

I. Introduction and Memorial Day Reflections

I have a message I haven't ever preached for years and years, but it was based on that song. It started out by preaching about Jesus' birth: there was no room in the inn for Him, but there's room at the cross for you. Now that'll preach. Put a couple of poems in there and songs, and you've got something going here.

Last week was Memorial Day, and I think I got more response. I had a goofy message I preached last week. People just really, really, really enjoyed it, and it was a practical lesson fundamentally on combat soldiers and how to read a soldier's uniform. Most people have no idea. In fact, I've had many people either tell me personally or email me that they'll never look at a soldier again the same way. I told you how to read the combat ribbons on his chest. I decided to leave Sergeant Rock up here as a testimony to all of our soldiers, but at the same time, as an object lesson, his left side of his chest looks like an Army-Navy store.

You always want to remember that, as we talked about last week, you can tell where he's been, what he's done, and the battles and campaigns that he has fought in through his time in the service. Somebody asked me last week the difference between a campaign and a battle, if they were the same. Obviously, a campaign is a battle that you fight, but there's a difference between them. A campaign will be a theater of operation, like in World War II, they fought in Italy. That was a campaign. Southern France, that was a campaign. Africa, that was a campaign. Finally, into Germany and Alsace-Lorraine, those were campaigns. But within those campaigns, there will be many, many battles. So you want to realize that there's a difference between the two, even though they're directly connected together. There'll be many battles within a campaign, many skirmishes, many firefights.

I was watching last night, I like to watch it about once or twice a year, the epic movie Gettysburg, the Battle of Gettysburg. There was another one that was, actually there were going to be three of those. They did Gods and Generals, which was incredible. That's the first part of the Civil War. Then they did Gettysburg, which is the second part of the Civil War. There was a third one, but they flopped in the theaters because if you haven't got Freddy Krueger running around with a chainsaw cutting you up, they're not going to watch it. But it was so incredibly good, and I just like to keep up on it. That was a classic example. I thought about it. The Battle of Gettysburg is a campaign. It lasted for eight or nine days there in July. But within that campaign, you had the Battle of Little Round Top, you had the Battle of Big Round Top, you had Pickett's Charge there toward the end, you had the Devil's Den, you had Cemetery Ridge. You had probably 20 or 30 or 40 different fights going on within that campaign, battles within it. So you want to understand the difference.

I showed you how that in the book of Joshua chapter 12, after Israel crosses over Jordan and gets into the conflicts to get the land that God had for them, they fight three major campaigns and get into 31 different battles, which probably had thousands of skirmishes and little firefights and

encounters, little pockets of fighting. It was an incredible thing. I tried to show you how that God, before they got into their inheritance, God stopped there in that chapter, and what He did was, He began to recount the battles that they had been in.

Warfare, physical warfare, is a very complex thing with many moving parts, but so is the spiritual warfare that we're all in. In both cases, war, conflict, and battles can be very confusing. A lot of things are happening, a lot of things go wrong. It's called, in technical terms, "the fog of war." In a spiritual battle, I've found in dealing with people and in my own life, it's the same thing if you don't stay clearly with the principles, because there can be a fog of the spiritual warfare too, where things get overwhelming to you, things get to the point where they can get confusing for you. You're not sure exactly what to do or where to go. But where the military guy has to depend on orders or how he was trained and orders from headquarters, you and I just have to follow the principles of the Word of God. I've said it many, many times: when God gave us the Bible, He gave us an unchanging Word in a changing world. It's what we hang on to.

In the pivotal chapter of Joshua 12, as I said, He stops after the battles are over, but before they get their inheritance, and He recounts the battles that they had been in. I made the parallels between the Old Testament warfare, which was a physical warfare, and our spiritual warfare, which is a warfare of the believer we talked about in Ephesians 6 and many, many other places. We, as good soldiers of Jesus Christ, are to endure hardness. We are to fight a good fight. We talked about holding the line last week. Our rearguard action is where we are at and how we are in these last moments of time before Christ comes back, fighting this thing back to back, as we talked about last week.

II. The Call to Stand and Serve

As I told you last week, without a doubt, for me, the greatest blessings of my ministry is to have so many of you who I equate as my mighty men of valor, men and women who stood and stand by my side and fight this good fight that we're in.

Ezekiel 22:30

And I sought for a man among them, that should make up a hedge, and stand in the gap before me for the land, that I should not destroy it: but I found none.

