

John 9

Sunday 8/23/2020

As I have said a couple of times, today is our first time back together for about four or five weeks now. We now know as a church that we have had our first round of probably what we all call the new norm. I don't think anybody totally understands the dynamics of what is really going on. We are all so focused on COVID-19, and it really has surged again in Missouri and Kansas City, and we got caught up in it.

I think we are facing a whole new culture. For the child of God, the one word that he can never be without—and I do not care what you know about the Bible or what you think you know about the Bible—but for each Christian, the one byword, the one key word that is necessary to have in your life would be the word **perspective**.

I thought this week as I was putting all of this together, that all through history there have been notable events that really changed the whole course of the world and certainly human history. Most of it went unseen by the people of it; certainly, the writers of history never picked up on it. But there were certain events, and I thought about it this week as I look back, there were certain events that actually changed the whole course of where man was going in life and where planet Earth was headed.

I think of 606 BC, when the nation of Israel finally goes into captivity completely. Most people do not see the relevance of that event. It actually changed the world, and we went from the kingdom of heaven, which God had established with the nation of Israel, now into a time which we know from the Bible is called the times of the Gentiles. Everything changed. Most people did not see it. Most people were oblivious to it. Most people's lives just went on, and they never really saw. I do not think they had NBC and CNN and Fox News back then, but if they did, it would have just been a highlight that Babylon comes down and takes captivity the nation of Israel, and Nebuchadnezzar has now taken. That is all it would have been. I do not think anybody, probably maybe there were a few people that saw it, but most likely there were not. They just saw it as an event changing hands from one nation to another.

I will tell you another one: the first coming of Christ. We look back at the first coming of Christ, and it is the greatest event that we ever experienced in our life as Christians. But in reality, the only ones who picked up on it were the three wise men. Here was the greatest event in history that certainly, with the coming of the Lord Jesus Christ into this world, changed the course of the world forever, and three men are the only ones who showed up. Yet, I want to tell you something: the information was in the Bible. Where do you think they got it? They got it because they were from the east where Daniel was in captivity, and they were following that, and they knew exactly where the King should be born. Out of all the world's population, three men showed up for the event that changed world history.

Most of God's people never see anything around them that does not directly affect them. We call it tunnel vision. You are oblivious to what is going on around you. All we see is what directly affects us. When it does not affect us well, that is all we can focus on. That is all we can see. That is all we can understand.

I will tell you another one: 1948. Who saw 1948? Maybe there were a few more now because the Bible is more prevalent back then, but the world certainly did not see it. They just saw another rogue group of people, the nation of Israel, who had been fighting without a country for two thousand years, been suppressed by every nation on the planet, had just six or seven million of them been wiped out by Adolf Hitler. Who really saw in 1948 the great prophecy of Matthew 24 that changed the whole course of the world?

You see, we do not look at things that way. We as God's people, especially today, only see what affects us. All of these things around us, down through history, for anybody paying attention, I can see the change that it brought to planet Earth. Some saw it; most were oblivious to it. All the writers of history certainly missed it. If you go to grade school or you go to college or wherever you go, when you get into the classes about world history, history, social events, you will get none of this stuff. Man missed, God's people missed the greatest events that came our way.

If you can see anything spiritually at all today, and obviously the core of this church is here today, it does not matter what happens in the world with most churches as long as the core is solid. I have spent seventeen years of my life building a strong core, and you being here today speaks well to that. If you can see anything spiritually at all, you would have to add the year 2020 to that list. 2020 will go into the history books as the year that life on planet Earth, certainly in America, changed forever.

Most of God's people are so focused on what is affecting them directly, they cannot see that probably in another year, maybe another two years, maybe not that long, the Coronavirus 19 virus is going to look like it was your best friend. But we are oblivious to that. In every disaster, and this is so true, in every disaster there will be a tipping point. The tipping point is when it all goes to Hades in a handbag. It is the tipping point when it is never going back.

I watched this week the movie *Titanic*, not the goofy one that just came out with Leonardo DiCaprio or whatever his name is. I watched the one that was made in 1953. When they made that movie, there were still survivors from the Titanic that they used to get information. If you want a factual picture of what happened when the Titanic went down, get that. It is called *A Night to Remember*. It is without a doubt the greatest movie ever made. We were not there, but it will show you probably as good as you are ever going to get at what happened that night.

That ship stayed afloat until it hit its tipping point. When it hit the tipping point, it sank under the waves forever. Every disaster will have a tipping point. If you look at that in life, in history, your own life. Many of God's people's lives are a mess today. There are guys out there who have lost their families; their kids do not want anything to do with them. It is a mess. Their marriage is a mess. They are unhappy. They are a disaster. But if you would go back in their life, you would find that at some point there was a tipping point. At some point, just as the Titanic slid beneath the waves, your life slid back into this world.

World War II is another one. We fought over in Europe, and we fought again in the Pacific. There were two different wars. The tipping point for the war in Europe obviously was D-Day. The tipping point for the war in the Pacific was much more subtle, and most people never catch that

one. It was the Battle of Midway, which we all went to see that movie not too long ago, if you remember.

The Titanic stayed afloat right up to the point that the water came in so far. It went from hole to hole to hole, and the ship went down, down, down, and when it reached the tipping point, down it went. America, as troubled as she has been, has stayed afloat. But I am afraid this country has finally reached its tipping point. This is why, in your calendar of world events, if you even have one, 2020 is going to be an incredible time.

They said about the Titanic that she was the ship that God Himself could not sink. How did that work out for you? America has got the idea that she can do whatever she wants to do, live however she wants to live, and escape the judgment of God. How is that working out for you?

Let me talk to you for a minute. It is hard to believe, kids, it is hard to believe how life was less than a year ago and how it is now. Never has there been so many issues that are unraveling this country and the world. You just see the virus because it has affected you and us and the people in our state and the people in our city and maybe the people in your family. But there has never been so many issues that are unraveling this country and the world, and there is no end in sight.

Both the Democrats and the Republicans talk about change. But from a Bible standpoint, there will be no change until you change the thinking that got you in the mess that you are in. The Republicans talk about making America great again, and I am all for that. But how do you make America great again when you never understood what made it great in the first place? It was the Word of God. The Democrats want to build back better. My question to them is, "Better than what? Stalin? Adolf Hitler? Vietnam? North Korea?"

