

Here at Old Path Baptist Church, my goal was to help you get that, those of you that want it. It is all built around, as I said, getting the wisdom and understanding of God, which the pattern for that is found in Proverbs chapter 2, there in the first five verses, which we covered many, many times ago when we went through the early chapters. It is about us not being a foolish individual when it comes to the things of God, but rather a wise son. We have talked repeatedly how the Book of Proverbs talks about a wise man and a foolish man. The wise man is someone who gets God's understanding. The foolish man is someone who simply does not.

In Proverbs chapter 31, we can see the mind of Christ as to the work that He has for us. That is really where we have been focusing in this great chapter. Our theme verse for this chapter was a verse out of Philippians chapter 1, verse 6, which talks about that God at salvation has begun a good work in us and will perform it until the day of Jesus Christ. That is where we are all at today if you are saved. You are somewhere in that process. Once you get saved, some things begin to automatically change in your life. Then you have to pick that up and continue that by adding to your faith, as Paul talks about the great things that need to be added.

When we look at this great chapter, we see what it will take to really serve the Lord. We see what it will cost for you and I to really serve the Lord. Every detail is laid out for us to clearly see what needs to be done in our own life. I never talk about these things of really giving God your

all, giving Him your everything, and not think of how many of God's people will simply never do that.

II. The Power of Biblical Scenarios

Scenarios in the Bible, as you learn the Bible and the Bible becomes everything that you use in dealing with life and looking at it, you are going to see that the scenarios in the Bible really add a dimension to your life when you have to encounter a situation or deal with a situation or you just hear of a situation. All through my ministry, I have dealt with parents that had children that did not do what they needed to do, as we were kids. Every time you deal with that, no matter who it is, it does not matter, the scenario comes to mind of the prodigal son. What a great story that is in unfolding. It really shows, it is one of the most incredible stories in the Bible. That is what these scenarios do. You find yourself in a scenario or a situation and a scenario fits it. That scenario will give you almost everything you need to know about how it happened, what you do with it now that it has happened, and how to go forward in the situation.

I have been to many funerals where it was probably a pretty accurate statement that the person that died was not a believer, not saved. Again, you go to those and you hear the preacher get up and try to make the guy or the gal sound like they were really something special and how God, we are all the children of God and God loves everybody and all this stuff. Yet, the scenario that comes into my mind, and I think about it all the time when I hear a situation or I see a situation, there is Luke chapter 16 of the rich man in hell. The verse, part of that verse, that in hell he lifted up his eyes in torment. I think of scenarios like that that fit the people.

I think of the scenario of Mary and Martha. Mary and Martha basically fundamentally lay out the two types of Christians. You have Mary, who you always found her at the feet of the Lord Jesus. She uses her own hair to wipe His feet with the precious oil that she buys. She is a picture of many of God's people, male and female, who really, when you find them, they are always at the feet of Jesus. Then you have Martha, and she is always in the middle of everything. Martha is cumbered about with all kinds of stuff. Martha is the kind of Christian who wants everybody to see what she is doing. You meet people like that in both scenarios. I will meet somebody and get to know them and watch what they do with the Lord, and I will say to myself, "That is a Mary." You see other ones, and you say to yourself, "That is a Martha." The scenarios are so absolutely incredibly important in the Bible.

I think of, and many of you have been in this situation, where you win somebody to Christ and it is just like the apple just fell into your lap out of the tree. You went someplace and the guy was just ready to go, ready to get saved. They almost opened up the Bible and showed you how to show them how to get saved. In that case, I think of the scenario of the Philippian jailer. He was ready to be won to Christ. He was right there. It did not take any prodding. Everything was right there.

Then I think of the other type, like the Ethiopian eunuch. I have seen that so many times where you go someplace, God has you there and you do not even know that. Right there around you is someone like that Ethiopian eunuch who is searching for God. All he needs is a few answers. All

they need is somebody to open up. I think to myself, "That was an Ethiopian eunuch. That was the Philippian jailer." The scenarios are so good.

III. The Cost of Discipleship

When I think of men and women who are simply Christians who do not want to do what is right with the Lord, I mean, I do not understand it. I mean, I do, but it is hard for me to grasp that. When I think of them, I always think of the story in Mark chapter 10, verses 17 and 22, in the scenario of the rich young ruler. It is one of the greatest stories in the Bible.

Mark 10:17-22

And when he was gone forth into the way, there came one running, and kneeled to him, and asked him, Good Master, what shall I do that I may inherit eternal life?

And Jesus said unto him, Why callest thou me good? there is none good but one, that is, God.

Thou knowest the commandments, Do not commit adultery, Do not kill, Do not steal, Do not bear false witness, Defraud not, Honour thy father and mother.

And he answered and said unto him, Master, all these have I observed from my youth.

Then Jesus beholding him loved him, and said unto him, One thing thou lackest: go thy way, sell whatsoever thou hast, and give to the poor, and thou shalt have treasure in heaven: and come, take up the cross, and follow me.

And he was sad at that saying, and went away grieved: for he had great possessions.

That is one of the greatest stories in the Bible. I talked about scenarios when you learn your Bible, scenarios in life, and it needs to learn that. There is a story about George Whitefield. George Whitefield was a great preacher. He preached in the 1700s up around the New England area and was really responsible, him and Jonathan Edwards, for the Great Awakening, the first Great Awakening. He was preaching one time, and it was a cold winter night. He preached for like two weeks, and this well-to-do family that he was staying with, they were not saved. They had everything that they could ever want, a beautiful place. He owned businesses all through town. Like most guys, they want to be the guy that keeps the preacher, the great George Whitefield. They came every night that he preached, and George Whitefield could really preach the Word of God, but they never got saved.