If there was ever a time in American history and American Christianity where God's men and women need to be that and stand up and fill that gap and make up that hedge, it's the time that we are living in. As we looked through Ephesians 6:1-10 last week, I showed you how there are four times we are commanded to take our stand. That's what we need to do today: we need to stand together.

The U.S. Army has a slogan. They come up with different slogans for recruitment purposes. They like to give the idea of an elite force of men and women that have been trained in a military manner. So they'll come up with a phrase like "an army of one." The Marine Corps, on the other hand, they'll come up with their slogans, and they'll talk about "the Marines are looking for a few good men." We see those on posters, we see them wherever we go, at billboards and things like

that. But in reality, those are biblical concepts because you as a child of God should be an army of one. You should be someone that God was looking for a few good men, and you were one of them. Those two things, even though the world uses them, and I think it's great, fundamentally it goes back to Christianity and the Bible. God is looking for a few good men, and we as God's men and women should be an army of one. You ought to be able to hold your own against anything or anybody based on you, the Word of God, and the Holy Spirit of God inside you.

I also must tell you, a part of that blessing is really to watch you apply the training that you get here. If you look around, our church is predominantly a very young church: young couples, young singles. God keeps bringing them in. It's like a magnet, an attraction. I like to watch how God takes you young guys. Obviously, some of you I classify as my "oldies but goodies." You've been around with me forever, and you help me immensely. Our job, our older guys, our job is to help the younger ones along. Even if it's something like pitching a softball or catching or whatever, getting involved, you are directly helping somebody in something, in a spoke of an overall wheel that we are trying to build.

I watch God use you guys. I really do. I watch how you come in as raw recruits. Mel Sabaka used to say over and over again, I heard him say it, "God never sends green troops into combat." That's so true. But I watch you here. I watch you guys come in, and you young gals come in. I watch you couples come in. I watch you come in not knowing anything, but when you are here, after a while, you have an understanding of everything. You're not perfect in your life, and there's going to be ups and downs. We all have those. But you've made the commitment that you're now in God's service, and I watch God take you and mold you and make you. I watch God be able to drop you into every circumstance that He wants. That's what I want for you. I try to build you through Bible Institute, the people ministry, the Thursday night Bible study, even on Sunday morning, and certainly the one-on-one and the people that I put you with. We all have a goal for you, and that is to make you the very best we can for your service as a soldier of Jesus Christ.

I'll use everything at my disposal, everything. I don't mean this in a wrong way, but last week's message, you wouldn't have got that at an average Baptist church. You've got to be weird. You've got to have a different mindset. You've got to think outside the box. I could have got up, and we could have sung patriotic songs: "God Bless America," "The Battle Hymn of the Republic," "Star-Spangled Banner." We could have done all those things. But I wanted to bring a message to you because we're in a warfare. We don't have a lot of time left just to spin our wheels, and we need all the men and women that we can get on board. It's a time where it's all hands on deck.

When I look at you and as you come in, I cruise the crowd for anybody who has even an inkling of leadership ability. My job is to cultivate that. My job is to help you with that. My job is to put people in your world, guys and gals, who will take you with their ministries, whether it's down at Westport or it's over here or over there, and actually invest in you, show you what a great model of a real soldier is, male and female. Then I watch you take off. I watch God use you. We always think about it being some grandiose old thing, but it's not. I look at guys and gals who just become captains of softball teams. You're responsible for those. It teaches you self-discipline. It teaches you to be dependable. Then you've got to do your devotions. It forces you. We have a church here of 200 and some people, but in softball, you have your church there, your team. You

have to operate just like we do on Sunday morning. You teach them the Bible. You're going to find that when you start to work with them, some of them are going to have issues.

You wouldn't think if you're playing softball, somebody would come up and say, "My marriage is a wreck, and I really need help." But you see, it isn't about just a game of softball. It's about the Holy Spirit of God working through you, through an avenue.

III. Starting with What You Have: The Moses Principle

I learned a long time ago the great study back in Exodus 4 with Moses, when God called Moses. Moses was reluctant because he was afraid, just like a lot of you are when you're faced with, when God wants you to do something. He's alibiing back and forth with God. He's going to say, "Who do I say? What do I say to? What if they don't believe me?" He has all the fears that every one of us had at some point in his life. Did you ever see this scenario there? God looked past his fear because He saw the real character that Moses had. So God looked past his fears.