North Korea just passed a law that you cannot own dogs. All your dogs have to be turned in for food. You better go home and hug your dog this afternoon and thank God you do not live in North Korea. There have never been so many issues that are unraveling us.

For us, the big one is the COVID-19 pandemic. We saw a second surge in July. In America, there are 170,000 dead in the United States, and every state is getting clobbered by it. But I want to tell you something: the medical experts tell us that in the fall and winter it is going to be much worse and much harder, and probably going to be the worst catastrophe from a medical standpoint in America's history. I do not necessarily believe that, nor will you when I am done. But I think it is going to get really, really bad.

We are facing schools. All the colleges opened up. The idea that college kids are going to wear masks and socially distance? Are you kidding me? All the colleges opened up, and within two weeks there were three or four hundred kids that were exposed to it and had it. I do not know what we are going to do in the public schools. They put it back to September after Labor Day, and then they are still deciding what they are going to do. Do you think that you are going to get kids in school? When we had our camp, we had the kids disinfect every time before they came to eat. We had them do everything we knew how to do to keep them. There were kids that before they went into line to eat were wiping off their hands and telling the women there that, "I already disinfected," when they did not. You wait until you get into public school.

How about sports? It is a disaster. What baseball player wants to go in and play ball with a bunch of plastic people sitting in the stands? Are you kidding me? Gone are the days of fifty or sixty thousand people screaming. Businesses are closing. Everybody is feeling the effect of it.

Then you want to add to that—we are going to list the issues this morning because I want you to get a perspective—and then we add to that, what, the Middle East? It is so easy to see how last week, when the deal that Israel made with Arabs, so many people got that as a Bible fulfillment of something, and we are thinking that here we are, we are in the tribulation period now, and it is coming right here. I am sure there were a lot of preachers out there who capitalized on that and made a great sermon for their people with an "ooh-ah." But yet, by this week, it is already falling apart. They are firing missiles back at each other. Hamas is not going to buy into it. The Palestinians are not. They are not going anywhere.

You see, you have to have perspective. Yet, I am the first one to tell you, the Middle East is a total mess, and nobody is going to fix it. But it has not reached its tipping point yet. Most of God's people that think they know the Bible, pretend they know the Bible, pretend they are all involved in the Bible, they do not even know what that tipping point is, and they do not even know what to look for. They just hear it come out in the news and, "Oh boy, the end is here." Well, I am not telling you the end is not here, but I am telling you the tipping point has not happened yet.

Then across America, these are the issues across America. Riots are unrest. Portland, Oregon is soon going to hit a hundred days of total chaos of people burning and looting and throwing rocks and fireworks and all kinds of stuff at police officers. They are burning down police stations. They are breaking in and looting, tearing cities apart. City officials are letting them do it. What is their answer? "Let us defund the police department." They tried it up in Seattle and some of those places where they let them take over whole city blocks and run it themselves. How did that work out for you?

You cannot have a society without a rule of law. There is no rule of law. You had to learn that from Exodus. The first thing God did when He brought His people out is gave them ten commandments, a rule of law. All society rises and falls on their appreciation of the rules of the law. I do not like getting a ticket when I am going 95 miles an hour in a 45-mile zone, but there is a rule of law. I am safe because none of my jeeps will go 95 miles an hour without falling over and dying in a ditch someplace. But I am telling you, you have to have a rule of law, and turning our cities over to thugs is what is going to happen.

I am going to tell you something. I read this last week, and it is a scary thought. I am not saying it is true. But we are seeing riots and riots and riots and riots over race. It is a thing where now in Kansas City, if you ever get to go to a Chiefs game, you cannot dress up like an Indian. You cannot paint your face. You cannot wear a headdress. They are going to get rid of the big Tom Tom. The Washington Redskins have already caved in and changed their name. I would call it the Washington White Skins. I would not have a problem with that. Better yet, Washington Honkies. That works. It has a ring to it. This country, if you have not figured it out, this country is in a mess.

The Boy Scouts, one of the most honored groups that have, through their Eagle Scout program, done a good job. I think they had a ceremony in the Eagle Scouts statue that you do. It was given back to the Indian days of some Indian guy who had an order, an order of this Indian guy. Now they have stopped it. Do you know why? Because the Indians did not like white folks pretending they were Indians. They are all going to have to sell your lawnmowers because if you have a "Scum Scum" engine on it, that is an Indian chief. You are going to have to get a white man engine or something. I do not know. It is a mess.

We are seeing across this country, I read an article this week, that there is a chance—I am not saying yes or no, and I do not really care one way or the other, I am just telling you what I read—there is a chance that the police officers who killed George Floyd could get off once they get into a courtroom. You see, it is one thing to burn down the streets and scream and yell and all this stuff. Once you get into a court and the evidence, and this is what he said, when the evidence is presented of how much drugs he had in his body and all the other factors, they may get off. Now, I am not saying whether they should or whether they should not. I do not really care. What I am telling you is this: if you think we had riots when this guy got killed, you wait and see what happens if they do get off. Perspective. Perspective. Nobody is going to stop it. This country has reached the tipping point.

Our government. Never in the history of America have the elected officials been so absolutely worthless. Our government is completely broken. They can get absolutely nothing done. Millions are out of work because of the virus. Millions out of work cannot pay their rent, do not have enough food. They use us as a bargaining chip in the election to get power while people suffer. They care nothing about us. It is about their own political agenda and where they want to go, and they care nothing. They will tell you whatever you want to hear to get in power, and when they get in, they are going to do whatever their agenda is to get it done.

I am telling you right now, I am not the prophet nor the son of a prophet, but I am going to tell you right now, the November election will be the bullet in the head for America. At the Democratic convention, they all stood up and pledged allegiance to the United States, and they took out "under God" because they do not believe in God, and they are against organized religion, and they are against what we are doing here today. If they have their way, they are going to shut us down along with taking all your guns, taking every personal freedom you have. By the time this thing gets moving in the middle of next year, COVID-19 is going to seem like it was your best buddy.

I, as a kid growing up, was born in 1950, and that makes me 70 years old, I will save you the math. But a lot of things got invented at that time that you guys just take for granted. Back when I was in school, we did not have calculators. I remember when the first ones came out. I mean, banks had them, but they were big things you had to crank. Nobody went and just got a calculator. If I had had one, I would have passed math, but I did not. I remember when they came out. I remember when digital watches came out. Casio was the one that brought them out. Biggest thing that ever hit this planet. Everybody wanted a digital watch. Now I have one here that tells me how far I walk and tells me what my blood pressure is, which is pretty high right

now. It tells me everything I need to know. I am telling you, they did not have that when I was a kid growing up.

