

John 1:6-9

Sunday 9/27/2020

If you have your Bibles this morning, we are going to turn back to John chapter 1, the great Gospel of John that we started a couple of weeks ago. You will remember last week we got into our second message on that great book, and we began to see and develop the concept of God as light, the light of God. God's true light, the Son of God, which lighteth every man that cometh into the world. The Bible says the Word of God in that light lights men through the Holy Spirit of God. We went through and began to lay that out.

I showed you the first week we defined the word beginning as the way that God began to go, and this is how God's way brought the light into the world of total darkness through the Lord Jesus Christ and through the Word of God which we have in our hands today. I gave you yet another example of John. I cannot underscore this enough. John is the greatest type and picture in all of the Bible, probably, of what your life and my life should be as a child of God, using the light that God gives him and doing what he does.

I showed you how the Word of God last week in my own life is likened to five lamps, and it fits into your world too. I showed you how the Word of God is a reading lamp that illuminates what you are reading as you are trying to go through the Bible. I showed you how the Bible is a heat lamp that gives you the necessary spiritual vitamins that you need and warms your soul in the coldness of this old world. How it was a safety lamp to keep you safe. How it was a traveler's lamp that showed you where God wanted you to go in your life, and how also it was a night lamp to light the way through this dark world. Everything that we need to sustain our life through the Word of God will be found in the light of God's Word. God's people continually look everywhere else in this world for something that satisfies, for something that will guide them, when all they need is what they have in their hands this morning through the light of the Word of God.

I gave you two great verses:

Psalms 119:105

Thy word is a lamp unto my feet, and a light unto my path.

Psalms 119:130

The entrance of thy words giveth light; it giveth understanding unto the simple.

Then I gave you, if you will remember, the definitive chapter on the Holy Spirit of God and how it works in the church age, and that would be John chapter 16. I showed you the sevenfold work of the Holy Spirit of God. Three things that the Holy Spirit of God will do for an unsaved man:

1. He will reprove him of sin.
2. He will reprove the world of righteousness, that is Christ.
3. He will reprove the world of judgment, that is the great white throne judgment when every man will stand before God.

Then I showed you, as a saved man, the Holy Spirit of God will do four things for us:

4. First of all, He will lead and guide us into all truth. We made the emphasis on all truth being in the Word of God.
5. We saw how He glorifies Christ, and that is what we are to do. The true picture of the Holy Spirit of God inside each of us will be how we glorify Christ with what we do.
6. The third thing is that He shows us what is coming. He shows us what is coming down the line, so that you do not get caught up in all of the things that are happening around you today and misread those and get them put into some context that it really should not be in.
7. The last thing, He shows us what is real. He will show us what is of God and what is not of God.

Yet again, I say this, God's people today are totally oblivious to any of this. Then we saw the great study around the word contrast, how God uses contrast to teach us. He said in John chapter 1, verse 4, that the light that God made two great lights, and that great light God divided the light from the darkness, and that formed the first contrast in the Bible. The rest of our time in the Word of God, the rest of our Christian life, and everything we go through and face will simply come down to that contrast: light versus darkness. That is why it is so important to have the Holy Spirit of God be able to show you what is of God and what is not of God. It shows you how Satan has a black light, a light that is in need be darkness, the Bible said in Matthew. With that light, he blinds the minds of unsaved people and saved people too, and he blocks the glorious light from Christ coming through. Again, how the life of John is our example of what we as Christians should be. John is an incredible book, and as we move through it, we are going to see so many solid practical concepts, not only in the verses that we look at as we go through, but in the stories that Christ unfolds great truth in through the Gospel of John.

I. The Ministry of John the Baptist

Today, we are going to begin to look at another man whose name also is John, and this will be John the Baptist. Did you ever notice that in the world there are probably more guys named John than any other name? It is a very popular name and a very common name. In the Bible and in teaching the Bible, John the Baptist is called John. John, who wrote the Gospel, is called John the Beloved. The name John means God is gracious. Again, it is no accident that the first man who sets it all in motion, John the Baptist, his name is John. Then the last man who sums it all up and lays out the complete picture for us and gives us the whole account, his name is John. Both of these men come that all men through them might believe. It is an incredible picture coming through the Bible.

Our verses today will be John chapter 1, verses 6 through 9. Let us read it and then we will pray and then we will jump into it.

John 1:6-9

There was a man sent from God, whose name was John.

The same came for a witness, to bear witness of the Light, that all men through him might believe.

He was not that Light, but was sent to bear witness of that Light.

That was the true Light, which lighteth every man that cometh into the world.

Let us pray. Father, we do thank you and praise you today for the time that we have set aside to open up your Word. We pray, Father, that first off and first and foremost that we would look to you for a cleansing, that the blood of Christ would cover us today, that anything that has not been confessed, that is not right with you, Lord, at this moment that you would forgive us for it and take us forward that we too might understand the great doctrines and the teachings of the Word of God. We love you. We thank you, Father, for all that you do for us now. We will be careful to give you all the honor and the glory and the praise in Jesus' name for our sake we ask it. Amen.

The ministry of John the Baptist, he said there was a man sent from God whose name was John. The ministry of John the Baptist is one of the most prominent stories in the Bible. We know that he is a forerunner of Christ, and he starts his ministry six months before Christ starts His. In fact, he is born six months before Christ is born. The whole thing is John the Baptist was the forerunner of all this. He comes to the Jews and he is the first man to proclaim that Christ has come to the nation of Israel as their Savior and as their Messiah. He is prophesied back in the Old Testament, Isaiah chapter 40, verses 3 through 7, and again in Malachi chapter 3, verse 1. You will find the verse there that you will find in the New Testament Gospels that he was the voice of one crying in the wilderness.

John comes out of the wilderness and he comes to a nation that is very hardened against anything that God has. We know they have a form of godliness, but they have truly denied the power thereof. Christ now has come to give them their salvation as His people, the nation of Israel. John the Baptist comes six months ahead preaching repentance to the nation of Israel. He baptizes down in Jordan. I do not have time this morning to go into all of that, why Jordan is so important in all of this and why that is the river that he picked. It has all its purpose and its plan in what God is going to do.

In John chapter 3, verse 29, he is called the friend of the bridegroom. We do not have time to get into this today, but we will take the time when we get into John chapter 3, when we get into this verse, how that in God's household from Genesis to Revelation, there are seven members of that household. We know that the household is going to a wedding someday, and that wedding is going to be Christ the Bridegroom and you and I as the church as the Bride. At that wedding, John the Baptist represents a group of people who are called the friend of the bridegroom, one of the greatest studies that you will ever take to unlock a lot of things in the Bible that we will do when we get there.