George Whitefield had this scenario in his mind because he was getting up to leave that morning. The carriage was down front, and he had his bags packed. The windows were all frosted over, and he took his ring and he drilled in the ice, and as it melted, it got larger letters, and he wrote in there, in the window in the frost, "Get thou lackest one thing." The lady a couple hours later came up to clean the room and make up the room and called her husband up. Her husband came running up the stairs, and there on that window, now the heat from the room had made the letters a lot bigger, and as soon as he sat there, "Get thou lackest one thing." Both those people got on their knees and got saved right there at that point in time. George Whitefield had a scenario in his mind. He saw people that fit into the very scenario who had everything. They had everything

they wanted, and they went to church, but they kept George Whitefield, gave money to the church, were prominent in the community, "Get thou lackest one thing."

I look at this story here and I see a lot of God's people that are that same way. Now you look at this kid, he goes to church obviously, I am putting it into a New Testament context. He is a religious kid. Somebody today, he would go to church and he would read his Bible probably every day or every week of his life. He is just like so many of God's people that we find today. He asked, "What must I do to inherit eternal life?" He wants to do something for God. This guy is moral, he keeps the law. He wants to follow the Lord. The Lord looks at him and He says, and I love this, the Bible says that the Lord beheld him and loved him. God will love you even when you do not love Him. Even when you do not love Him like you should love Him, He will love you every bit the way He should love us. If that does not make you love Him, I do not know what in this world ever will. The Bible says He saw this guy who wanted to follow Him, wanted to be like Him, but He knew that the kid was not going to do it, but yet He still loved him. He says, "Okay, you lack one thing." The kid says, "What is that?" He says, "All those great possessions that you have, all those things that you have invested your life in that in eternity are never going to make a difference, you go get rid of all that, you sell all that, and then you come and follow Me." The Bible says he was grieved in his heart and went away sorrowful because he had many possessions.

I look at that and I think to myself, the Lord will always test you with the very thing that you love more than Him. It is an incredible thing. I look at this young guy here and the first thing that pops out to me, like so many of God's people, he wants to follow Christ. He has obviously heard about everything that Christ has done and he wants to follow Him. He has got 95, 96, 98% of it right on the money, but he still lacked one thing. You see, possessions, loving things in this world more than God, will always obscure your faith because when times get tough in the ministry, you will have a tendency to run back to everything that is good that you have. So that is why in a spiritual sense, you have to give it all away if you really want to keep it, because in your life as a Christian, then there is no going back to anything because you do not have it anymore.

Then I notice this guy, he says in verse 17, "Good Master." That is exactly what Judas called Jesus before he betrayed Him. Judas never called Jesus Lord. He always called Him Master. I do not know if you ever picked that up or not. This kid here is so striking in the fact that he is willing to call the Lord Jesus Master, but he is not willing to make Him Lord of his life. There are a lot of God's people like that today. This kid went to church, he read his Bible, kept the law, and in that sense, he saw Christ as the Master. But for you to serve God and to do what God wants you to do, you have to make Him the Lord of your life. That is what he was not willing to do. He is like a lot of God's people. The cost was too high. They would not think anything of buying this for \$10,000 or going on a vacation for \$20,000 or buying this or buying that. They would not think anything wrong. The cost, if you really want something, and this is the true statement, if you really want something, the cost will never be that high that you will not work to get it.

I always looked at high school kids, when I was a high school pastor and I would have activities for them, and they would say, "Well, I would like to come, but I do not have a way." I learned

about kids: if kids really want to go someplace, they are going to find a way to get there. If you gave them free tickets to the Schmucks concert or whatever the case may be, the Three Dog Night with a broken leg or something like that, but they had to find their own way, they would get down there. People find a way to do what they really want to do. It is just human nature. It is a thing where the cost was too great. What it cost God for our true token, our salvation, and what it will cost us to finish the work. That is really the issue with this kid. He looked at all that God had for him, and he wanted it, but he looked at what he had here, and what he had to give up was not worth giving up to get what he really thought he wanted to have.

Luke 14:28

For which of you, intending to build a tower, sitteth not down first, and counteth the cost, whether he have sufficient to finish it?

I think that is probably the number one problem in the Laodicean Church age today. I think that preaching is so lame, and pastors are so inept, and churches are so out of touch with reality that they make Christianity such an easy thing. I get it, getting saved is the easiest thing on the planet. But I want to tell you something, after you get saved, the life of serving God is not going to be the easiest thing you ever did in life. I am just telling you. I think that so many pastors, for whatever reason, and there are probably a number of reasons, they want to make salvation so sweet and so simple and so pure, which it is. But they never prepare the people for the cost that comes after you get saved. There was a cost involved for you to get saved. And there will be a cost to you for serving Him after you do get saved. Most people look at it, and they just say, "Too much." Notice he says here, "building a tower." That would be the tower of David in the Old Testament, because we have talked about it many, many times. The cost of building your tower is just too high for what somebody wants to do.

IV. Principles of a Godly Ministry

In 2 Corinthians 4, verses 1 and 2, talking about serving the Lord and the ministry and all that God has for us, you have a great defining passage of what a minister should be and what his ministry should be.

2 Corinthians 4:1-2

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

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

Three things plague Christianity today and plague God's people: dishonesty, craftiness, and handling the word of God deceitfully. That is where Christianity is at today. He says your ministry should not be that. Then he gets into verse 2. Here it is: "but by manifestation of truth, commending ourselves to every man's conscience in the sight of God."