I will tell you something else. I remember when gas was 45 cents a gallon. Not anymore. A lot of things changed with time. I remember when the first television set came out. Those that could afford them, they were expensive, but they were just little 12-inch black and white. They had a terrible picture on them. It was snowy, lines through it. But everybody wanted one. Everybody could not wait to get one. I remember when you did not have cell phones. You had a telephone in your home. Sometimes most people had party lines. If you wanted to make a call and somebody was talking on it, you had to wait until they got off. If you were talking on it, be careful what you say, because if somebody picks up the phone, they can hear everything you are saying. You had a big old phone like that.

Then I remember Star Trek. We all just thought it was wonderful when Kirk would come out there and open his little flip thing and say, "Scotty, beam me up." Now we all can do that. But they did not have them back then. I remember when the first cell phones came out, they weighed about 100 pounds. Big bags like that. You had to have somebody carrying them around for you. The battery weighed about 20 pounds. Now you all have one. Now you even have them hooked to your watch. Things change.

I remember when we got our first television set, it was terrible. Little 12-inch tube. You people out there in the foyer, you people upstairs, you go to Walmart, you can get a 75-inch plasma flat screen TV. It is like almost being there. I looked at that and I thought to myself, that is just the way a lot of God's people are. Some of God's people are looking at life in America and the things around them through a 1953 12-inch black and white television. The picture is distorted. The sound is not very good. You need to step up to a 75-inch King James plasma TV. You need to get a TV that shows you depth perception, not distortion perception.

I am telling you, the November election is going to be a disaster. It is all how you see it all. If the Democrats get in, we are done. We are done. You will lose every freedom you have. They will take your guns, they will take your healthcare, they will take everything, and you are going to see an incredible, it will be the tipping point. If Trump gets in, we are done. Why are we going to be done? Because if he gets in, this country is a sore loser. Look what they did last time when he won. They tried to impeach him when he was in the office for what, three months? That did not work. They hate his guts. He is the most hated man in America next to Peter S. Ruckman.

I am telling you, if he gets in, there will be riots in this country. There will be civil unrest. There will be claims that he stole the election. I just got a hold of something yesterday, and it just kind of like the lights came on. He is fussing over the postal service and mail-in ballots. I am telling you this, I do not care either way. I am just glad I have a front row seat to the end of the world. But I am telling you, it just hit me last night. You see, I originally thought that the Democrats could steal the election by falsifying ballots because everybody is going to get one, and people who have been dead for 20 years are going to get a ballot and get a chance to vote. The theme is going to be, "Get out and vote, and vote often." That is what is going to happen. That is what I thought. I thought that the Republicans do not want that because that is what they were afraid of.

If that was really the reason, I would not worry about it. I would just get more people in my party to fill in more ballots, and I would still win. But it hit me last night. It just hit me. It is not about that. When the election takes place in November, it is going to be the most catastrophic mess that you will ever see. There are going to be votes lost. There are going to be a lot not found. It is going to take forever to find who won this election. While in some of the state representatives, it has been months now, and they are still not decided who won.

Now here it comes: perspective. Get rid of your little 12-inch black and white, get you a big plasma, 75-inch if they have them in stock. They are probably going to be all gone after this service this morning. It hit me. They are not going to try to steal the election. They are going to try through the election to delay that there is no president that can be elected. Whether you know it or not, if by February, when election day, when the president is supposed to be sworn in, if they do not have a final vote, guess who gets to become the President of the United States? The Speaker of the House, Nancy Pelosi. Right under your nose. America is in trouble. A year from now, coronavirus is going to look like a trip to Disney World. For sure, on your calendar of events that change history, 2020 will be, or should be, on your list.

Here is the killer. We are in the middle of a perfect storm. We are getting whacked by about five, six, seven different things, and it is all leading up to the tipping point. The perfect storm for America. Here is the killer. You have got to love this. We all knew it was coming. Are you kidding me? For 30, 40 years, preachers have told you about this day it was going to come. Every evangelist made money off of it. He made money off his books, tapes. Prophecy conferences. Are you kidding me? In 1978, Paul Harvey with his radio program predicted exactly what we are going through and where we are at today. We all knew it was coming. Over and over again, you were told of these coming events.

Now that it is here, we see within God's people two great truths about us and what we are facing today. We are seeing 12-inch black and white televisions, or we are seeing 75-inch plasmas. The two great things that come out of all of this that I am talking about this morning: one is how unprepared God's people really are. Oh, we like to think we are. We like to talk big when everything is good. But when push comes to shove and your world comes down around you. Along with that, the second thing, without a doubt, is how the events that Christianity is facing right now are going to define us. We are either going to be the ones that stand and hold it together so the world can see it, or we are going to be the ones that just fall apart just like the world. Today, there is no perception. There is no perspective. There certainly is no understanding.

I have been talking about spiritual growth. Building inward, we talked about it last Sunday. At camp, we talked about building a wall. Last week, we talked about building a fort. If ever there was a time when God's people needed to wake up and see life as it really is, it is now. It is today. Of course, most of God's people are just looking at life of what affects them. They are oblivious. They could not see God's hand and what is going on and unfolding around us if their life depended on it. They have that little 12-inch black and white with a distorted picture. The question for God's people today is, "Do you see the big picture or just your own picture? What

do you see and what do you learn from it?" 2020 will be not only a defining year for America, but it is also going to be a defining year for Christianity.

Now so far, we have looked at spiritual growth. I have showed you over those five weeks we were together. We talked about the indwelling Holy Spirit of God. We talked about the infilling Spirit of God. We talked about walking in the Spirit of God. We talked about the leading of the Holy Spirit of God. Last week, we talked about the opposition to the Spirit of God. Today, I want to talk to you about—this will be the final message on this—I want to talk to you about seeing the world through the Holy Spirit of God. That is the ultimate goal for each of us.

Proverbs 15:3

The eyes of the LORD are in every place, beholding the evil and the good.

Do you see like that? Do you see through the eyes of the Lord? In Song of Solomon 5:12 and Song of Solomon 1:15, it talks about that He has dove's eyes, and we are to have dove's eyes. What that means is that we are to see things exactly the way He sees them. Do we? Do we see the complete picture of the world today? Of America today? Of your own life today?