When John shows up, he creates a stir with Rome. This guy is not your three-piece suit, normal neo-evangelical pastor showing up or a Baptist. This guy comes out of the wilderness. He is awfully scraggly looking. He has probably got a beard and he has got a lot of locust wings and locust juice stuck in his beard because that is what he ate. He is not your first choice to take

home from dinner, nor would you want your daughter coming home and saying, “Dad, can I date this guy?” But he was God’s man. God knew what he needed to come up against the Roman Empire. John creates quite a stir for Rome, and they ultimately get rid of him. They marvel at him. Even the Roman Herods, they want to know who this Jesus is he is speaking of. People are beginning to follow him. He got a lot of attention out of this. But you know as well as I do that they had to get rid of him, and in time they kill him by cutting off his head. You will find that in Mark chapter 6, verse 14, Matthew chapter 14, verse 2, and in the third account of that is Luke chapter 9, verse 7.

You know how the story goes. Herod had one of his lady friends. His daughter was a belly dancer, I guess, and she did a belly dance for him. He said that was the greatest belly dance he ever saw, and he offered her whatever she wanted in the kingdom or something like that, except his position. The mother, this is how it works, she hated John the Baptist because John the Baptist was preaching against her and some of the things that she was doing, and she did not like it. So now is the opportunity. So she pulls her daughter aside and she says, “He is going to give you whatever you want in the kingdom, lest his throne. Here is what you tell him you want. Tell him you want John the Baptist’s head cut off and brought to you on a plate.” So she goes and tells him that. Herod did not want to do it, but Herod is a weak guy, and because of the oath, he did it. So that is how they got rid of John. They killed him. They cut off his head, and you know, that is how it went down.

Now, let me just say this too. I get to throw this out here because you get into all kinds of heresy today. There is a group out there of Baptists who are called Baptist Briders, like bride in a wedding. Baptist Briders. They are a heretical group that teaches that the first Baptist was John the Baptist, and they take the position that the Baptist Church starts with John the Baptist. Obviously, they are associating John the Baptist with us as Baptists. Of course, that is the furthest stretch as you could ever be. All that tells me about anybody who claims to be a Baptist Brider is if you went to Bible college, you need to get your money back. You cannot even come to that conclusion with even an eyedropper full of Bible truth about how God is dealing in the New Testament. It shows a complete lack of church history. It shows a complete lack of Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John and what God is doing. It shows a complete lack of the book of Acts and everything in between. So all I want to tell you is that if you ever run into a Baptist Brider, you know that is not what you are looking for. I can guarantee you.

II. The Practical Application of Being Sent

What I just gave you here is the historical account or application of John the Baptist, him coming to the nation of Israel. Doctrinally, it will be a picture of the Tribulation period. You showed in Luke chapter 1, verse 17 that John the Baptist comes in the spirit of Elijah, and that is a key, putting all this together in a doctrinal sense. But that is not our goal today either. I want to talk to you about the practical application here, because for me personally, it is an incredible personal verse to me. There are certain verses in the Bible that mean so much to me, and they mean so much to me because they were used of God, if not directly, indirectly, that impact my life that I never want to forget, nor will I ever forget, simply because it is the great reality of truth that

comes out of these verses. Because this passage this morning, or the verse that we read, “There was a man sent from God whose name was John,” it carries the truth in our lives as Christians that God will always put somebody in your life. God will always give you a man or a woman, and then He will reveal Himself through the Word of God through that person that He put in your life. For me, it reminds me that I would never have what I have today with the Bible and the ministry without a man that God put into my life.

A few years back, my father in the Lord, Mel Sabaka, some of you older folks have met him, you know him. You younger folks did not have the privilege of knowing him, for he died before you ever got to meet him. But many of you remember the old days at Old McDonald’s Farm up in St. Joe when Mel was our pastor preacher up there. You have heard him preach many, many, many times. I preached at his funeral, and the verse that I used was the verse that we started with today because I wanted to make a point. The verse I started with was John chapter 1, verse 6, and I said this: “There was a man sent from God whose name was Mel.” I wanted to make the point that God always puts a man or a woman in your life when you get saved, or He should. Many churches today, it does not happen. Most ministries today it does not happen because they do not see the value of that.

When I got out of the army and my father went home to be with the Lord, and God began to work the events in my life to get me back where I needed to be, it was God using this man and his wife, Mel and Jean Sabaka, and Jean is probably watching this morning. It was God putting this man in my life that changed everything in the direction of my life. I look back on that time and I learned a great truth: that our lives, that God will always give us somebody to mentor us and to help us to get to where God wants us to be. God never expected, and a lot of people think this, and a lot of people want this, but it will never work for you. God never intended for you just to get saved and for you to figure it out all by yourself. Paul himself tells you that the things that you have heard of me take and commit to faithful men. You will find down through history that unbroken chain.

It is a thing where I will never be able to repay what he did for me. It was a thing where I knew nothing. I got right with God and there I stood. I had Bible colleges pulling at me from this side, people saying this is what you need to do. I had my own feelings in my own heart of what I thought I needed to do, and I had everybody out there telling me, but one man, one man took the time to invest his life into my life and lead me and guide me. I know that I could never repay that, and I am going to tell you right now, I could never take that. I would never take that for granted. I know without God putting him into my life, I never would have made it. I never would have made it. This is why so many of God’s people today, even here, you do not make it. God will put somebody in your life. They will go along for a while, and that person in your life is there from God. “There was a man sent from God whose name was John.” John came to change the thinking of the nation of Israel, and God will put somebody in your life because the key ingredient after you either get saved or right with God is one word: change.

Let me say this. I totally get it. He was just a man. He was human. I got to see his human side. He had an old sin nature just like you and I do, and I get that. I am not trying to say that he was the God of my life. He was certainly the Apostle Paul of my life. But that Bible says it tells us

that John was not that light, but was sent to bear witness of that light, that all men through him. Wow. What a strange concept today in Christianity, allowing God to work through you to touch somebody else's life. He was human. He had his faults. He made his mistakes. He had his problems just like we all do. People down through the years said, "Well, you are just following a man. You are just following a man." Did you ever notice how everybody says you are just following a man, is following somebody? That is what the Bible says you are supposed to do. Paul said in 1 Corinthians 11:1, "Be ye followers of me, even as I also am of Christ." Everybody follows somebody. That is what you are supposed to do. You just got to make sure you are following the right man.

Mel, boy, over the 50 years that we were together, almost 50, at least 40 anyhow, he died before, but at least 40 years together, we would get into some stuff. I can stand here all morning long and stay all afternoon and all tonight and tell you about the capers that him and I got into. The things that as we walk through life together and he taught me the ministry and he allowed me to get into his world. More important than that, he was willing to get into my world. I learned everything I know today from him. He was the foundation of my life. He was my model. He was my example of everything I do in ministry. When I came to Kansas City back in 1976, I had no idea what I had gotten into. I had no idea what I was doing. I came here, got to be a youth pastor just like Zach. I did not know anybody out here. Barbara just had Kevin and Jim Lake. You all know Jim Lake. Him and I drove out together in a moving van. We got out here and I had no idea. If I would have known, I probably would not have come. Nothing personal to you guys, but I mean, it was a hornet's nest out here. I do not know how many times I fell back on him and called him up and said, "Hey, buddy, what do I do with this? I got this now." He always was there for me.