Now you see the inner details of all that we saw in our study in Proverbs chapter 31 with this virtuous woman. We saw all this unfolding itself. These two key areas that a minister and a ministry has to have: first, it is manifestation of truth. That is just simply preaching the truth. Do not have any hidden agendas in your preaching. You do not preach sermons so people will give money. If you preach the word of God, the people will give you all the money you need. But we do not preach the word of God today. We preach about giving money or doing this and doing that.

I knew a pastor one time, and this shows you the dishonesty. I knew a pastor one time that put his church into a situation where he wanted to buy this property because he thought and told the people that it was going to be, they were going to need it someday. Well, they would not have needed it for at least 120 years the way the church was going. But he committed to buy this property. Then he proceeded to beat the people up to pay for it. He would do things like have the kids in the elementary bring in pennies. Now he knows the pennies could not pay for this property, but they bagged up the pennies and then had the kids come down at the end of the service after his preaching about this and lay the pennies on the altar, that the kids were really, really on board with him. Then you can know where you can go with that. "Your kids sacrificed all they had to bring their pennies. Now what do you..." You know the next thing he did? He asked every family to donate a thousand dollars. He even went to the bank and set it up that if you did not have the money, the bank would lend you the money, give the money to the church and then you would pay the bank. That is the way they do it too. Then he put a board up in front of the church with everybody's name on it in the church. Hallelujah, brother, praise the Lord. He identified all the families that gave a thousand dollars. And by doing that, he identified all the families that did not give a thousand dollars. See how it works?

My philosophy is this: if God orders it, God pays for it. I saw churches this week. They had their big firecracker tents out there. Selling firecrackers to make money for the church. Now I would never do that, but my main reason I do it, we never sell anything. We light all them suckers off and we would have a ball at the time of my life. So that would be just a redundant thing to try to do. That was not going to work. But I look at that and I thought to myself, if your church is in such bad shape financially, if you have got to sell firecrackers, put up a tent. I am all for firecrackers. I am not an anti-firecracker preacher. In fact, in my preaching I can be quite a firecracker if you dislike my views. But it is a thing where I am thinking to myself, I do not get it.

You manifest. You let the Bible lay itself out to you first, rightly dividing the word of truth, and then you rightly lay it out to the people God has given you. You never pick or choose what you want to believe about the Bible, but then also you never pick and choose what you want to preach about the Bible because you have your own agenda that you want to accomplish. You preach the whole counsel of God. When I come through Proverbs, do not you know? You say you keep taking the glasses off. Yeah, but that adds to the message. Everyone is like, "See now you think you are going to get something." You are not, but you think you are going to get something. But I look at that and I think to myself, you just have to preach everything that God gives you. I know coming through the book of Proverbs, I knew going in on a Sunday morning

there was going to be some things that I was going to preach on that probably were going to not be popular with people. I mean there are a lot of things in Proverbs that you start getting into the Bible, that Bible starts getting into you. It is like I tell you all the time, the Bible is the only book in the world when you start reading it, it starts reading you.

I would think, I would say, I would think, "Well this person out here or that family here or this person here, it might be an issue for them." I would say, "I do not know what to tell you. It is in the text, that is where I am at." I am not going to sidestep it. I am not going to conveniently forget verse 14 and then just say, "Oh, I forgot it," and then move on. No, no, you preach the Bible. You do not get sarcastic about it. You do not get angry about it. You do not get to the place where you get vindictive about it. You just simply preach the Bible. It is called manifestation of truth. If there is anything, I do not know what your spiritual condition is this morning, but I will tell you for all of us, the thing that we need in the world that we live in and where you are at in this world is truth because everything else is phony and not real.

Then the second thing, "commend ourselves to every man's conscience." We should, we who teach the word of God, we who lay out the word of God, whether it is me as a pastor or you discipling somebody or working with somebody, the best that you can to the best of your ability, you need to live the examples of what you are preaching. You never ask your people as a pastor, you never ask your people to do something you are not willing to do yourself. You are there in the middle of it. In the military, the great leaders, the great commanders, the great platoon sergeants, the great lieutenants, the captains, they had a saying that they were the first boots on the ground and last boots off. Of course, in Christianity, you lead by example, not by position. You do not ask somebody to follow you because, "Well, I am a Christian and I have been in this church," or "You follow me because I am the pastor." You lead by example. That is where the Bible says, "commending ourselves to every man's conscience." Let him see who you really are.

Most pastors are so guarded, they have a wall around them that you will never penetrate. You will never get to know them. You have to call them pastor all the time. You have to be, when you walk up to them, you have to look down because they are up there with God. That is so phony. I am just like you. I have the strange struggles that you have. I have the same issues in my life that you have in yours. I am no better than you. The bottom line is, whether we like it or not, we are all in this cesspool called the world together. It is just the way that it is.

Then you take care of your people. You realize how special they are to you. A guy asked me one time, he says, "Putting the Bible aside, putting everything else aside, what is the number one thing that I should do as a pastor?" "Forget teaching the Bible. I know that and all this. But in a practical sense, what is the number one thing I should do?" I did not even hesitate. I said, "The number one thing you need to do is you need to make your people feel that they are special because they are." They will be special to you, but only because they are special to God and you represent Him, so they better be special to you. You look for the things to help them. You look for the things to make them better. Shoot, we could all find things wrong with all of us and just harp on that all day long. A lot of God's people do, a lot of preachers do. But that does not help anybody grow. I know we all got our issues. I know we all got our struggles. We all have our times in life where we could do better than we probably do, all of us. But you do not help

anybody by focusing on that all the time. You have to look past all those things and realize, hey, if it would not be for the grace of God, we would all be in hell screaming our lungs out this morning.