Now today, I want us to go to John 9. I want to give a little study to you today on seeing things through His eyes. Then I am going to finish up by giving you one of the greatest perspectives of life that you probably will ever get.

Let me read John 9:1-7.

John 9:1 And as Jesus passed by, he saw a man which was blind from his birth.

John 9:2 And his disciples asked him, saying, Master, who did sin, this man, or his parents, that he was born blind?

John 9:3 Jesus answered, Neither hath this man sinned, nor his parents: but that the works of God should be made manifest in him.

John 9:4 I must work the works of him that sent me, while it is day: the night cometh, when no man can work.

John 9:5 As long as I am in the world, I am the light of the world.

John 9:6 When he had thus spoken, he spat on the ground, and made clay of the spittle, and he anointed the eyes of the blind man with the clay,

9:7 And said unto him, Go, wash in the pool of Siloam, (which is by interpretation, Sent.) He went his way therefore, and washed, and came seeing.

Father, we pray now that You will give us understanding today. Help these people, these good people, Lord, who have come out today. Help us, Lord, to see and understand. Help us to throw away that little 12-inch black and white and begin to see things through the eyes of God and the eyes of the Lord, not just to walk in the Spirit, but to see the world through the Spirit, to understand why we are where we are at and where this country is headed. Lord, we will be

careful to give You the honor and the glory and the praise. In Jesus' name, for His sake we ask it, Amen.

Now you have here a story of a blind man that gets his eyesight back. I have got to tell you, there are five blind men in the New Testament, if you do not know that already. This guy is like no other healing in the Bible. It is completely different. As you start to begin the chapter, the disciples, the apostles, they get into a philosophical discussion of why this guy was blind in the first place. Some are saying, "Was it because of sin in his life? Was it because of sin in his parents' life?" They want to know why he was born blind.

People ask and wonder why things happen all the time. Maybe you do not see it, but in my life in the ministry, dealing with thousands of people, you see it all the time. This little story brings up some incredible truths of why we have to go through the things that we go through. The real question is not why, but we are going to talk about that. The real question is not why. The real question is, "What do you learn by going through what you go through? Do you learn anything? Do you get any victory in your life about anything?"

In Christianity, God's people, you have basically two kinds of people: you have the winners and then you have the whiners. When you begin to look at this, you begin to see and understand, and it brings up some incredible truths that I want you to look at today with me and go from there.

Doctrinally, this is all the nation of Israel. We know that. But sometimes the answers that we are looking for in our own lives are simply found in the stories, inspirationally, that God gives us. We know that the stupid Charismatics and their ridiculous theology, they like to teach that all the bad things are from the devil and all the good things are from God. Of course, we know that is not true. Nothing could be farther from the truth. Ecclesiastes 3:28 talks about that there are good things and there are bad things. There are negative things and there are positive things in the cycle of life.

I want to tell you that not all bad things that happen or befall a Christian are because of sin or God's chastisement in their life. Now I do not want to take away from that. We know that God, from Hebrews 12:1-5, that God will chastise us, and He makes that clear. But many times in the things around us, we have that tunnel vision mindset that we look at things without any perspective. We look at things without any understanding. We look at things through our eyes instead of the Holy Spirit's eyes. We just look at things too shallowly.

You see, we can get into a bad time and a bad situation no matter what it be. I am not just talking about the virus; that is really not even the issue this morning. But we will get into bad times in our own life, and we think that it has got to be a terrible thing. If I have learned anything, it is this: you are going to separate real God's people by what they do with the principles that they say they have learned, not when the good times are here, but when the bad times are here.

We are a principled church. We push biblical principles all the time. The fallacy of that is when your world goes south, you just simply throw out the principles for what you see it to be. Romans 8:28, that all things work together for good to them who are called to God, to them who are called to His purpose, suddenly got lost in your group, Texas. You lose sight of the great

principles that all of us claim to have. We let our emotions take over. We let somebody else take them over. We let some circumstance take it over instead of stopping and looking at it. If the principles that God gives you will work when everything is fine, why will they not work when your world goes south and everything is not fine?

What do you do when it does not work out for you? Are you like the disciples, and you sit around and get into a philosophical discussion with your other friends and say, "Why did this happen? Why do you think this happened? Did somebody sin, and what was it?" I am going to show you six things you better learn today. John 9 helps answer the question why. It helped me a number of years ago when I came across this study and I laid it out. It answers the question. In my course of almost 50 years in the ministry, I have had to answer to parents why little babies die. I have had to try to answer parents why your baby was born with a deformity. I have stood at funerals in a casket of a teenager that died of cancer or leukemia or a brain tumor, and the parents would look at me and say, "Why?" My whole ministry has been filled with dealing with people who should not have died. I mean, do not take this wrong, but us old folks, we expect to kick off here any moment. I am 70 years old; I am pushing past that. John 9, he says, "I have three score and ten." After that, you are rolling the dice every day. I get that.

My life has been fulfilled. I am happy. I have done everything I wanted to do. I have got everything in life I could possibly be content with. I am happy. If I died next week or tomorrow, five years from now, I can look back and say, "Hey, I had a great life." But somebody at 12, 9, 10, somebody 5 and 6 down at KU in the cancer ward, lost all their hair, got leukemia, whose life will be cut short, and they will never have what we have had in our lifetime. Parents look at me and say, "Why? Why is that?" I am asked that all the time. Most of the time, they ask that question like, "God is not fair. God is not kind. God is mean. God is not loving." They want to blame it on God, and I get that. That goes all the way back to the book of Job and his lovely wife, who should have been his helpmeet, came to him and said, "Curse God, and die." She got that from the devil. You see, the world and the devil want to get you to blame everything on God. This story here answers the questions.

Now maybe most of you will not be able to grasp this. I hope you can. But I am telling you, we are living in defining times as Christians. I am not going to even suggest for a moment that God's judgment is not falling on America. Somebody said, "Well, the Democrats took 'under God' out of the Pledge of Allegiance. Is not that terrible?" Churches took God's Word out of the pulpit 35, 40 years ago. You are just now catching up. Who does not know that all down through history, God used disease and God used nations to judge His people? I think sometimes we think because we are God's people, we ought to be exempt from the coronavirus. I think sometimes we think that because we are a Christian that those things cannot happen to us.