You know, it is another great principle that young guys today, I do not know. That was a long time ago. Things have changed. I get it. Everybody today thinks you are smarter than the guy that God put in your life. But I have seen it. You know, another great principle. You never want to forsake the man that God puts into your life. You just never do. All my ministry, some 50 years now almost, I have had guys, you know, want to go out and start a church. I would say, "You know what? You are not ready to do that yet." "Oh, I am going." You know, a guy said one time, he says, "Well, I am going out to start a church." He says, "I want your blessing." I said, "It is not my blessing you have to have. You have to have God's blessing." I have watched those guys do those things and forsake the guy that God put in their life to teach them. You know, if you hang around here long enough, you can learn some things about the ministry. Do you know that? They never wanted to. Every one of them failed. Every one of them was a disaster. You see, I was smart enough, dumb enough, however you want to put it, to believe and to know that when God put Mel in my life, it was there to learn some things, that I was going to stay put until God moved me, not my own movement of what I wanted to do. I, like Samuel, you know, I made up my mind, like Samuel, that I was going to let none of his words fall to the ground because I knew he knew a lot more about it than I did. I learned and I used those things, and then I added to them as I grew and learned from my own experiences.

He, I do not want to paint it. He was hard on me. He did to me what I could never do to some of you. He held me accountable. I was preaching one time. In fact, it was the first time I preached.

There had to be four or five hundred people there, and they gave me a shot at it. I still think that his day just set me up so he could whack me. So I am up there preaching, you know, and I am coming through there and I am just, boy, you know what, I am just like all those young guys. I am just spitting it out, you know, and just going to town. I said, you know, by up there about, I do not even know what I was preaching anymore, but I made the quote, “By the sweat of your, sweat of your brow, your earn, your bread,” and I am just going to town. Right in the middle of that sermon, I heard this big loud voice say, “Book, chapter, verse.” So I got into my Bible there and it said, I said, “By the sweat of your brow,” in the Bible, it said, “By the sweat of your face.” I read it and he said, “Young man, if you are ever going to preach the Word of God, you need to learn to quote it correctly.”

Now, what would you do if I did that to you? You would be out of here so fast, me and old Bob. Why you would call your mama, your daddy, your uncle, your aunt, and even the people in your family that are dead. What a terrible thing to do, embarrassing you. See, that is the difference between when God gives you a man and you believe he is the man that God gives you, you can take those things. You know why? Because he knew he loved me. I will tell you something else. I always think twice before I could quote a verse again. None of that mattered to me. He was the Apostle Paul in my life. I needed somebody to keep me accountable. I look back at my diligence, if I have any at all, in the Word of God today goes back to time just like that. There are young men today that if you try to do something like that or try to correct them where they could really learn the lesson. You know what? There are some lessons that you can learn over time, and then there are some lessons you can learn spot on in 10 seconds. That was one of them. You cannot do that today. It is a different world.

You know, we were both soldiers. He was a soldier during World War II and I was a soldier during the Vietnam War. We had a bond together. We had a camaraderie of discipline and understanding how you take orders and how there is an accountability. There is a chain of command. We understood that. I no more looked at things like that as my, you know, as my mentor teaching me about the ministry that I did to my drill sergeant in AIT trying to keep me alive by chewing me out for something I did stupid. I watched him make hard decisions. I watched him and I knew that he knew more than I did. I knew that he saw what I could not see. Never one time did I doubt him. I may not always understood him. I had the privilege of going to him and asking him why did you do this because he knew I wanted to learn, but never one time did I doubt him. You know why? It was not because he was perfect. It was not because he never made any mistakes. It was because I knew that he was the man that God put in my life. He was sent to me to give me what he had that I so desperately needed.

He gave me my Bible. He was a man that I watched, read the Word of God through every 33 days. You have got to read 50 chapters a day to get through the Bible in 33 days. He did it all of his life. He taught me my stand on truth. He taught me my love and caring for people. I learned my love for the ministry from him. I learned that in tough times you do not quit. That God's people many times will say I cannot do this, but God always says we can do this. He developed my leadership skills. He knew how to do that and I learned from him. I learned from him all of my life. Yet following that unbroken chain of 2 Timothy chapter 2, verse 2, “the things that thou

hast heard of me among many witnesses, the same commit thou to faithful men,” God gave him a man when he started out. That man was Pete Ruckman. I remember him telling me the stories many, many times. I remember sitting at camp listening to him and Brother Pete talked, we hours of the morning, just sat over there and just absorbed everything they said.

Mel told me the story many, many times how when he first got right with the Lord that he was really questioning everything. He was going to a secular college. He was working on a PhD or a degree in psychology and whatever. He got right with God or got faced with God and for the first time in his life he heard a man, Pete Ruckman, preach on an absolute standard that overrode everything in life. He said after one of the services, “I called that man over and sat him down and I said, ‘Tell me right now, do I have absolute truth?’” And old Ruckman let him have it. They were lifelong friends for the rest of their lives. Yet we talk about Pete Ruckman. God gave him a man. Old Pete Ruckman got out of the army there and was in Pensacola, Florida, completely unsaved, working as a disc jockey at the radio station in Pensacola, and a pastor, a young pastor came in by the name of E.W. Pyle, witnessed to Pete and won him to Christ and mentored him.

God always uses a man. There will never be a time that in your life or my life if you want to get where you want to go, I am telling you right now, everybody in this church who has grown and become a strong person, Christian leader, only did so because God put somebody in your life to help you. I look across this church and I see some of you have mentored 10, 15, 20, 30 people in your time here. Your life is a revolving door of bringing people in, ministering to them, giving them what they need, and then sending them out. I will just go on record right now and say this, the greatest friend you will ever have outside the Lord Jesus Christ is the man or the woman God puts into your life to tell you about Him, who puts up with you, who nurtures you, who brings you along, who puts up with your pettiness to get you to be where God wants you to be. Some of God’s people have forgotten that today.

III. Paul and Timothy: Like-Mindedness

I guess in the Bible the greatest example of this will be the Apostle Paul. By the way, the Apostle Paul was Mel’s favorite character in the Bible, you might have guessed. Paul in 1 Corinthians chapter 4, verse 14, he told the church at Corinth, and he is being hard on them. If you know anything about 1 Corinthians chapter by chapter, he is nailing them on multiple things that they are doing, and he is not cutting them any slack. But he says to them, “I write not these things to shame you, but as my beloved sons I warn you.” That puts it in a whole different context, does it not? You see, we need to be warned about some things. The reason why God’s people get in the messes they get in and the reason why we all got in the messes is because before we got saved because we did not listen to the people that warned us.