Do you know what God asked him? One simple question. He's there, he's alibiing, "I can't do this, and I can't do that." God didn't listen to any of that. God just asked him one simple question. He asked Moses, "Moses, what do you have in your hand?" Moses said, "Well, I'm a shepherd. I have a shepherd's rod." Do you know what God said? He says, "Okay, let's just start with that." When Moses went to Pharaoh, every miracle he did, he did with that rod. That rod in his hand became the extension of God's power, and that's where it started with him. He didn't know everything about God. He didn't know everything about the Bible. He didn't know everything about ministry. He just believed God, and he started with what he had in his hand.

All you may have in your hand is a ball glove. All you may have in your hand is a wrench. All you have in your hand may be this or that or whatever. God starts with what you've got in your hand. The great lesson out of Moses is the lesson I've told you many, many times. Moses kept telling God, in essence, "God, I'm not able to do what You want me to do." And God told him in essence back, "Moses, I'm not asking you to be able. I'm just asking you to be willing, because if you're willing, Moses, I'm able." God will take whatever you've got in your hand, and He'll start to use you. You'll get a ball team out there, and sure enough, you start going through it, and you teach a devotion, or one of your ladies teach a devotion, and God's Holy Spirit hits a chord in somebody's life. After the ballgame, they're going to come up and say, "Can I talk to you?"

Most churches, when it comes to athletic ministries, here's their philosophy: "Let's have a softball league. Let's have a basketball league. Let's have a volleyball league. And through that, let's figure out how to minister to people." That's the mindset. That's never been my mindset. My mindset is, "Let's have a ministry, and we'll figure out how to play softball." It has to be number one. It starts with you. I'm proud of you. I watch you guys. I watch individualism. I watch what God does with you. I watch as you disciple people. You've brought yourself in line with where they're at. To you, it isn't just a bunch of books.

I had a couple one time that went to another church, and they told me that they wanted to get discipled. So this church, the pastor, assigned somebody to disciple them, and they knocked on their door and showed up and gave them the discipleship lessons and said, "Hey, we're here to

disciple you. Read through these. If you have any questions, give us a call." That's not discipleship. Discipleship really isn't about the lessons. Discipleship is about your investment in somebody's life. It's about you taking the time to get into somebody's world.

IV. God's Opportunities in Adversity

I think of our Lifeline groups. Who would have guessed? Who would have even understood that before the pandemic, we had our prayer groups upstairs, which served a great purpose. But in ministry, God always wants to take you up the next levels. Do you know what our problem is? We refuse to go. We get so stuck in our ways. We think this is the only way it can be done. We think this is all it's got to be, that we miss as God wants to elevate us. As He elevates it, He spreads it out. I'm not saying that God caused the coronavirus so He could wipe out our prayer groups. That's not what I'm saying. But I like that idea.

When we lost that, we were forced. We had a choice. We could either do what a lot of God's people did and hide and do nothing and take the rest of our life off, or we could understand that all this was was another door of opportunity. We had to find a way to get through that door, and we did. Now look at it. You've got people all over the country involved in your group that we never would have had. We've got people coming to the point where now you're impacting people around the country.

I'll tell you, she's probably listening this morning, so I'm not going to say your name. I got a call. I've talked to her several times, and I've supplied some stuff. This lady's got to be in her 70s or 80s, and she's in West Virginia. I got a call from her the other day, and she ordered, she wants me to send her five books of *How to Study the Bible* and five books of *The Charismatic Movement*. This lady's in West Virginia. She's up in years. I'd say she's probably in her late 70s, maybe. I didn't ask. But she's certainly older. Her husband can't get out of the house, so they can't go to church. She can't do anything. She can't get involved on the level that we all get involved in. But do you know what she's doing? She's got a bunch of people that come over her house for a Bible study, and she's buying them these books. She's teaching them these books and going through these books with them. She loves these two books. She says that they're the two greatest books she ever read. She's probably right. I always tell her that, and they've sold well into a million copies too.

My point is this: where will you be when you're in your 70s and your 80s? When your husband's an invalid and he can't get out of the house? Where will you stop? For her, it's just another turn of the corner for opportunities. She's a feisty little gal. She says, "I give them this, but if they don't do this, they don't get whatever she's got for them." Big cookies or something. My point is this: there's a missionary in West Virginia that we didn't even know we had. They're everywhere.