But you know what God did? God saved us and He put us together. You think it is an accident that we are all together this morning? You think it is an accident that God brought you here, established this church, brought you families in and you young singles in and you kids in and everybody in? You think it is just an absolute accident that all that happened? Are you kidding me? Because you are special and God has something for you. God understands your struggles. He looks past your struggles. He wants to help. Now, you may never get past yours, but He will move around yours to help you be everything that you want to be. That is what a leader does. That is what manifestation of truth and commending yourself to every man's conscience means. You tell them, "I am no better than you." And you know what? "I know you are in a hole and I know you are in a mess and I cannot necessarily throw you a rope and make your mess go away, but I will tell you what I will do. I will climb down in that hole with you and I will help you climb out." That is what you have to do. That is the ministry.

As I showed you last week, the New Testament will be revealed through the Old Testament and how the two will work together even through their two different dispensations, in two completely different scenarios. Proverbs 31 will be an inside look at what our attitude of heart should be when it comes to serving God. Not like this rich young ruler, but understanding that we counted the cost. We are going to make Him Lord of our lives and we are going to do what He wants us to do.

Last week I showed you that this woman was not afraid of the snow. She was not afraid of winter. We explained all that because she had her household clothed in scarlet, the clothes that she made for her household through the meat that she provided for them, the Bible teaching them the word of God. I showed you two great clothing concepts. First of all, the garments of salvation, Isaiah 61:10, and that is when you clothe somebody's nakedness with the clothing of the Lamb of God which taketh away the sin of the world. And after salvation, the garments of the robes of righteousness, the judgment seat of Christ, 2 Corinthians 5, 1 Corinthians 3, Revelation chapter 19, garments of righteousness. We went back to the story in Joshua and that is how I showed you how that the Old Testament revealed the new and the story of the scarlet thread. You had Rahab, a sinner. You had her household, her family, and you had the spies, the men who were in foreign country but had the message of God that gave her that message. It resulted in, as God's judgment fell on Jericho, her family, her household was saved because of a scarlet thread. I showed you how that that scarlet thread is a picture of our true token of salvation, the binding between what God's word says and what God's word will do in your life when you trust Him as your own personal Savior. In Proverbs chapter 31, verse 21, this woman, all her family is clothed in scarlet. They are all saved. That was a great, great, great understanding of a lot of things as we move into today and look at these next verses that we can continue to put things together. Everything in Proverbs that we have been doing is not just cut and dry one week from the next. It all kind of bolts together.

Today, we want to look at the next couple of verses here. We want to lay out and add these principles to what we already have. So we want to look at Proverbs 31:23-25.

Proverbs 31:23-25

Her husband is known in the gates, when he sitteth among the elders of the land.

She maketh fine linen, and selleth it; and delivereth girdles unto the merchant.

Strength and honour are her clothing; and she shall rejoice in time to come.

John Biscott, would you ask God's blessing on the preaching this morning?

V. The Virtuous Woman's Influence and Reputation

Here, we see her husband coming into our story. We have not met him before. Inspirationally, obviously, this will be talking about any good, godly woman who will always be an asset to her husband. The Bible says, "Who findeth a wife, findeth a good thing." She will balance him out and always make him better. She will help build his good reputation with others, as the verse says, and be a help-meet to him in the ministry. We have talked about how back in Genesis chapter 2, verse 18, that when God brought Eve to Adam, He called her a help-meet, not a help-mate. We have talked about it many, many times, and I have made the point every time we go back there, it is simply that animals have mates, but humans do not. Humans have a help-meet. That goes back to the fact that God gave Adam a commission. His commission was to repopulate planet earth and do everything and fulfill the plan and the ministry that God had for him. He gave Eve to him as a help-meet, to help him meet that commandment that God wanted him to do. We know that.

Doctrinally, the context here will be us as Christ's bride. He is my bridegroom. He is actually my husband. I preached this one time, and a guy said, "Well, that is not exactly correct because you should not call Christ your husband because you are not married yet." I said, "Well, you need to spend a little more time on your Bible because you go back to Deuteronomy chapter 20, verse 24, you will find out when people were espoused to each other, they were called husband and wife." But do not let me ruin your day on that one. Of course, He is my husband, and I am His wife. When we do the work of Proverbs chapter 31, it gives Christ a good reputation in our city. Here is the gate. The gate in the Old Testament was where all the action was. It is where the elders met. It is where they saw people coming in and going out. It is where everything was happening. When you have a relationship with Christ and you do the work and you do it biblically and do it right, then you bring a good reputation to Him.

Christianity today, sadly saying, Christianity today and pastors today have a really bad image with most people, and I understand that. You have all the TV evangelists on there. The coronavirus was not out two weeks, and Jim Baker and some of these clowns on there had something that you drink and sell it for millions and millions of dollars and it will keep you from getting the virus. It is just ridiculous. What it was was that silver that they used for antibiotics back around 1900. The silver and water and you poured it in and he was getting up there and saying, "This is proven to keep you from getting it." The only people dumber than him were the

people that buy that stuff. It took the federal government coming in with a lawsuit to shut it down because of the fact that, there again, they are dishonest. That leaves a bad taste in their mouth.

Oral Roberts before he died, one time he had a prayer tower, and he told the people that he had a burden for missions and he wanted to raise \$5 million. He felt like the only way that he could do it was to go up into this prayer tower and he was not going to come down and he was not going to eat until God's people made that money come in so the world could know Christ as their own personal savior. So he locked himself up in that high prayer tower up there. I would have let the sucker starve to death. No, I would have done better than that. I had a window up there. I would sit down and put a little thing with barbecue beef and wave the aroma up there, and a couple McDonald's cheeseburgers, and just some salad and bacon and all these eggs, fry it in the morning and lift the thing up there. He got his money. He did. Stupid God's people raised that money for him to come up in that tower. It is just ridiculous. It is things like that that give us, give Christianity a bad reputation.