A little bit later on in the book of 2 Corinthians the church starts to come around, but there is a group of people and these people will be in every church. In 2 Corinthians 3:1 there is a group now within the church of Corinth that do not appreciate Paul holding them accountable. They did not appreciate that he loved them like they were. He built that church. He won those people to Christ. They did not appreciate the fact that now he is trying to straighten them out. They say, “Could you give us proof?” Imagine asking the Apostle Paul, the man who got the revelation

from Him to God. For 10, 12, 13 years it was him and God. Can you imagine in that day asking his credentials? These pious, gas-bagged wannabes in the church of Corinth are saying, "Well, who do you think you are, Paul? Would you give us a commendation from somebody that really proves you or who you say you are?" You know what his answer was? He says, "Yeah, I will give them to you. Go look in the mirror. How about you? You would not even be here if I did not win you to Christ." You find him. You find him. But he was the man that God put in that church. He started it. He won them to Christ and he loved them as his spiritual sons.

Now I am going to tell you something and you better listen. God will put somebody in your life that sees what you cannot see. God will put somebody in your life who has walked the same path that you are on right now. Somebody who worked their way through some tough times. Do not get an attitude about that. Like Paul, they love you and they want to warn you. Yet in the majority of God's people today, because we live in a different time than my day, the key word is unteachable. They never see the value. They never see the power of that verse that "There was a man sent from God whose name was John." I get it. We live in a different world today. Nothing is the same today than when I started. I say all the time, you know, that my goal is to build a Philadelphia church, you know, church history. Build a Philadelphia church within a Laodicean church age. That sounds really neat and great talking point, but that is really tough to do because nobody wants that today.

Mel and Jean took me in as their son. My father died and I had nobody, and spiritually. They brought me in and, you know, took care of me and gave me what I needed, taught me what leadership was, taught me what Christianity was really all about, taught me what ministry was. He was the greatest leader of men that I had ever met in my life, and to this day. The things that I learned, I watched in his own life first. I watched that he just did not tell me. I watched him doing it. I do not fancy myself as a good leader. I do not. But whatever I learned about leadership, I learned from him. He taught me. We sat, we drove. After a while, I was a song leader. We worked together. We preached together. We went places together. I would lead the singing and play the trumpet, and he would preach. We were a formidable team. All that time, I used whatever time I had to find out everything I could. He taught me. He trained me.

I remember asking him one time on a long trip, you know, I said, "Mel," I said, "What, what, you know, I know I am new to this and I see all this around me. But what is a real leader? I want to be a leader. I want to be, but I do not want to be the wrong leader." I will never forget how he, on that long trip, he told me. The first thing he said was, "You know what, Bob?" He says, "I guess this is the first thing you need to understand, that leadership is not about ability." Everybody thinks it is. Everybody thinks that you have great ability that would make you a great leader. He said, "That is not true." He says, "Real leadership is not about ability. Real leadership is about accountability. Will you be accountable to the truth of the Word of God first?" He says, "Anybody can make easy decisions, Bob." He says, "But a leader, a real leader is going to have to make hard decisions. He is going to have to make decisions that are unpopular."

I had just watched him. He had a lifelong friend. I will not say the guy's name, but he had a lifelong friend that worked with him in the ministry for what, 20 some years, probably. He was over one of the Sunday school classes that Mel was over, all the superintendent of that, and he

headed up the junior high class. This guy, and I do not even remember what it was, but he got sideways with a preacher or something, the pastor of the church, and something happened. But Mel had to replace him. I am telling you right now, that was the hardest decision that he ever made in his life. Those guys were lifelong friends and they never spoke since that day till never did. In fact, that guy left the church like you all do. He was gone. Went down to another Baptist church and a guy out of that church had split and went down there and started another with a handful of people. That is how it works. I watched him make that decision and it tore his guts out to have to do that to somebody that he was as close to. But he made this call. You know why? Because real leadership is not about ability, it is about accountability and you have to be accountable to the truth. When you are accountable to the truth, a leader has to make some hard calls.

He taught me, he said, “You know what? Most people do not see this, Bob, but he says, you never really, if you are going to be a, he says, I know you do not understand all of this, but he says, you build leadership through adversity.” Anybody can be a leader when things are good. When times fall apart and everything caves in in the world, and he had no idea where we were headed to, he says the real test of a leader and how you build leaders is you build them through adversity. He says you learn as a leader to take advantage of the adversity to build people through it. I have never forgotten that. That is a foreign concept today, but I have never forgotten that. You know, when I go through tough times like we are going through right now with all this stuff, it just, it makes me look for the opportunities. We are already seeing God lay it out and we get to October 11th. I am going to show you how I have sat down and give you the opportunities because, you know, this is where we are at. We can no longer do it the way we did it, and I do not know that we will ever be able to go back to. So what do we do? Quit. We all find a pet rock to crawl under.

Then he taught me this. He said, “You know what, Bob?” he said, “A leader projects positivity, never negativity.” He says, “People are going to look to you. If you have a negative attitude, hide it.” He says, “Because people feed on positive things, but they also feed on negative things.” He says, “The way you do that is he says you always look at see what God is doing in any situation. Find what God is doing in it, not what you think he should be doing.” People will look to you and when you project a negative attitude about everything, when you do not like nothing or nobody, that gets contagious. He says there is nothing negative about the ministry other than people, but do not let the negativity of people destroy the positive things in the ministry.

Then he said, “You know what, every Christian,” I never forget this one, “every Christian should be a leader of one of four levels.” He says, “First of all, he needs to be a leader with his family.”

8. Leader with his family.
9. Leader within his church.
10. Leader within ministry.
11. The ultimate leader with people as an elder or a pastor.

Of course, we know that 1 Timothy chapter 3, verse 5 says that if you do not have rule over your own family, if they are not in church today, if they are not serving the Lord, you are out of the

rest. You are just spinning your wheels. You are kidding yourself. The church is found in Acts chapter 13, verses 1 through 3. The ministry is found in the book of 1 Corinthians and 2 Corinthians. You know, the elder and the pastor concepts found in 1 Timothy chapter 3. It is all laid out for you.

Then he taught me this, and boy, this is one I use all the time. I never forgot. He says, "You know, the number one quality of a good leader is that he is a good follower." He says, "Bob, you are not always going to be in charge." He says, "Bob, you are not always going to be the leader." He says, "Most people, if their whole world is about look at me, I got to be the one in charge. I got to be this. I got to be that. If I am not, then I do not really want to be involved in it." He said, "You are going to find out," and boy, how true it was. He said, "You see, a real leader will never be a real leader till he is a real follower." He says, "What you do," he says, "You will not always be in the lead. So you follow the guy that puts in leadership. Then you lead, lend your leadership skills to what he is doing to make whatever he is doing more successful. Or you go sit in the corner over here, over there, or back there and suck your thumb." That was so true. He said, "You know, a leader, a real leader does not ever complain about what he does not have." You know what defeats us because we go around all day long whining about what we do not have. When the opportunities are all around you that you could have whatever you want. He told me, "Do not ever expect God just to serve up the ministry to you on a silver platter." He never does it that way. A real leader will have to look at the opportunities and make some things happen based on the opportunities through the leading of the Holy Spirit of God. That is why I have told you for how many years, look behind, look around, and look ahead. Like the virtuous woman in Proverbs 31 we saw several months ago. She is seeking, was willing.