We have a tendency to look at the stupidity of Christianity. We have a tendency to think that it's all that way because it so greatly overshadows everything. But I've got news for you. Anywhere in church history you go, anywhere, anything that you do, any place that you look, you're going to find, no matter how dark it was, you had little guys out there just like her that were holding the line. Yet we have God's people who have their full facilities. They can do everything. They can

go everywhere. And they wouldn't walk across the street to give anybody a Bible. Let me tell you something, that little gal is going to have some combat ribbons on her chest at the judgment seat of Christ. Nobody knows who she is. Nobody knows. She's not in the limelight of anything. She's just doing what God has put in her heart to do. I'm telling you, using what you know will ensure that you grow. It's just that simple.

I look at our Timothy ministry. We started that out of the pandemic too. I just couldn't wait any longer for these young guys and gals to just sit around, and they needed something. So I took you single guys and gals, and that's your ministry now. And you run it. It's an incredible thing. Jim and Kathy did the same thing with a younger kid back there. It's a thing where out of all of this bad stuff, God gave us incredible opportunities that we were smart enough or dumb enough, however you want to look at it. I prefer to say dumb enough to walk through the door. I watch as God uses you guys to get you ready to help me on other levels higher than that.

I think of the, and I was overwhelmed, I think of the rest home ministry. We've only started up in Liberty. Kelly Leach works up there, and they ask about having church services. Charles always heads that up. We've done rest home things before, and it's always one or two people that show up. I couldn't believe it. That place was packed out last Sunday. It makes their week. They love to sing the old songs. We have got ourselves into a situation where these people like preaching. We drop you young guys into it. Mason, you're preaching today, aren't you? Dylan, you're preaching today, right? Good job. I guess Drake preached last week. See, that's what I mean. This is where you guys will learn. This is where I learned. Is Drake here? Is he in the back with the Timothy? Don't tell Drake this, but he was preaching last week, going to town, and a bird crapped on his head. If you're offended by the word "crap," I can use the other term that might help you understand it even a little bit better. But he's out there preaching, and he never missed a beat. He didn't say, "Oh, man." He just kept on going. Obviously, there's risk. If you're really smart, and he's learning, he just kept on going. If I had done it, I'd have just said, "What do you think? I'm not sure what kind of bird was that. It was a pigeon." You've got to make them part of what you're doing.

I started that way. My first sermon I preached was in a rest home, and we did the dumb thing. All these people were sitting, and I was just like that, and they were all right here, and we stupidly passed out suckers to everybody. So while I'm preaching, this old lady in the front row, the sucker comes off her stick, and she's choking on it in front of the deal, and I'm preaching. Two nurses come in. They've got her knee on her knee, and they've got her head back, and all these things, and I just keep on preaching. It's invaluable. I watch God use you. I watch God build you. All you graduates, there's this graduate from school. My advice to you is get into the Timothy ministry. Get into the Timothy ministry. Let us help develop you. If you're going to get on a softball team and guys are volunteering for a devotion, start someplace. Just take and let God use what's in your hand. He took Moses, who couldn't do anything, was fearful of everything, and just started with what was in his hand and turned out one of the greatest leaders Israel ever had, that there's more written about him in the Bible than any other man in the Bible outside the Lord Jesus Christ. That's what God wants to do with you. It's just that simple.

V. Mentorship and Leadership in Ministry

For me, two of the greatest principles in the Bible for training young men and young women would be Proverbs 20:29.

Proverbs 20:29

The glory of young men is their strength: and the beauty of old men is the grey head.

That is so true. I can't do the things that I used to do, so I'm relying on you younger guys to do it. That's the way it's supposed to be. The key to ministry outside of teaching the Bible correctly is delegation. Delegating to people as they grow. I don't have the ability to do it anymore, but my gray head supposedly suggests that I know something. So what you do is that you take what you know, but you can't do what you used to do, so you develop the men and the women that can now do it by giving them the understanding that you have. Most pastors never see that. They get to 60, 65, and they're out. They're going to retire. They're going to play golf the rest of their lives. There's no discharge from this war. My job, until the day I die or have the ability to do it, is to take every young man and young lady that I can and give you everything that I've learned that you can carry on in your strength that I don't have anymore.

Then he says in Proverbs 17:6:

Proverbs 17:6

Children's children are the crown of old men; and the glory of children are their fathers.