The world in most cases, the world is not as stupid as God's people and they are lost. The common man in this country, the common ordinary man works a hard job, makes the salt of any economy in any nation. The common man knows better how to fix and run this country than the people running it do. But nobody listens to us. Of course, he went up in that prayer tower and feigned like he was, and people just said, "Oh, we cannot let Oral Roberts die." Sure you can. Well, he was the greatest healer in America, one of the great top healers. He could have brought himself back to life.

Back in Akron, Ohio, when I was back there, they had a guy by the name of Ernest Ainslie. He just died a couple of years ago. He had been around a long time. Ernest Ainslie, he would bring people down in this, he was a charismatic, and he would bring people down and cast demons out of him. That was his big deal. He was on television every Sunday morning and they would bring people down there and he would, they would stand up there and he would say, "Come out!" And he would hit him with his hand, knock him on the ground, and then usher him off, and now they were healed. People saw through that. When his wife died, his wife's name was Angel. He made a prophecy that God was going to bring his wife back from the dead because they believed in all the sign gifts. Now this, you are not going to think this is true, but it is absolutely true. On her grave, they put a big golden angel and he ran telephone lines down into her casket with a telephone in there for that when God finally brought her back to life, she could order out, order out of there, or whatever. You are laughing at that. I asked, you say, "I would like to go and see that." Well, it is the only one with telephone lines running down into the tombstone. Absolutely true.

The world looks at that. The world sees that. It is goofy. But you know what the real problem is? We all get painted with that brush. I had a lady one time and I worked hard on her, her and her husband. They are nice people, but they are lost as can be. She was a school teacher and she has got her own way of thinking about things. Finally she asked me if I could get her a Bible because she wanted to read the Bible. So I thought I would make a little breakthrough with her. But I would see him up the fitness center and we would get talking, and she knew I was a pastor. She

says, "Oh, what denomination?" And I said I was Baptist. And she went, "Oh, oh, Baptist, crazy Baptist." See, we get painted with the whole brush. It is a thing where that is because of Christianity. That is why a lot of these guys, honestly, took Baptist off their name and became a neo-evangelical. What they think is a non-denominational when it is not. But they did not want to be associated because many Baptists have a bad rap around people because they get clobbered with everything. I get it. I do. I understand that. I mean, you have all the TV evangelists, you have all the goofy charismatic and the phonies, you have the mega-church's pastor that all they ever asked for was money, and you got the Baptist. I mean, there is strident legalism. The stupid ideas that are all contrary to the Bible and get up there and say some of the stupidest stuff, and they put you in a little box as a Christian where you talk about somebody being in slavery. You have not seen slavery until you have seen most Baptist churches.

Any given service, they got this mega-church that costs more money than anybody has. I remember one time again, and I think I told you this story a while back, this church up here, they built a new facility that was like \$100 million or something like that. It was just incredible. They took up a special offering to get it going. They raised something like \$500,000. I was over at a friend's house, and he knew I was a pastor, and they liked to play out their big buildings and all that against what we have here. There are people that will not come to church in a place like this because it does not look like a church. I do not want it to look like a church. I want it to look like what it is, a bomb shelter. We had radiation things up there signs a while back where the food was stored. I do not know what happened to them. If you go to these big mega-churches and a tornado comes, they will all die. Down here, we are all safe. We would not even know what happened. Below the top block, we just keep on going. It would be kind of like, if I could tell the story about you driving in and getting hit in the deer. Carolyn told me that they were driving in coming from Utah, and a deer ran out. They were going about 80 miles an hour, and the deer ran out in front of them and totaled their car. But the funny part was, you had just put me preaching on it in Job. I am preaching away in Job, and they are driving down the road, and that is probably why you did not see the deer. The deer comes smashing into them. She says, "The airbags came out, the car smoked, gas went all over the place, and all that thing." She says, "All the chaos. Are you okay? Are you okay?" And she says, "Through it all, Bob just kept preaching on the book of Job." I will preach through any tornado. I got more hot air than they got anyhow. People say, "What are you?" I say, "I am a Baptist with an explanation." I would like to explain my position.

But people, Christianity has a bad rap today. You go to these churches, any given service will be 15 minutes of watered down Bible, then 30 minutes to give more money, and then you come back Sunday night, and it is the son of to give more money. Listen, the key to making Christ known in the gates will not be exalting yourself or your mega church or all the possession that you have, but rather simply exalting Christ. The Bible says in 2 Corinthians chapter 2, verses 14 through 16, that when we talk about Christ, we uplift Christ. But the Bible says we are a sweet savour in the nostrils of Almighty God. He says it always causes us to triumph in anything, because it does not matter if the person gets saved or the person stays lost. I mean, I want the person to get saved, and I do not want anybody to stay lost. But as far as God is concerned, that is their decision. But whether they get saved or are lost, when you preach Jesus and exalt Him, it is a sweet smell in the nostrils of God. That is our job.

John 12:32

And I, if I be lifted up from the earth, will draw all men unto me.

That works today just like it did when John wrote that. Simply making your preaching an exaltation of God's Son, lift Him up, not yourself. Lift Him up. You do that by manifestation of truth. You do that by commending yourself to every man's conscience in the sight of God. All this is lost today, it has been replaced with a three-ring circus of entertainment.