Then he taught me that when you build a church, you do not build buildings, which everybody does today. They think you build a bigger doghouse, the dogs will come and live in it. You do not build a church by building a building, you build a church one person at a time by building people. He says as you grow and your church grows, the way you train people to be what they need to be is the fact that you learn to delegate, not legislate. He taught me that a leader will always lead from the front, never from in the rear with the gear. You build relationships with people that you will want to train and mentor and bring them along. The only way you do that is by training them, is by getting into their world.

Then he taught, boy, he knew this one well, he said a real leader will always stand for God when nobody else will. He taught me to look beyond the faults of people, look beyond whatever they are at in their life, look beyond their struggles and always look to see God's potential that is in them and do not get overshadowed with where they are struggling and miss the opportunity to unveil that potential. Then develop it. Then he taught me to be effective in ministry, you have to invest your life in others' lives. People are not going to just come seek you out. They are not going to come and say, "Oh, you are going to, we go, you will see it." I learned this from him. We will go to volleyball. We will go to, we will go to anything. I do not care what it is. Whatever we do, there is a crowd. You will see me do one thing. I work that crowd. I do not care who wins the volleyball game. I do not care who wins the softball game. I am there for one reason. There are people there that need what I have and I have got to find out who wants it and who does not.

So I do not so sit back and say, “Hey, I am the pastor. I really know the Bible. Why do not you come and grovel up my feet?” You have got to work the crowd. You have got to go to them. You have got to build relationships with them. You cannot be the last one there and the first one to leave. You have got to work the crowd, man. There are people in that crowd that God wants to put in your world, but you have got to get on their level. You must seek them out and God will show you the opportunities through the relationship you build.

Today, this concept of God sending us a man is so clearly laid out in what I call the Timothy concept. Something that I have used now almost 50 years of my life. The model of Paul and Timothy, but then you see it with Paul and Titus too. I was his son in the Lord. You see it with Paul and Philemon, you know, his fellow laborer who when Paul was in jail, he wins Onesimus to the Lord. Then he sends a letter to Philemon saying, “Hey, this kid is my son now in the Lord.” Oh, that is all he did. How Paul sets the example for us that we should take men and women and mentor. Keep that word in mind. Mentor them and help them because God’s, you know, become God’s leader, what God wants them to do. Develop them in one of those four areas. I found in this great verse, my example and my model for building people based on the man that God put in my life. “There was a man sent from God whose name was Mel.” Hey, let me ask you, can somebody quote that voice today and put your name in there? As far as I am concerned, that is my calling in life as a Christian and as a pastor. Building people. Taking young men and young ladies and giving them the opportunity to grow, putting the things in their life that they need, seeing beyond their struggles, seeing them as God sees them, creating scenarios and putting them in probably before they are ready to. But you know what? If you do not ever step out and get going, you will never get going. I have done that for almost 50 years, building in them the qualities of a Christian life that my Paul tried to build in me. You know, I have never been about quantity numbers. How many you have? I have always been about quality. Building the best I can with the best that God sends me, taking strong men and women and making them stronger.

IV. Paul and Timothy: Like-Mindedness

In Philippians chapter 2, the book of Philippians, you want to turn over there now. Philippians chapter 2, you are going to find two examples of two men that illustrate exactly what I am talking about because God sent Paul to them. Just like he sent Mel to me and he sent John to the nation of Israel. In Philippians chapter 2, verses 19 through 24, and then a little bit beyond, you see the overall goal, what the overall goal should be for me and also for you. Paul and Timothy, the Timothy concept.

Philippians 2:19-24

But I trust in the Lord Jesus to send Timotheus shortly unto you, that I also may be of good comfort, when I know your state.

For I have no man likeminded, who will naturally care for your state.

For all seek their own, not the things which are Jesus Christ’s.

*But ye know the proof of him, that, as a son with the father, he hath served with me in the gospel.
Him therefore I hope to send presently, so soon as I shall see how it will go with me.*

But I trust in the Lord that I also myself shall come shortly.

Now, Philippians is an incredible book. It is a prison epistle. Paul is in jail and he cannot get to the church at Philippi. Paul loves these people. Again, he won these people to Christ. He started this church. He cares for them. He is responsible for them. But now he is locked away and he cannot do, listen to me, he can no longer do the ministry that he once was able to do. So he turns to his son in the Lord to do for him what he is unable to do. He says in verse 20 and 21, "For I have no man likeminded, who will naturally care for your state. For all seek their own." And boy do they. Never in the day and age of ministry with God's people do I see that second verse more prominent. Verse 21, that everybody is seeking their own today. Nobody wants to step out and invest in somebody's life. Oh, if they come to you, if somebody gives you somebody but going out and seeking. You know how you got saved? You did not get saved because you were seeking God. The Bible says in the book of Luke that the Son of Man came to seek and to save that which was lost. He sought you first. He says for all seek their own, put themselves above everybody else's need. Not the things which are Christ's. He says to Timothy, "I do not have anybody."

There are two key words here we are going to look at. First one is like-minded. The second one down through here he says, he says, "I have no man like-minded," and the second word will be the word naturally. So he sends them Timothy. Now Timothy is like-minded. It is taking young men and young ladies and building the mind of Christ into them, which you already have. Through you having the mind of Christ and teaching and building that mind of Christ in them, you both become like-minded when it comes to the ministry. You realize that the ministry is the number one thing in our life after we are saved. I do not care what you think. If you have any other passion or goal after you are saved than to do for God what he called you to do, you are in the wrong pew. Like-minded.

Now maybe you guys understand. This is why I started the people ministry years ago. The people ministry was about people. But you know what it was more about me spending time with you on those Saturday mornings letting you see inside of me. Let you see what God has put in my heart and hopefully God through the Spirit of God would take what he put in my heart through our time together, put it into your heart. And he did, did he not? Many of you. That is why in time I did not do it all at the same time. But a little later on once I saw how that was moving I put Bible Institute together for my singles. The young men and young ladies who I think are the greatest single group of people, you know, in all the young marriage too. You know our church is about 80% of people in their 20s and their 30s. Us old folks who make up the pillars and hold the thing together, we make a very small fraction of it. You know this is why most churches are out of business today because everybody out there with the coronavirus is 60 or older and they are scared to death they are going to die and some of them rightly so. So they stay home. But you know what in a young church it does not work that way. You understand. You have been trained. We are like-minded. You understand that no matter what befalls us and

you have not seen nothing yet. We have got a job to do. So you take the cream of the crop and you make them better and through the process you build that oneness that oneness that only can come from somebody developing your mind your skills to get to the same end. People giving people what they need. And training them to be like-minded doing the ministry the right way and making yourself available to people that hey look you know what I am here for you.