That's the relationship we have of father, son, father, daughter in a spiritual sense. You become not only a crown for me at the judgment seat of Christ, but you become a crown for me in life that I'm so proud of you because of what you do. That is simply a man or a woman who has learned some things and then taken what they've learned and investing it in younger ones, the elder men and the elder women, and I don't mean just old in age, spiritually speaking, and you help develop them. You help them develop them to be the best for God they can be. The older people helping them do that, and it doesn't get any better than that.

In the military, the backbone of the military will be the NCOs, non-commissioned officers. This guy here is a three-striper, so he's a buck sergeant. It goes all the way up that you have in a platoon formation where he has three up and three down, three up and four down, and then before he goes into being a master sergeant, which then he's in charge of a whole company. But here's how it works: the NCOs are the ones who get it done. The orders come down from headquarters, and it's the NCOs that make sure it gets done. In combat, it's your NCOs that you'll want to watch. Most of them have been in combat. Most of them understand it. They know where to go, what to step on, where not to step. They'll get you through, and in Christianity, it's you, the NCOs. The men and the women who have been here, and you've developed yourself, you've been part of my ministry, you bought into this crazy organization, and now God will use you to take the young men and the young ladies that come in, put your arm around them, and help them find what they're looking for, which, by the way, was the exact same thing that you were looking for when you came in, and somebody did for you. It's just that simple.

Some of you guys have been with me for 10, 15, 20, 30 years, five years, whatever, and you can handle the load. You really can, and it's what you do over and above. It's incredible that nobody ever sees, just like this little lady down in West Virginia. No fanfare, nobody, no TV cameras, nothing on Facebook about it. It's just somebody behind the scenes doing the job that God has called them to do, just like so many of you do. I see the little things you do for people that nobody ever knows. I see the little things that you do to help people that nobody else would ever see, but that's really what it's all about. In Christianity, you'll have other people. If they've been around the Bible 10, 15, 20, 30 years, and if the Bible was gunpowder, they wouldn't have enough to blow their nose. There's a difference here, and the difference is of what God has done in your life and how God has developed you.

Then you remember I showed you one of the great principles of the Word of God, the unknown in Luke 17:1-10, is you don't get any rewards or inheritance for the things you're supposed to do. It's all over and above, and that's a powerful, sobering principle.

VI. Introduction to John Chapter 5: Defending the Miracles

Today we're going to start John chapter 5. I'm really excited about John chapter 5. I think John chapter 5 is probably one of my favorite stories in the Bible. First off, you need to see this as we get a little recon order here of our chapter. You remember that the book of John lays itself out around four Passovers. I told you that in chapter 1:1 to 2:13, and then 2:13 to 5:1, that's where we're at now, 5:1 to 6:4, 6:4 to 12:1, and then Christ becomes the Passover Lamb on the fourth Passover. This is the natural breakdown of the book of John, and it helps you rightly divide it, and of course, that's the way the Bible lays itself out.

Now let's read John 5:1-9. Now here we go, train your eye as if you're reading this for your first time after all we have been through. Some of you new people here haven't been around to hear me squawk about all this, so just follow along. But you people that have been around, now use your trained eye. Let's see if we can find, I'm going to give you a little key here, let me make sure I get this right. There are five key words or phrases here, and you see if you can pick them out as I read down through here that's going to give us the context of this. Just stay with me.

John 5:1-9

After this there was a feast of the Jews; and Jesus went up to Jerusalem.

Now there is at Jerusalem by the sheep market a pool, which is called in the Hebrew tongue Bethesda, having five porches.

In these lay a great multitude of impotent folk, of blind, halt, withered, waiting for the moving of the water.

For an angel went down at a certain season into the pool, and troubled the water: whosoever then first after the troubling of the water stepped in was made whole of whatsoever disease he had.

And a certain man was there, which had an infirmity thirty and eight years.

When Jesus saw him lie, and knew that he had been now a long time in that case, he saith unto him, Wilt thou be made whole?

The impotent man answered him, Sir, I have no man, when the water is troubled, to put me into the pool: but while I am coming, another steppeth down before me.

Jesus saith unto him, Rise, take up thy bed, and walk.

And immediately the man was made whole, and took up his bed, and walked: and on the same day was the sabbath.