VI. The Model of Nehemiah's Revival

Now the model for all of this, as we look at this, the model for all of this here is found in Nehemiah chapter 8 when they were putting the gates together. In chapter 8, it is dealing with the water gate, water being a type of the Word of God. You have to remember now, in Nehemiah and Ezra, or Ezra-Nehemiah, the Jews are going back after the 70-year captivity and Nehemiah and Ezra are leading the way. Nehemiah knows they are going to go back and they are going to rebuild the city because they understand that that city, Jerusalem, is the key to their future. So they are rebuilding the wall and the cities and putting all that together. It is an incredible picture of you and I in the Laodicean church age building your body, your temple to be God's building and God's temple and how important it is to your future.

In chapter 8, verse 1, he gathers all the people together. He is going to make a proclamation. He is going to tell them what they are going to do.

Nehemiah 8:1

And all the people gathered themselves together as one man into the street that was before the water gate; and they spake unto Ezra the scribe to bring the book of the law of Moses, which the LORD had commanded to Israel.

Now they get everybody together and they bring the Word of God there. Then in verse 4 says that Nehemiah and Ezra, they make a pulpit of wood. He stands up in front of those people, puts the Word of God on that pulpit of wood, and declares unto them what the Word of God says. You probably do not know this, but for the last 300 and 400 years, this is why every Baptist church that was worth its salt had the pulpit right in the middle of the church. Because they wanted everybody to know that the central concept and the central idea in this church was the preaching of the Word of God. You go to a Methodist church, it will be on the side, a Lutheran church, it will be on the side. You go to many evangelical churches, they do not even have one. You go to a Catholic church, they are all over the place. But true Bible-believing Baptists wanted everybody to know out of Nehemiah chapter 8 that the central preaching and teaching for this church that brought everybody together was the Word of God. He preached from a pulpit of wood. Preaching of Christ, exalting Him, needs to take center stage in all of our lives, but also in this church. The central main focus of this church needs to be to lift up Christ.

When you read these great chapters on how they exalted Christ and come down through this chapter, you are going to find that it had a result of five things in their life that needs to be in every church. We talk about revival, and there is no revival today. I drive over to church and pass

four or five churches and every fall they will have revival time, November 5th to November 10th. "Come, we are having a revival." That is what is wrong with America today. You do not schedule God's revival on your calendar. Revival does not start by you bringing in some great guy who can preach and set a time aside. Revival starts in the hearts of God's people. There will be no revival until the Word of God gets in your heart through the Watergate, through the preaching of the pulpit central to people's lives.

Five things:

1. The first thing he says in Nehemiah 8:8, they read the Word of God distinctly and gave the sense and they helped people to understand the book, the Word of God. The first thing you see, and in everybody there, the Bible became number one. It was the most important thing that they had. It was not a program. It was not something that they did. It was not their athletic program. It was not that they had a great five-star restaurant or a gymnasium. The central thing was that everybody, everybody, the Word of God distinctly and gave the sense. They laid it out doctrinally, historically, and inspirationally. But it says that they caused people. The older ones helped the younger ones figure out the Word of God.
2. Second thing, Nehemiah 8:3. Everybody read the book from morning till midday and all the people paid attention to the Word of God. Morning, what a long service that is. In most churches if you preach more than 20, 30 minutes, they are all out the door. They started at 6 o'clock in the morning and they went till noon preaching the Word of God. Nobody complained. Nobody got off the left. Nobody cared about the roast in the oven might burn. Let it burn. Because when the Word of God becomes number one in this church and it is preached from a pulpit of wood, it will become number one in your life. All the people paid attention to the Word of God. I am on my iPhone doing a service. I just got a text. "I love you too." No, they paid attention. They were not looking around, wondering or watching, wondering how hot it is in here, what time is it, when is it going to be done. They paid attention. You know why? Because when the Word of God becomes number one, it really becomes number one.
3. The third thing, Nehemiah 8:1. We already saw this one. There was no division among the people. They got together as one man. You see, nothing, when the Word of God is number one in your church and your life and your ministry, then nothing gets between God's people. Now there will be things that try to get between you. It is not the fact that the Bible eradicates the problems that people have that may give you issues. It is the fact that the Word of God eradicates the fact that you do not let those problems grow legs and you deal with it biblically and you solve the problems. Psalms 133:1

Behold, how good and how pleasant it is for brethren to dwell together in unity!

4. The fourth thing, they had respect for the Word of God in Nehemiah 8:5 because when you exalt Christ through the Word of God and it becomes central in everything that they did. So when Nehemiah opened a book from the pulpit of wood, everybody stood up. There was a respect for the Word of God in the Lord. There is no respect for God today in churches. There is no respect for God in most of God's people's lives. You dress the way you want to dress. You live the way you want to live. You talk the way you want to talk. You go wherever you want to go. The Bible was central. There was not any praise bands. There was not any, all the

activities or any singers or anything that praise singers or worship singers. It was just a book in the pulpit of wood being declared to people and they started early in the morning and went to noon and everybody paid attention and when he opened a book everybody stood up.

5. The fifth thing, Nehemiah 8:9. Nehemiah 8:9

And Nehemiah, which is the Tirshatha, and Ezra the priest the scribe, and the Levites that taught the people, said unto all the people, This day is holy unto the LORD your God; mourn not, nor weep. For all the people wept, when they heard the words of the law. See that is the effect when you love the book. That is the effect that it has on you. It touches your heart. They were weeping because of the book was open. Now they have been out of fellowship in captivity for seventy years so they finally come back and now they are getting back to where they should have been with a word of God in their life and it is such an impact in their life that it brings tears to their eyes. Yet we today we watch so many things on television and waste our tears on so many TV shows and movies where things happen and people die and love relationships break up and none of it is true. They are all sitting along a pool someplace drinking a cocktail with millions of dollars in the bank. We waste our emotions on things that do not count and there are people around you, there are things around you, there are things that God did for you that want to do with you that never penetrate into your heart. They love the word of God because it lifted up the one who was the author of their salvation, their true token.