You know and I have watched this for probably been true forever. But in my half a century almost I there is a real danger in Christianity for all of us and you young people the older you get. Now right now I get it you are young you can you know charge hell with a squirt gun with no water in it. You are that is great. But I am telling you you are going to see this phenomena and the real danger in Christianity that is your order you get. You become complacent. You lose your passion. A chocolate chip cookie is the best thing you could ever have unless it is laying on your shelf outside in the air for three weeks. Then it is stale. And God's people the older they get they get stale. They hit 50, 60, 65, 70 and we lose our edge. We get set on our way and we all do. We become inflexible. We develop attitudes. We lose our edge and our focus. And we just begin to cruise coast across the finish line. You see it in the military. You see these guys that are lifers are 20, 30 year men. And they will get 17, 18, 19 years in the military and then they just start marking time. They just put in their time to get to their retirement. They quit training. No P.T. No optical course no rifle range. They just kind of vegetate and wait for the retirement time to roll by so they can go get their little cabin down the lake by him a boat and that is the way they go.

I have seen the same thing in Christianity all my ministry. I have seen pastors who get to the point when they get 60, 65, time to retire. You have did what you are supposed to have done and so you know now it can kick back and relax and just retire because you earned it. You did not earn squat. What you should have earned is eternity in hell with crying out your lungs. But God came down and saved you. He gave you a job to do in Ecclesiastes chapter 8 tells us that there is no discharge from that war. When David got into trouble Bathsheba in 2 Samuel chapter 11, verse 1, you know what the great verse is. There was a day when the kings went forth to war. David stayed home. There is a danger in getting out of the battle. I have seen the same thing in Christianity all my life. Then you just kind of vegetate. I have been in churches all my life where the deacons walk around like there is somebody when they are nothing. They have not won anybody to Christ in 40 years. They have not read their Bible through in 20 years. They just they have the title and the status and they are just going to get on a bicycle and coast downhill at the finish line is heaven. They are all the same way. They develop an attitude. The younger ones the fire eaters they start to do what they do not do anymore and they do not like it. Hey you do not want to do it but you do not like somebody else doing it. You are a mess man. You cannot be effective in a church full of fire eaters if you had a flame out. You have got to stay in it yourself. Just like people getting older do not want to keep themselves physically in good shape. God's people do not want to keep themselves in spiritually good shape and they lose that key ingredient like-mindedness. They do not see others anymore. They only see themselves. What is prominent in their life is their comfort level not their discomfort.

Now I am going to tell you right now I do not ever say much about myself but I am going to tell you right now that ain't ever going to happen to me. I am 70 years old. I got a mind of a 20 year

old. I know it is hard to get up in the morning. It is. You need a nap in the afternoon. I do. I am just telling you your bones creak and crack. Yes they do. I mean I told somebody at the fitness center the other day trying to work out you know how you know you are getting old when it is harder to get out of the machine that it is to do their exercise when you are in it. I get it. But your vitality your your it is in your mind. It is not in your body. It is not how old your body feels. It is what your mind is. And when you are like-minded and you have the mind of Christ Moses I do not care if you are 120. I do not care how old you get. You never lose your edge. That is what happens with God's people. I get it.

V. Paul and Epaphroditus: Natural Care

Now the next key word is naturally. Verse 20 says naturally care for your sakes. That is a great word in Christianity. There are some things that should just come naturally to you and me like Romans chapter 12, verses 1 and 2, your reasonable service living sacrifice. It is reasonable. Well in your Christian life and mind once you get saved there is a natural things that should happen.

12. One you should have a man in your life or a woman.
13. Two in time. You ought to be that man and woman in somebody's life.
14. Three your Bible learning it and applying it for your leadership and one of the four levels.
15. Five and your ability to be like-minded with the other people around you that way you can get into a ministry and like mind in this rules the day that whatever you do you do it the right way the way it needs to be done. Paul and Timothy.

Now our second example was again in Philippians and the end result of the Timothy project. You want to keep that phrase in mind the Timothy project will be found in verses 25 through 30 with a man by the name of Epaphroditus.

Philippians 2:25-30

Yet I supposed it necessary to send to you Epaphroditus, my brother, and companion in labour, and fellowsoldier, but your messenger, and he that ministered to my wants.

For he longed after you all, and was full of heaviness, because that ye had heard that he had been sick.

For indeed he was sick nigh unto death: but God had mercy on him; and not on him only, but on me also, lest I should have sorrow upon sorrow.

I sent him therefore the more carefully, that, when ye see him again, ye may rejoice, and that I may be the less sorrowful.

Receive him therefore in the Lord with all gladness; and hold such in reputation:

Because for the work of Christ he was nigh unto death, not regarding his life, to supply your lack of service toward me.

Now I do not even know what to say about this guy. I really know facing what we are facing today and I get it. I get it. I understand. I am not speaking lightly against it. I get it. But what do

you do with a guy like this in your Bible? One time we had an evangelist that used to come up here by the name of Leo Humphrey. Some of you remember Leo Humphrey. Leo Humphrey was the modern New Testament John the Baptist. This guy was fearless. I had been with him in Central America. I have been with him all over the place is having crusades. He loved to win people to Christ. He probably had the worst Spanish in the world but it did not stop him from preaching in Spanish and the people loved him. Wherever you went in El Salvador they knew the name Leo Humphrey. He was the most compassionate soul winning fired up guy that you ever met in your life. But he was he was not your norm. He was a John the Baptist all the way and it used to drive me nuts because he did not pull any punches. He would sit come into a church of proud and people like you know finding most churches today and he would gut them. He would just let them have it and it always just infuriated me. When before he came to preach the head pastor would get up and he would say now Leo Humphrey is going to come and preach to you now. Now let me just to tell you he is a little different than we are and I want to prepare you because he is a little he is different and you just need to. And I would think to myself what in the world are you doing apologizing for a guy that is exactly what we ought to be. That is the world we live in today.

I watched him one time. We are out there we go out during the day and we pass out tracts and tell him that there was going to be a movie in the square of the city and down in El Salvador Guatemala wherever you go everybody will come out for that. And the movie they used to show was the goofiest movie you ever saw about hell. I even forget the name of it. It was absolutely the stupidest thing did matter. They would show him this movie on hell and then Leo would get up and he would preach every three four hundred people all the time. I was in Central America back in the day. I never had anybody refuse a tract. I never had anybody did not want to listen about the Lord. You know why. Oh this is going to hurt you now because they were had just went through a major civil war where thousands of thousands of people were killed. And every time you have some uproar upheaval in society it opens up the doors for the gospel. You can forget I said that do not want to ruin your day. You know what he did. I watched him go over this little girl and he gave her a tract and he says in Spanish he says honey. He says I want you to come to the to the thing tonight. She went and asked her mom and she was selling bread there in the side market. She went in after mom and her mom I could see her mom going like this and she came back and she says I am sorry I am sorry but my mom will not let me go as long as we have bread to sell. You know what he did. He went bought all her bread. She came to the meeting and she got saved that night. He did not walk around saying hey you know who I am. I am Leo Humphrey just come and hear me tonight. He invested in her life. And then what he did he gave the bread away to people free to who needed the bread. I mean it is incredible. But what do you do with a guy like this. I mean this is one of the greatest examples of what a child of God should be that we are not every one of us. It is laid out here and there are six key qualities of this guy.