Let's pray. Father, Thank You for today. Thank You for the good folks that are here. I pray Your blessings upon what we're about to look at. I thank You again for my mighty men of valor, the men and women who stand with me in ministry, who are by my side, who pay the price as I do, and together we'll stand not only here, but thank God, we'll stand at the judgment seat of Christ. Give us those ribbons, those decorations of our combat service in this life, and we'll thank You and praise You in Jesus' name. Amen.

As I said, this is, without a doubt, one of my favorite stories for a number of reasons. Let me start by saying that this is one of the greatest stories in all of the Bible. So you might know, out of the gate, scholarship will tell you it didn't happen and it shouldn't be in your Bible. That's just where you need to know where this thing is going right out of the gate. They'll tell you that this is, in their big twenty-four dollar words, a spurious passage, added. It's not really part of the Bible, that someplace somebody added this story to this, and it really didn't happen, and it really should not be in your Bible.

This crowd will always have a problem with the miracles that the Lord does and the miracles in the Bible. You will find that it's not just this passage. You will find that they will tell you that the flood of Noah was not a universal flood that flooded out the world, but a local flood. They will tell you that in the Red Sea crossing in Exodus, when the nation of Israel went across the Red Sea, and the Bible says that God pulled the waters back and the land was dry and they walked across, they will tell you that that isn't true, that that is a mistranslation, that it was not the Red Sea but the Sea of Reeds. They will take away the miracle of the Red Sea crossing by telling you that the Sea of Reeds, just add another "e" to it, was only about seven inches, six inches deep, so that's how they got across. But yet God is the God of fixing idiots like that. So if they want to take away the miracle of God actually cutting the Red Sea, it was probably three, four hundred feet deep, and want to make it the Sea of Reeds and take away the miracle, it's still a miracle because if you read your Bible, then all of Noah's army drowned in seven inches of water. You don't get around God; He fixes it.

They'll tell you that God didn't destroy Sodom and Gomorrah the way the Bible says. The Bible says that He destroyed it because of the act of homosexuality and all the ungodliness that was going there, and they will tell you that it was not destroyed because of that, but they destroyed Sodom and Gomorrah because of a lack of hospitality, and that they were not very hospitable to people. This is what you get. A lot of people that like to be part of that world today or support

that world, they like the idea of it not being because of homosexuality or lesbianism, because that's just the way the human mind goes.

Creation is another one. They don't believe in creation. They've come up with the idea of evolution or theistic evolution or intelligent design, anything but just what the Bible says and the miracles. We talked a couple of Thursday nights ago about the Joshua 10, the missing day in Joshua, 24 hours, or not all 24 hours there, but under Kings and Chronicles you find the other 20 minutes. But whether you're actually, the Bible says, stood still, and yet again, they want to take away that. I don't know if the guy that called in that night and asked the question, I'm not saying that he is one of those, but it's typical that the question was, "Well, if God really did that, there would be no gravity, and everybody would just float off the earth." Again, anything but just understanding that if God did stop the earth from rotating, He's got an anti-gravity switch right next to His photon blaster. But it's that thing where we focus on what we think couldn't be because we're so intellectual that we just miss the miracle. Let me tell you something, if He's got enough to stop the earth from rotating, He's got enough to keep you from floating, I promise you, unless you're into drug abuse, and then you're floating all the time sometimes, but that's okay too.

Elisha going up in a chariot, everybody says, "Well, that was a UFO." No, not yet, but it was a chariot, and he goes up into a chariot, and you have all the deals with that. The Star of Bethlehem is another one, and they don't get anything about the Bible. "Star, Wonder, Star Bright, Star of Bethlehem," and so they get that all out of whack, and they don't ever see what that really was, and the Bible clearly lays it all out for you. I'll tell you another one, the worst one or the best one, whatever. The resurrection of Christ. The resurrection of Christ coming out of the grave was a miracle, amen. But you see, the liberal crowd don't want to believe that, so they came up with a swoon theory. Do you know what the swoon theory is? That he passed out on the cross because of the pain, and then when they put him in the cave, it was cool in the cave. I'll take you down when we go down to Branson, I'll take you down to Marvel Cave and show you how cool it is down there. It was cool down in the cave, and so he's laying on that deal in the cool cave, revived him, and he just got up and called AAA, and they moved the rock out of the way, and here he is. Anything but the true miracle of God. That's what they do.