That is the model for every church on this planet. That is the model for revival. That is the model for Christians. It is not to lift up your mega church or your program but from a pulpit of wood central to the people. Lift up Christ and let Him draw the people in through the preaching not the sideshow of selling snake oil. Today in Christianity with all the cable TV and the YouTube and the internet and the telecommunications and the ability to transmit the gospel around the world and satellite communications and the printing material, laser printing and printing the Bible and tracts and Christian material and all the modern day's ability. We are getting done less today than they got in the book of Acts when they had nothing but the Holy Spirit of God. Because all the things you see today in Christianity, all the bells and the whistles do not replace the Holy Spirit of God, the pulpit of wood, the central preaching of the word of God and exalting and lifting up Christ.

VII. The Virtuous Woman's Garments of Truth and Strength

Now look at Proverbs 31:24.

Proverbs 31:24

She maketh fine linen, and selleth it; and delivereth girdles unto the merchant.

Here she is likened to a business that makes clothes and then delivers them to the merchants to be sold and distributed unto the world. She is looking here as a retailer. She is like the ship from afar, verse 14 we saw with the fine linen which is the righteous of the saints. So it says here that she maketh clothes and we have seen the clothes that she makes, the fine linen. Then it says about the fact that girdles. Now this is not girdles like you think and maybe you do not even

know this. When I grew up as a young kid a lot of women wore girdles. My mother wore a girdle. I do not even think they make girdles anymore. But I want to tell you this is not the girdle like you are thinking. This is not the girdle that you put on that when you weigh 200 pounds suddenly you look 80 pounds. That is a big girdle, I will tell you. It is talking about in our context here if you remember, it is talking about not girdles like somebody would use but in the context the girding your loins with truth, that kind of girdle. We saw it in Ephesians chapter 6, verse 14, we looked at it in verse 17. The gird your loins with truth and strength. Of course that is what this woman does. That is what she produces. She produces strength and she produces fine linen and she produces loins gird about with truth. What Proverbs 31:24 is saying is that she through her preaching and manifesting of truth has brought respect and honor to her husband Christ and they exalt him. They exalt him because they see the change in their life.

The thing that will bring people to Christ more than anything else on this planet, you can pass out tracts, you can preach all day long, you can do whatever you want to do but the number one thing that will really bring somebody to Christ that you are close to, is the change in your life. That will do more than all the tracts and all the texts and all the sermons and all the cassettes and all the CDs you could ever muster up to give them because they can listen to all that and see all that and deny it but it is hard to deny when somebody's life changes for the Lord. They accept the truth and they go to work, they get the fine linen and the loins gird about with truth.

Then Proverbs 31:25 says that strength and honor are her clothing and she shall rejoice in time to come. Now there are a couple of things here that we want to look at. We break verse 25 down. First one is strength and honor are her clothing. See, the end result of our labor of love for God is to make clothes for ourselves, our household and then the needy and that will be our strength. We saw a while back in Hebrews chapter 5, verse 14 that when you start teaching the Word of God, the Word of God exercises your senses and gives you discernment and it makes you strong. Nobody ever got strong in the Lord by getting saved and just sitting. You get strong by getting saved and then serving. Let God take what you do.

Philippians 4:13

I can do all things through Christ which strengtheneth me.

In all the new Bibles it is "I can do all things through Christ who strengtheneth me" and of course that is a mistranslation completely. It is not God who comes down and strengthens you. You do not get saved and then pay your dues and then at some point the big dump truck in heaven is going to back up with spiritual dust and the roof is going to be pulled off some night and sprinkle while you are cosily sleeping in your bed. That is not how it works. "I can do all things through Christ which strengtheneth me." It is the things that you do for Christ that strengthen you and that is the key. That is the key. Philippians 1:6, He began a good work in you to perform it until the day of Jesus Christ and you are to have strength and honor as your clothing. Why? Because you take the word of God when you got saved, your true token and then you take it and you give it to others and through that exercising of your senses God takes what you do, the which, "I can do all things," the which and strengthens you. Through that work, through the strength of our hands we will exalt him and by giving him the honor and glory to

God's Son, that sweet Savior, lifting him up for all to see. You see, at the crucifixion he was lifted up on the cross for you and for me. Now in this life I need to lift him up for all the world to see through me, not through the Bible, not through my message. Your message means nothing if you do not live it to the best of your ability. You see, at Calvary he was lifted up on the cross for you and for me. Now I need to lift him up for all the world to see but it has to come through me to them.

VIII. Rejoicing in the Time to Come

Then it says, "she shall rejoice in a time to come" and there are two things here. Now we saw that she is not afraid of the snow and the winter, it is not going to get to her. The Bible says that she rejoices in a time to come and that first one we want to look at will be your household in the context. Your family, your kids, growing up and standing by your side in ministries, family teams and to do the fulfillment of God's plan of evangelism to the world.

Proverbs 23:24

The father of the righteous shall greatly rejoice: and he that begetteth a wise child shall have joy of him.

So the first rejoicing has to do with you got your family by your side, their side, clothed in scarlet, you are all ministering together. Then out in the world someplace they are with you by your side, ministering the word of God with you. There is rejoicing in that.