Now I have made it clear. I mean I have never made this a secret. I have made it clear since the beginning of our church that this church will not be for everybody. I get that. I never expected it be because of what I want to build and the way I am going to do it. It is you know it is just not going to happen. It is not. Back in Ezekiel chapter 22, verse 30 the Bible says that God was looking for a man. He is looking for a man to stand in the gap and make up the hedge. Maybe we

never studied that but the gap is defensive and the hedge is offensive warfare. And God was looking for a certain kind of man and I am telling you right now so am I and woman. God was looking for a man in his day to change the world. I am looking for a man and a woman today that I can mentor and put into their life and train and give them to change the world. And it is just the way that it is. This church is a processing center. Nothing more. You come in you check it out. You will hear me preach. You see what is going on. You process it all and then you decide yeah this is for me or no it is not. And if it is not it is okay. Some do most do not but what stays in most cases is exactly what I am looking for. That is why this church is filled with the young people that it is and young couples and the young I say young people you know what I mean. You young adults.

When I look for a man or look for a woman I am look for these six things. A like-minded person who naturally has some of these things. So he says about Epaphroditus here he says first of all he says he is my brother. That obviously goes without saying that he is a saved man and he is his brother in the Lord. But Proverbs 17:17 says, "A friend loveth at all times, and a brother is born for adversity." In the ministry there is going to be adversity. In a ministry it is not always going to be nice. It is not always going to be easy. It is going to be hard. Not everybody is going to like what you have to do. They are not all going to like what you say. You know it is a time when if you have a like-mindedness and you have the natural abilities the fact that you know what this is where the oneness comes in. All of my life and I have just seen this and it just drives me crazy. All of my life I have had to stand by myself for issues and there were guys out there or women out there that should have stood with me that did not back in the day and whenever. And you know what they did not want to be the bad guy. They did not want to lose a friend. They wanted to kiss their rear end up one side and down the other and not offend them. Well I am going to tell you something. There are times as Paul in the church at Corinth there is times when you are going to have to take your stand. And a real brother in this case stood with Paul. You know why? Because a real brother is born for adversity. It is not about friendship. It is not about losing this person. It is about the truth and what you do with it. And he says he is born for adversity like-minded. There is a great message you ought to get on YouTube Dr. Ruckman preached many many years ago it is called cowards in the ministry. Great lesson.

Then the second thing he says is my companion. That will be the sweet fellowship that we have together as we watch God bring in the blessings. Watch the people come in. Watch their lives get changed. It is hard to see this if you are not involved in somebody's life. And if somebody that is not out there seeking to try to get into somebody's world mixing with the crowd meeting people finding out who they are work the crowd like I said. So many people only see the negative in everything. Ten people get saved a ministry going around the world affecting hundreds and hundreds of people and all they see is a negative. They are always negative. And it is just the way that it is. You have got to build relationships that are built around what God is doing in your life and in my life. But when there is not God is not doing anything in your life it is impossible to see what he is doing in somebody else's. In other words it comes down to this. You have to make the effort. Every week I have people call me on the phone and I do not want to say this wrong because I really enjoy it because this is what it is. But it is stating the obvious. Wow is not it exciting when everything is happening. Wow did you see so and so. Wow did you know this

happened to so and so. Boy God is just doing this. That is the kind of stuff. All the opportunities that are before us.

Then he says my fellow soldier. This will be my foxhole buddies. In battle together. You know combat vets. I used to go to most of them are dead now but for years I went to all these World War II reunions that these guys had. And the war had been over 50, 60 years and the bonds were still tight. They talked about the things that they went through. They talked about the cold times at Bastogne. They talked about the times of Normandy. They talked about all the times that they were of uncertainty. And it was guys who built a bond because they would say to this guy I am going to put my life into your hands today and I am going to trust you. And tomorrow that guy would say back and I am going to put my life in your hands today and I am going to trust you. Combat forges camaraderie. The battle warfare forges alliances. And it is a thing where you know and when you know when you have as a companion and a brother and then you go through the warfare of Ephesians 6 it galvanizes people together as fellow soldiers. And it is a thing where you know today we just do not find that I have very little tolerance for Christianity conscientious objectors. I have very little tolerance for people who were not who not get into the battle. I understand it. You may be a wonderful person but you know I come to the time that fellow soldier is what he was to Paul. He did not let Paul fight the battle by himself. And it is a thing.

Then he said a messenger as a brother companion and a soldier. We have a message to get out. Nothing should stop that message. Times change. Good times leave bad times come in but the message never stops and it never changes. Nothing will stop the message except us. We are we are the ones who have to carry the message and we have to find a way no matter where we are at how to get that done. Operation remnant October 11. You are going to see it. God's people today most of them will always strike the path of lethal resistance. And I have said it before. I hate the 20th and the 21st century. Paul said he was born out of due season. I am a Gentile born out of due season. I hate the 20th and the 21st century. I hate everything about it. I hate the lack of days ago Christians. I hate the men and women that have no steel in their backbone. I have the people that crawl under the rock every time something comes their way. Put me back in the 15th, 16th, 17th century brother. Put me back where Christianity knew what it meant to take a stand. Put me back in a time where you paid a price for blood if that is what you had to do. This 20, 21st Christianity is sickening to me. It is absolutely destitute. And I will tell you it is an absolute mess.

Then he says a minister. How do you see God's ministry in your life? Do you even have one? Or do you always complain about what you do not have when there is a thousand opportunities in front of you? You will never catch it in your couch in front of the TV. You will never catch it when you are not putting yourself out there where God can use you. And you have got to look at what the ministry means to you, what this church means to you somewhere where you can get all you want and never have to give anything back. It is okay. Well, all is good. But when the world crashes in, then you know what? It did not go to anything. I mean, what does it mean? Do you love it because it is where God has put you to fulfill his plan and purpose or is it simply just not

worth your risk? Is it your passion? Is it your life? Is it everything that you live and breathe as it should be once God saved you?

Then he says, fellow laborer. As brother, as companion, as fellow soldier, as messenger, as minister, and now as fellow laborer. 1 Corinthians 3:9, "For we are labourers together with God: ye are God's husbandry, ye are God's building." Building each other. We build each other as we build others. And the work of God's ministry is a very important part of the work of God. We build each other as we build others. And the work of God only gets stronger because a brother is born for adversity. And truthfully, the more adversity any church goes through, the stronger it should become. And it will because the adversity purges out the non-hackers. And then you are left with Proverbs 27:17, "Iron sharpeneth iron; so a man sharpeneth the countenance of his friend."