I always, I have a perspective. You see, I threw my little 12-inch TV set away a long time ago. You need to do so too. I went out to Walmart, got me the biggest plasma TV you ever saw in your life. I have got it programmed into a King James 60 and a half of the Revised Version. I see things as clearly as I can see them, as God sees them. What I found out? You go back to that time frame, 606 BC. It was one of the most horrendous times. I cannot tell you how enraged Nebuchadnezzar was with Jerusalem and the nation of Israel in that final siege. It came down

three times. The last time they came down, they boarded the walls up, and they could not get in. Nebuchadnezzar was better just spending, losing 100,000 men. He just ringed around the walls of the city, and nobody came in and nobody came out, and they were under siege for two and a half years. They did not do anything. They let them starve to death.

Finally, when the city gave up, those soldiers went in. They ravaged and raped the women. They burned down the houses and threw the old men and women in the fire. They would rip the babies out of a woman's hands before she was raped about 100 times, and they would throw that baby up in the air and catch it on their spear. They would take little 14 and 15-year-old boys up on the wall, 40, 50, 60 feet high, throw them off the wall. They destroyed the city. They destroyed everybody in the city. Then what was left went into captivity, bound in fetters and chained, and marched back to Babylon. We read the story in Daniel 1 of Daniel and the three Hebrew children. We read how Daniel took a stand for the Lord. That is some great preaching, and that is some great truth.

But have you ever asked yourself if Daniel was doing such a great job and really had a relationship with God the way he did, why did God let him go in that captivity? Did you ever stop and ask yourself that question? You think he was, no mention of his parents. They are probably killed. Brothers and sisters, who knows? It is certain that he never saw them all again. How would you do if tomorrow you got separated from your wife, your kids, or your kids from your mom and dad? You got separated from everything that you knew, never to see them again. Who would you blame that on? The only thing that got Daniel through that captivity would be the only thing that is going to get us through this captivity of America. That is the principle that he had. Daniel purposed in his heart that he would not defile himself with the king's meat. It is purposing in your heart. It is the principle of meaning something to you.

I want to tell you something. The captivity of 606 BC looked like a long time ago, 600 years before the birth of Christ. But I am going to tell you right now, America is in a captivity. If you do not see that, if you do not understand that, we will either be winners or whiners, and you get to choose. Now maybe these six things here I am going to give you will help you out, like it helped me out. I want to give you six reasons why we go through what we go through. When you want to ask yourself the question why, and it is not sin or God's chastisement, it will be in one of these six.

Now we like to pretend when things do not go our way that God is not in charge of everything. But somebody with a 75-inch plasma TV knows that whatever happens to you is by God's design. When Job and the devil and God were down there in Job 1, remember, it was not the devil that brought Job's name up, it was God who brought his name up. Sometimes God wants to bring our names up. I am going to show you six reasons why. You do with it what you want. I do not care.

I. Six Reasons Why We Go Through Difficulties

1. Sometimes God Wants To Keep Us Humble We think of pride, and pride was the first sin in the Bible. We think of pride in a Christian's life because of sin or because of being out of

fellowship. But there is another kind of pride that fills in, and that is the pride of success in the ministry. There are many of God's people who get prideful because of the good things that they do, not the bad things. You have to be careful with that. A great example for that in this particular one would be in 2 Corinthians 12:1-11, the Apostle Paul himself. I cannot think of anybody on this planet in the Bible that probably could have had a more problem with success than Paul. He was given a revelation by God that nobody else got, and then he is entrusted with taking that to the world. He is the only one who had it. But over there, he is caught up into the third heaven, and he is shown things that were unspeakable. God revealed to him all about the church age and all how Israel fit into it, and Lord knows what all He gave him. Then He sent him back down on Earth. How would you like to be the only one? We all know people. We have all had experience with people who think they are the only ones that have a truth about the Bible, and they are the most arrogant people on the planet. How would you do? What would I do if God entrusted you and me with a message that nobody else got and said, "Bob, John, Tom, Ralph, Mary, you are the only one that has got this, you give it up." Why? We would be out getting a big bus with our name on the side of it, and we would be driving all over the country saying, "Look what God gave me, and I am going to give it to you." Sometimes God will put something in your life to break that down. What it was with Paul? He was thrown in the flesh. He asked God three times to take it from him, and God said, "No, My grace is sufficient." Let me translate that for you: "Paul, not only is My grace sufficient for you to get through it, you need this so you do not get lifted up above measure." Sometimes success can be a prideful thing in our lives. Sometimes God will bring something in that will humble us, bring something in that keeps that balance. Sometimes, believe it or not, with all that we do with the Bible and all that we do with the things of the Lord, we can actually just become too strong. I want to tell you something: the quicker you learn this one, the better off you are going to be. God cannot use you when you are too strong. God has to only use you when you are weak. Sometimes those things come into our world in their age and say, "Why? Why? Why?"

2. To Make Us Fruitful The second thing I want to tell you is sometimes we go through some tough times in our life. The question is, "What do you learn from it? Are you always blaming God or somebody else? Or do you see it? Focus on it and say, 'Okay, God, what do You want me to learn through this?' Get out of your tunnel vision." Sometimes He will allow things to come into our life to make us fruitful. The example for that is John 15. He says He brings fruit and brings forth more fruit and then brings forth much fruit. But what the progression of fruit bearing is, is God purging us. God putting us through some things. Purging is one of the things that you will find throughout the Bible. John waited 99 years because he knew, or the great principle, the key to faithfulness is patience. The last thing we want to be patient is when we are being purged. I do not mind being patient when things are going my way. Boy, let me lose control. Now let me be sick or let me be in the hospital or let me want to get here or do this, and I am not too patient. I used to hate going to the bank because you would always get there and there would be 20 people in line. My luck, always. She had some 99-year-old lady, so you could not kick her. She had 10,000 pennies and 5,000 nickels. She wanted somebody to count while I am waiting for her to get up to the door. Now you cannot go in the lobbies anymore, new norm. You cannot even go in your own bank. You want to go