Then the second rejoicing will be our rejoicing of the judgment seat of Christ. The day we get 2 John chapter 1, verse 8, our full reward. But you have to be careful because there are people who want to take that from you. That is why he says you want to, and look at the context of 2 John, he is telling you to be careful because there are people out there who want to keep you from getting a full reward. The idea of standing before God and rejoicing that you overcome the world and you did the work and you fought a good fight. Revelation chapter 4, verse 10, we talked about this before. It is the idea casting your crown before God's throne. But in many cases a lot of God's people will not be able to do that because Revelation chapter 3, verse 11 they never heeded the warning and some men took their crown.

In our hymnals there is an old song that is never sung much anymore. But it is a song that is a great concept of Revelation chapter 4, verses 10 and 11. It is on page 418 in your hymnal. It is a great song that has been sung for many, many, many, many years but it is kind of been lost in the shuffle today with all the praise bands and all the flashing lights and all the music and all the contemporary stuff. This great song has been lost in the pages of that old hymnal which simply says the name of the song, "Must I Go In Empty Handed." It is a reference to the judgment seat of Christ, the day where each of us all down through the history of the church, 2,000 plus years. One at a time we will take the crowns and there are five of them in the Bible that a child of God can get. Most of God's people could not find these five crowns if their life depended on them much less have them at the judgment seat of Christ. Are you kidding me? You do not even know where they are at. You could not lay them out if your life depended on it. Putting those at his feet and giving back to him all that he has done through you, the good works to the one who was our

true token. The verse says, "Must I go in empty handed. Thus my redeemer meet. Not one day of service give him. Lay no trophy at his feet."

My dear friend, I am telling you the ultimate exaltation of Christ, and I know we exalt him now through our preaching, but I am telling you the greatest exaltation of Christ will be that day when you walk into the throne room with the crowns that you have earned through your work and everybody understands that you would not be there or have done the work and you finished his work so they are not really your crowns. You know what you do? You walk over and you lay those crowns at his feet. The ultimate exaltation of Christ before the assembled family of God. You see, you do not strive for the mastery. 2 Timothy chapter 2, verse 5 says, you do not strive down here to get a crown and go through all that you go through for yourself. If that is what you think you do and why you do it, man, you are on the wrong road. You do not strive for the masteries, do the ministry, put up with what you put up with to get a crown for yourself. I mean honestly, you are going to go to heaven to get a glorified body. What is a dinky little crown going to do for you? But you strive. You endure hardness as a good soldier of Jesus Christ. You put up with it all. You deal with it all. You face it all. You go through unbearable hardships and tough times and temptations and struggles in your life. Everything of that cold blast of winter to take you off the focus of the one who was your true token that gave everything for you to finish the work. So in that day, you do not get the crown so you can say, "Look at me, look what I have." You get the crown so you can walk into that throne room and lay them at His feet, not yours.

But you see, that is so typical of God's people today. Everything is about us. The megachurches, "Look what we got. Look what we are doing. Look at all this straight stuff. Look at me. Look what I did. Look what I did." And you think that you are doing that so you can stand there, the judgment seat of Christ and say, "Look at all my crowns. I have got a dump truck full of them." They are not for you. They never were for you. Therefore, the one who made it all possible. The ultimate, listen to me, the ultimate exaltation of the Lord Jesus Christ of lifting Him up will be a shout of God in here that you back up five dump trucks full of crowns and you walk up and you say, "Lord, these are all for You for what You did for me. And I want to cast them at Your feet. Not one of them do I deserve. Not one of them do I want. I thank God that I got them because I served You. But at the end of the day, dear Lord, it is all because of You." Back them up and dump them at His feet. They are not for you. They are not for me.

What a day that will be.

Revelation 4:11

Thou art worthy, O Lord, to receive glory and honour and power: for thou hast created all things, and for thy pleasure they are and were created.

Yet some of them may there walk in with, "Lord, I do not have nothing. Nothing in my hand," and a great song will ring down through the annals and the hallway of heaven, "O must I go in empty handed." I cannot imagine standing before the Lord with a glorified mind and body knowing all that He did for you and in coming to the realization. That you could have right now through this message. But you want to block it out. You want to paint it out. You want to mask it out. You want to pretend you were not here. You want to pretend you want to blame it on me or

the heat or the coronavirus. You want to use every excuse. You could have it today and know whatever time you got left those crowns are for Him, not for you. But you will not. It will take the reality of standing there and seeing Him when you could see Him this morning.

Understanding what He did for you because now you have the mind of God when you have it now. But we just refuse. We exalt and lift Him up now through our preaching, through our church and through our lives. But I am telling you folks it is only a prelude to the final coming day of exalting Him our true token with everything we have done for Him. But at the end of the day it is all for Him, all by Him and all goes back to Him. We just take what we have and lay at His feet and stand back and say, "Yes sir, thank you for all You did for me. Not much but I gave my life for You and here it is. It is all because of what You did for me Lord and I love You. Take it for Your honor and glory." Turn around to the assembled Christianity. "He is worthy! He is worthy!" That day is coming.

Instead of worrying about should you wear a mask this morning, instead of worrying about should you social distance, and I am not saying you should and you should be careful but do not let that override everything in your world that you forget about the day that is coming. Because no mask will hide you there. No social distancing will keep you from going in there empty handed. Oh Proverbs 31, a couple more weeks will be done. But there you see it today. The honor, the glory, the strength of lifting Him up, being everything to Him, the pulpit, the Word of God, the central preaching to bring together those five things in our lives that give us the true revival. You see, you should not have, a church should not have the program of revival. A church that preaches the Word of God should live in a state of revival. God is always doing something. Every head bowed and every eye closed. Let us be finished here.