Now look at this guy. By 20, 21st century standards, what an absolute fool he is. It only proves, folks, that in Christianity today in the Church of Jesus Christ, there is a sucker born every minute. He is sick, and the Bible tells us that yet he is nigh unto death. Now that is a serious condition. But he cared more about the people that God gave him than his own physical needs. What an idiot he is. What an absolute joke this guy must have been. Paul said in verse 28, "I sent," he is saying, "I am going to send him to you," but he says, "I am sending him more carefully." Why? Because this guy is almost ready to die. He is sick. And Paul says, "I am sending him, but I am sending him carefully." Look at verse 30. What do you do with a guy like this? "Because for the work of Christ he was nigh unto death, not regarding his life, to supply your lack of service toward me." What an idiot. What a guy. I mean, he is sick. He is nigh unto death, but he is caring more about the people that have needs than he is. I do not even know what you do with a guy like that in the world that we live in today. That is so foreign to God's people that some of you right now listening to this do not like it. You know why you do not like it? You could not do that on your worst day. There is a man who cared more about the things of God, who understood the things of God, that when his own personal life is going to pieces, he is sick. Listen to me. Nigh unto death. And you get God's people to get a little sniffle, or you get this, and you cannot come to church. Hey, I will tell you this, and I do not care whether you like it or not. I would rather die of coronavirus 19 doing something for God than staying home and hiding and being safe and not doing anything for God. You say, "Well, no, no, no, no." Tell it to Epaphroditus. Do not tell it to me. Tell it to him. You are going to have to stand there in heaven with him. Oh, and I get it. 20th century this week. And please me, I do not want anybody to die. Anybody who dies of coronavirus 19, I feel sorry for. I wish it did not happen. I would do anything I could to change it, but people are going to die. But on the news this week, oh, the news. And people follow that so much. We hit the milestone. Two hundred thousand people in America died in the last 10 months or so. And God's people just say, "Oh, what am I going to let me put it in perspective for you." May I? May I please? This will not fix anything for you, but maybe it will just make you feel bad. 1572, St. Bartholomew massacre in one week, not nine months in one week. The Catholic Church under Henry VIII murdered, butchered and killed over two hundred thousand French Huguenots. Want to compare the numbers?

We have the greatest opportunity right now. Why are God's people today such cowards? We have the greatest opportunity right now to be the strength for people who need Christ and his strength. Be safe. I get it. Wear a mask. I get it. Wash your hands. I get it. I mean, we can praise God and thank God all the time because he put it all in a line for us at Calvary. But boy, ask him to put it on the line for him today. I hate the 20 and 21st century. You know, in church history, my goodness, there are so many examples of these two men and how their life forged, forged steel in the backbone of so many of God's people. One of my favorites, one of my favorites, there is a hundred of them, thousand of them. One of my favorites is back there with you, Latimer and Nicholas Ridley. In fact, Latimer was the older guy. He mentored and disciplined and was the father in the Lord to Nicholas Ridley, the young guy. In Bloody Mary's reign, she was wiping out every Bible believer that she could. She got these two guys, and they were condemned to death to be burned at the stake. Together they served God, father and son spiritually. Now they were going to die together. They brought them in and tied them side by side or apart and put all the wood around them. Then they lit the fire and the witnesses said that the fire began to consume Latimer and it was burning slower with Ridley. It did not kill him. It just, when he finally was dead, it had burned off his legs from his waist all the way down. As they are burning, and here again, Latimer is not screaming, "Oh, get me out of here." He is worried about Ridley. He wants to go out as a light for God and he is afraid that Ridley is going to go through this terrible agony. But he did not. And through the burning flames, you can hear Latimer cry out to him, "Be of good comfort, Master Ridley, and play the man. We shall this day light such a candle, by God's grace, in England, as I trust shall never be put out." Light a candle. He is talking about their own bodies. Here is a man burned at the stake, losing his life, everything he has, and what he is concerned about with his partner, his son, the Lord. Do not falter. Play the man. We, you and me, are the candles that are going to burn today to take that light to all of England. I feel fully saying this to you today. I feel like an absolute fool compared to that and our light affliction to say to you what I am about to say. Play the man. Play the man today. Play the man. Play the man.

Back in 2 Samuel chapter 10, verse 12, Israel was greatly overwhelmed by the Amorites. Joab the general said to Abishai his brother, he said, "Look pal, we are outnumbered. I am going to take the choicest young men that I have and I am going to hit them. I am going to hit them, overwhelmed or not. I am going to take the choicest young men of Israel and I am going to hit them head on. You sweep around and hit them from the backside." He said, "Abishai, before he left," he said, "Abishai, be of good courage, and let us play the men for our people, and for the cities of our God: and the Lord do that which seemeth him good." That is where Latimer got it. That verse, "Play the man for God and our people," was over Ruckman's favorite verse was over his fireplace all of his life. The verse here today says, "There was a man sent from God whose name was John." I ask you today, can you put your name in there? Do you see the times that we have as the greatest opportunity that people need it now more desperately than ever before? Are you meeting someone else's needs? Are you mentoring them? Or do you have someone to help you and never forget this, you never take them for granted. The best friend you will ever have, trust me, the best friend you will ever have is the man or the woman who takes you and mentors you and is Timothy and Paul in your life to invest in your world. That is what God has given them.

In this pandemic that we are facing right now, medical issues, stay home, man, please do. I got something coming for you on the 11th. I am going to take care of you older folks, stay home. I got to come and come in your way that is going to help you. But I am going to take my Timothys and I am going to take my Epaphroditus and I am going to continue the message in the ministry. Finding a way, no matter what happens, following the opportunities that God opens up and giving us what we need to get it done. "There was a man sent from God whose name was John," us going to people who need us now more than ever. And understanding that whatever we are going through, there is a greater need. I am not saying by any stretch of the imagination, be foolish. Just be Epaphroditus. Care more about what others are going through than what you are going through. That is where it has to get to. Put yourself last, put others first, put God on top of that. Break that staleness in your life. Break that lethargic negative attitude. Get out of the mindset that you know what, you do not like this or you do not like that. Start looking and seeing what God could do with you if you would just allow him to. John is a great book.

Now, I am going to be done here in just a second. Please take time upstairs and downstairs to sign up for work day. I need to get that going. It is out there on the table. Do not forget my singles, ten minutes I am going to give you that I want to meet you upstairs. And do not forget your T-shirts or your contributions if you want to get that for the cancer thing. And pray about that because I think through the middle of this strife, God has given us an open door here. We may be able to go into these two homes where the people really have a need. And we can build relations with them first and then bring them to Christ, Lord willing. Let us pray. Father, we thank you and praise you for the Lord Jesus. Thank you for all you do. We love you. We pray now, Father, your blessings upon us.