to the bank, you have got to make an appointment. Really? Whatever happened to just walking in? Boy, you cannot even go to a Quick Trip without wearing a mask. I went to get dog food the other day out at Petco. I still have a tough time forgetting my mask. I had one in the car. But I am in Petco, getting it, and suddenly I just realized I did not have a mask on. I forgot it. So I am thinking, I have got the dog food, maybe just scoot through this thing. As I am going up there, I hear these people with a loudspeaker. They did not want to come to me personally. They are afraid of me. So they took the college way out. Somebody got on a PA system and says, "Attention, customers, make sure that everybody is wearing a mask." I said, "I need to go get my mask." I went home, got it, came back. Everything was good. I am telling you, life has changed. It is not the same. It is a thing where we do not like being purged. But yet He says that through the purging, you get fruit, more fruit, and much fruit. The key to fruitfulness in the Bible is patience. Noah waited for 120 years. Job had to go through all his experiences for seven days. Do you think that was easy? I wonder how many of you would like to trade whatever we all go through with the coronavirus for what Job went through for seven days. Anybody? Perspective. Abraham waited 99 years to get the fruit. He had some issues in his life. But at the end of the day, all things did work together for good because every one of those guys came out better than they went in. How about us, you, me? When we come out of this great mess that America is in, if we ever come out of it, will you come out stronger or weaker? Will you be a winner or a whiner? James 1:3 Knowing this, that the trying of your faith worketh patience. That is purging. James 5:7 Be patient therefore, brethren, unto the coming of the Lord. Behold, the husbandman waiteth for the precious fruit of the earth, and hath long patience for it, until he receive the early and latter rain. The key to patience is the trying of your faith being purged. It teaches you to wait on God when you do not want to wait on Him. It teaches us to stop when we do not want to stop. It forces us into a scenario many times that we do not have any control over because we are all control freaks. The Christian life is many things, but to me, the biggest thing it is, along with ministry, is just nothing more than waiting on God's timing.

3. To Restore Our Sympathy For Others The third thing, sometimes we have to go through things in our lives that are not too pleasant because we have lost our sympathy for other people. It is hard to believe that in Bible Christianity, working with people, that we can become so calloused and hard and indifferent. The apostles did, and they were with Him every day. They were so busy being successful, they lost their compassion. It is easy to do with the jerks you have got to work with sometimes. I get it. It is like being in a war and people being, your buddy is dying and people being killed and people you eat lunch with or breakfast with, and they are dead by nighttime. You get calloused to it. It got so bad in the military that when a new guy came in, you did not even want to know his name. You did not know where he was from. Why? Because it hurt too bad when he got killed. People do the same thing. I am telling you, over there in 2 Corinthians 1, we talked about it the first week after when it all hit. We talked about suffering together. Suffering each other is a good thing. You never want to lose your compassion. In Matthew 15, the woman came and she was begging Jesus to heal her daughter. Jesus finally did, but the apostles kept saying, "Get rid of her. She is following after us, crying and making it respectable. Get rid of her." There was a time when the little children wanted to come and be with Jesus, and the apostles thought that

they were too dirty, too, did not want to get their white robes all stained. So they tried to keep the little children from coming to Jesus. Sometimes we have to go through what we go through so we can sympathize with somebody else. Be there where they are there and not be so callous to it. I know this is not true in many senses, but I know it is true in a lot of God's people's lives. People tell people, "I will pray for you," and we will never think about praying for them until we see them again the next time. We have got so many things going in our world and so many things that we are busy with and so many things that are so important to us that we just lose the oneness and the compassion for the people that are around us.

Sometimes we have to go through those things so we get our sympathy back for others.

4. To Make Heaven More Real To Us
The fourth thing: because God has to put us through some things that are tough things, that heaven will be more real to us. I think of what David went through with Bathsheba. When most people see the wrong things or do not see the whole thing in 2 Samuel 12:23, a little baby that she bore died. David makes one of the greatest statements anywhere, and I use it at funerals all the time. 2 Samuel 12:23 But now he is dead, wherefore should I fast? can I bring him back again? I shall go to him, but he shall not return to me. Heaven became real for him. Sometimes God has got to reach down and take a little flower out of your garden and put it up there because you are so busy down here, so focused down here, so tunnel vision down here where you are a little 12-inch black and white. So God has to come down and take a little flower out of your garden. I used to hear Mel Sabaka tell that story all the time that he was fighting God, did not want to preach, and God wanted him to preach. They had a little baby girl, and she just lived four or five days, and then she died. Mel laid that, at the funeral, the funeral director was going to lower the casket, and Mel said, "Get away," and Mel picked up that little casket about that big and laid it down in that hole when he told God, "I will do whatever You want me to do." Why did that get to him? Because heaven was more real to him. God forbid, God had to do that to any of us to make heaven real. Philippians 1:21 For to me to live is Christ, and to die is gain. I am telling you, sometimes God has to come down and pluck a flower out here or do something that heaven becomes more real to you. I am in the same boat. I was 19 years old when my dad passed away, and it did not mean anything to me at the time before that about the Lord, but that is the thing that God used in my life. That was the thing that turned my life around, and now heaven became real to me. Sometimes that is just the way it has got to go. It is the ability to see beyond our circumstances and see the big picture that God sees. You are either going to have an unlimited view or a limited view. It is just that simple.

5. To Better Understand And Believe God's Principles
The fifth thing: sometimes God allows things to come into our lives so we can better understand and believe the principles of God. I say this again, the principles of God are not for when everything is good. When you are sick or you get this or some disaster happens or you lose your job or you lose this or something happens with the kids, it is not because of sin in your life. It is because it is just the way life went. Are the promises and the principles of God only good to you and good for you when everything is going well? Or do they work for you when your world is falling apart? Do they keep you on an even keel? Do they keep you in perspective? Do they keep you balanced? Do they keep your emotions from jumping off the cliff? There is a great story in Mark 9:14-29. It is one of my favorites because I put myself through it so many times. This guy had a child, a

little boy, and the boy was demon possessed obviously, and he would tear himself and throw himself in the fire. The little kid comes up, and Jesus is right there, and he starts to take one of those fits. Jesus looks at the guy and He says, "Do you believe all things and I can do this?" Something like that. The guy says, a classic line, Mark 9:24 And straightway the father of the child cried out, and said with tears, Lord, I believe; help thou mine unbelief. We all say we believe, do not we? We are a mess. I have said this many, many times to Christians. God gives you the Bible. God gives you what you need. God gives you everything, and then you do with it what you want to do. But when push comes to shove, we all get what we deserve. We will make some bad choices in life and want to whine about it or complain about it. We all get what we deserve. He has given us the promises to keep us exactly where we need to be. The promises for most of God's people only work when something is not wrong in your life. Then you fall apart. Then you just cannot handle it. Then it is like the church's fault or this person's fault or that person's fault or God's fault. It could never be that you are a sham and a phony, and at the end of the day you claim about having and loving the principles, but they just do not work when your world comes down around your shoulders. 2 Corinthians 7:1 Having therefore these promises, dearly beloved, let us cleanse ourselves from all filthiness of the flesh and spirit, perfecting holiness in the fear of God. What good are they if they do not work for you? Just like, "I got a great deal on a car. I got a 1967 Corvette for 50 bucks." "Wow, that is good. Where is the engine?" "It does not have one." In the Christian life, the engine that drives you will be the promises and the principles. I am telling you, 2020 will define each one of us. You are not going to be able to blame it on somebody else forever. Sooner or later, your life will go to pieces, and you will hit that tipping point.

6. To Bring God Honor And Glory The sixth thing, John 9:3, "the works of God be made manifest in him." Sometimes God allows things to come in our lives just because He wants to get an honor and glory out of me through it. Can you allow God that? Whatever we are going through in America, whatever has happened or is about to happen or will happen in the next year, no matter how bad it gets, can you allow God to get the honor and glory out of your life? We have some heroes in our church. I think of the heroes like Joe Christensen, who was a police officer, and all of our nurses; they are heroes to me. But my two heroes to me personally are two people that maybe you would have thought about it and maybe not. I do not mean this in a bad way, or in a way to embarrass them, or in any way, shape or form, because they are both here this morning. But my first hero is Jeffrey. Jeffrey, you are a hero to me. Because it is obvious that God is getting the honor and glory out of his life. I watch him at Bible study. I cannot imagine losing my eyesight. I watch him with a big magnifying glass looking up the scriptures and writing his notes in. Yet I see some of God's people in this church that have 20-20 vision, and you would not even open up the Bible to look at anything. If God wanted to make you blind, would you be okay with it? If God said, "Bob, I want to get the honor and glory out of you," and you would say, "Okay, God, whatever You want," and He says, "But I am going to strike you blind and then let the world see how you continue on." Are you okay with that? You see, this is where the rubber meets the road. My second hero is Del. Del, I cannot tell you how happy it made me when I knew you were coming back to church here. The real hero is your wife, who has to put up with a spastic idiot like you. The reason I call you Bozy is because it is just an acronym for Bozo. But I love you guys. I

remember when you first got saved in my Bible study, you had just tried to park your car on a railroad crossing, found out that that was not a good place to park your car. You got hit with a train, and it just about changed everything in your world and your life. You could have quit. You could have got mad. He bugs me to death because he wants to do more. Yet I have people that have full facilities, and you do not want to do nothing. You are hiding out this morning. Him and I go back a long way, and his wife, she is a darling, I will tell you, she is the best there is. I remember Bozy just got back there, and he could not get a job anywhere. I got him a job back at the old church we were at as a security guard. What he did, he just sat in a parking lot with a little blue light on the top of your car. Remember that? The old folks in the retirement homes would feel safe looking out there and seeing that blue light. Tell the truth, most of them did not like it and thought something was going on and wanted to know what was going on. My favorite story with Bozy is it was a dark night about two or three o'clock in the morning, and it was foggy. A lady, an elderly lady, had got dropped off and was going up to the field, and he wanted to help her. So she is walking up there. Now it is about two o'clock in the middle of the night, foggy, full moon, the whole nine yards. Out of the fog, this lady looks around, and here comes Bozy, "I am going to help you." She went to John Knox Village the next day. You could have quit, buddy. You could have given up a thousand times, and maybe you felt like it sometime, but you never did. You never did either. You may not get out on a preaching circuit someplace, but I will tell you what, three or four times a week you get those little prayer things that he puts out. He is like the woman in the Bible. He has done what he could. God uses him mightily in your great testimony in both your cases for the glory of God. You did not have to do that. Let me ask you a question. If God wanted you to be like him, would you say, "Okay, Lord?" Some of you cannot even get past the coronavirus to go something like that. I am telling you, sometimes God just does things. He says in 2 Timothy 2, "In a great house, there are vessels of honor and vessels of dishonor." God wants the freedom in your life and my life to do whatever He wants to do with us. The question is, "Are we okay with that?" Wanting God to use you or me instead of bickering like the apostles of, "Why is this man born blind? Why did this happen?" For the glory of God it happened. This time will define all of us. To me, I am not speaking for you. To me, if Christianity and what I have is worth believing in to the point that I believe it is, then it is certainly worth us sacrificing everything for it. We all knew that this day was going to come, and we all knew that in Christianity there was a price to pay. But now that it is here, you want to default on the pay. It was okay for Him to pay it for you and for me. It is not okay for us to pay it for Him. Now is the time to see if you and I will pay it for the glory of God. I am not talking about the coronavirus. I am talking about what is coming of some of God's people. That is all they can see. "Poor me." There are many questions a Christian has to answer. Not just a question about his salvation, but rather the question, "Will I be a vessel of honor or dishonor? How will I deal with what is coming, and can God get the honor and glory out of me by having the freedom to do whatever He wants to do?" Willing to be used. Sometimes it is preaching 20, 30 years of your life. Sometimes it is in a wheelchair. Sometimes it is walking down the street with dark glasses and a white cane. Sometimes it is in a hospital bed. Sometimes it is paralyzed. Yes, sometimes it even is somebody's death. When somebody says, "Why? Why?" Keeping your perspective.

II. A Historical Perspective

This week, I got this, and I worked on it. This is the greatest perspective that I could ever give you. Let us pretend that each of us was born in 1900, 120 years ago. I love things like this because I work daily at keeping my perspective. If it is anybody that could lose their perspective, it would be me. Many times I could feel like just forget the whole thing and move on and do something else. But many times people will infuriate you with their stupidity. But I am telling you right now, the thing that will get you through whatever is coming and whatever has come and wherever you are at will be understanding your perspective. Because we all need a reality check.

So let us just say for a moment, coronavirus, tough time are you having? Are you sheltering in place? Well, if you were born in 1900, let us just say you were. Your first 13 years were relatively okay. In 1912, the Titanic hit an iceberg. That was a disaster; 1500 people died. But the first 13 years of your life, being born in 1900, were fairly okay.

On your 14th birthday, World War I started. It lasted until your 18th birthday. It was called "the war to end all wars." It was the wholesale slaughter of humanity. It was the war that was the tipping point for wars. Now we had the industrial revolution, and we had machine guns, we had poison gas, we had airplanes. In four years of your life, from the time you were 14 to you were 18, 48 million people died. That same year, when you were 18 years of age, the Spanish flu broke out. For two years, until you were 20 years of age, it ravaged planet Earth. In two years, 50 million people died.

On your 29th birthday, the worst economic disaster hit this country that every recession, every downfall of the economy gets back to Black Friday, and the collapse of this country through the Great Depression. Right now in America, the unemployment rate is about 9%. A year ago, it was 3.4%. In 1929, when it all hit, it was 35%. Banks failed. People lost everything. Millionaires on Thursday were paupers and penniless on Friday. Everything in life as we know it changed overnight. In the course of that, it lasted for 11 years. 25,000 people committed suicide.

On your 39th birthday, World War II started. It lasted until you were 45 years of age. It was a total war, war in Europe, war in the Pacific. In the course of those years, 90 million people died. On your 50th birthday, the Korean War broke out just five years after the other one. You can add another eight million people died. From your birth in 1900 to age 55, polio killed 500,000 people every year. At the same time, smallpox—you say, "I never heard of it"—that was because it was eradicated in the mid-50s, but until that, from about 1796, the last case of smallpox in America was 1977. 900 million people died. Whole communities were wiped out.

On your 56th birthday, 1956, you were born in 1900, Vietnam broke out. It raged for 20 years, and another 600,000 people died. When you were 60 years old, the Cold War broke out. This was a time of the atomic age, the nuclear holocaust, and people being afraid and panicked because of everybody rushing to get the bomb and everybody afraid somebody was going to use it. Stepping over the line for a moment, in 2009, the swine flu hit the United States, and 300,000 people died.

Today, we have the Coronavirus-19, our own pandemic. To date, 170,000 deaths in America, 22 million worldwide, seems paled in comparison.

Hey, guys. This is 2020. You guys have got 80 more years to go. I was born in 1950. I saw the first half, lived through the second half. Most of you, if Jesus does not come, you are going to live through it all. You have got 80 years yet to go with the worst scenarios you could possibly think of coming your way. I would say another two or three years, what you just went through with the coronavirus, it is going to be like going to Disney World, World of Fun. It is going to be nothing compared to what is coming. But all you can see is through that little black and white lens. You will never come to the place where you will see through the eyes of the Spirit because yourself is in the way. All you see is what directly affects you. I am glad I will not be around it. I am 70 years old. I have probably got 20 years, maybe 25, I do not know, maybe not that long. But I will not see it. I am glad. I have seen enough of it in my time. But what I would like to see is how you handle it. Because most of God's people are not doing too good right now.

Now let me ask you. How did your parents, your grandparents, and your great-grandparents get through the 1900s? You are obviously here because they did. How did they survive the 20th century where the most horrendous things happened that we lose sight of because I have got the virus? I will tell you right now, you better understand what is coming your way. You better realize that the party is over, and 2020 could well be the tipping point for this country. If it is not this year, it is certainly coming quickly. Yet with all that took place, all of it, how many, I did not even count it up, I should have done that. How many billions of people died?

Some of the greatest preachers that ever walked into a pulpit preached some of the greatest messages with some of the greatest revivals of people getting saved by the scores, by the hundreds of thousands. The difference between then and now is they had a Bible. We do not. The difference between then and now is they had a Bible that they believed. We have one, but the promises only work when the sky is rosy. Today, most Christians and the world look at things the same way themselves. Their little tunnel vision of what they see that only directly affects them. They do not see the fact that God has a bigger plan. God has something that He wants to do. This virus that has hit this Earth may be the judgment of God, but in Daniel and Ezekiel's day, even though the judgment of God was falling on Israel, God used those people who were willing to be vessels of honor. Winners or whiners? What do you learn from what you go through? What do you learn by what you have to experience? The bad things, easy to learn the good things. It is when your world falls apart and your life changes. Where are you at?

III. Learning From The Signs

I came home from Jamie and Danny's a couple of weeks ago. I do not know when it was, on a Thursday or a Friday or Saturday night. I cannot remember when. I live right there. You come up 350, and I live there at 83rd Street, down the road, right around the corner, where the 350 splits there. On the other side that goes north is Westridge. On my side where it splits, it goes south. That is 83rd Street. But when you are coming from my house from Lee's Summit, you come up 350 going north, northwest, I guess it is. Then you get to Westridge, and then you turn and drive

about a quarter of a mile. Then the freeway goes the other way, and then I cross over that and I go home.

As I came home that night, I came up there, and it was the most horrendous traffic accident that I think I have ever seen in my life. Traffic was stopped. I went on around and went up and came back down the other side, but I wanted to see what happened. So I came up and parked up there and got out, and all kinds of fire trucks, all kinds of ambulances, police cars were everywhere. The one car I saw there, there were probably two cars involved. The one car looked like it went through a shredder. I knew immediately that somebody probably was killed. The other car was badly damaged, and there was somebody sitting there along the side, and she was being consoled by the medics and the police. I figured she was a survivor of it.

Come to find out a couple of days later what actually happened. This happens all the time there. You come up 83rd Street to the light, and if you want to go that way, you have got to go across and go up a quarter of a mile and then get on 350 because it is split. If you want to go south like you are going to Lee's Summit, then you just get on right there. What happens all the time? I have seen it happen. I have been there when somebody has done it. She drove up to 83rd, was not paying attention, and turned in the lane coming toward her, thinking that it was a two-lane highway. She got hit head-on. A 68-year-old woman got sent out into eternity.

I watched that and thought about that, and I thought to myself, "What is the lesson here in this?" That woman ended her life in disaster because she made a wrong choice. It would have been one thing if the signs were not up that said "divided highway." It would have been one thing if right across the street there was a big sign that says "wrong way." It would have been one thing if those signs would not have been there. What got her killed? She ignored the signs that were all around her. In the day and age that we live in, it is going to get you killed. It is going to destroy your family. It is going to make your life the most miserable you can be. You do not want to see the signs around you either. You are going to make a bad choice just like she did, based on ignoring the signs. If not physically, certainly spiritually, it is going to get you killed. Those are the six things. You better learn the lessons because of where this thing is going.