When it comes to the Bible, anyhow, when it comes to being a doctor, being a lawyer, or being a nurse, or whatever, higher education is vital. Don't misunderstand me. I don't want some doctor cutting on me that looked like Billy Bob at the gas station, said, "Oh, he's wanted to be a technician." I'm not what I'm looking for. But when it comes to your Bible, higher education and all that it'll do will be to destroy your faith in the Word of God, and they'll take away the miracles in the Bible. That's where they'll start. Then they'll set themselves up as the final authority.

Just so you know, they will tell you that verse four here it is, and what they do is they take verse three and they take five words out, then they come to verse four and they take 27 words out, and they tell you that verse four is not found in the more reliable, accurate Greek text, so the story could not be true, and it had to be added because the manuscripts that we are following now, it's not in there, so obviously it's a spurious passage that needs to be taken out, or you need to be told in a footnote not to pay any attention to it because angels never did anything like this throughout the rest of the Bible. Now I've got to give you that, there's no other place in the Bible where you

find angels doing exactly what they did here, but I'm not sure what your point is. I realized that Ezekiel 14 says there are some places in the Bible that God does things out of whack and out of timing just so if you want a lie to believe, He could have one. He told you that in Ezekiel 14, God will answer you after the multitude of your hearts, and if you want a lie to believe, He'll give you one.

1 Corinthians 1:19

For it is written, I will destroy the wisdom of the wise, and will bring to nothing the understanding of the prudent.

So God will put something in there that never happened before, and because a guy has an axe to grind against the Word of God and he wants to be the final authority, then he'll tell you it shouldn't be there. Of course, that's because what they tell you is, it's also us who understand manuscript evidence a little bit, that's because verse four is only found in Vaticanus and Sinaiticus, two corrupt manuscripts from which all the new Bibles come from today, which has changed from the Greek text of the King James Bible in over 60, 70, 80,000 places. I might just add, the only Greek manuscript that this entire verse is found in the way you have in your Bible is the Textus Receptus, from which your King James Bible comes from. So Origen, back in the day, didn't like this story. He didn't believe the miracles either, so he cut it out. So you have a Bible today that comes off those manuscripts, which will be everything other than a King James Bible. You're going to have one who's going to tell you what shouldn't be in there. So we can immediately dismiss scholarship and throw them out for what they are: tools of Satan in the Bible sense.

With the devil's little helpers out of the way, we will just follow the God-honored text, use the English God has given us, and we'll follow the keywords. When it comes to serious Bible study, nothing will be more true than Isaiah 29:12-16, where it tells us that when God was dealing with the people back in the Old Testament, they honored God with their lips, but their heart was far from Him. Then God, because of that, hid understanding from them that they couldn't get it, and that the wisdom of the wise shall perish, and that their words, because they reject the Word of God, are in darkness.

Job 5:13

He taketh the wise in their own craftiness: and the counsel of the froward is carried headlong.

That's what He does.

VII. Unpacking John 5: Key Words and Doctrinal Application

Now let's look at these five things. Let's see how you did. If I was reading this for the first time, coming down through here, and I'm just Billy Bob Bible reader, and I'm trying to put my Bible together, and I heard this crazy fanatic on Sunday morning and Thursday night give me the Bible is all built around keywords, it gave me a whole list of those keywords, and I was dumb enough to write a list myself, and now I'm reading my Bible, I'm checking for these words.

The first thing I would find is in verse two, here's a story, and yet it's a story that's going to revolve around a sheep market. I would remember back in Nehemiah 3:1 that that's where the sheep gate is, where they brought the sacrificial sheep in. So this marketplace here is where they went to buy sheep to make a sacrifice. So the first thing I'm going to see about this story, it's built around a sheep market, in a sheep gate, and a sacrificial sheep.

The second thing I would read in verse two, it's at a pool of water called Bethesda. Bethesda means mercy. So we have a sacrifice of a sheep connected with mercy and water, which is a type of Holy Spirit of God in the Bible.

Then the next thing I would catch in verse five is the story is about a certain man. We have talked about this plenty over the last couple of weeks or months, and we know that when you find this phrase, "the certain man" is always going to be a reference to the nation of Israel. You will find that this man has an infirmity that's another keyword for 38 years, and we'll talk about that here in just a little bit.

Then we find the word "whole." I've told you that over the last couple of weeks, I showed you how that in Acts 2 is the definitive chapter. You find it in verse four and again in verse six, and this man desires to be made whole. I showed you how that's always a reference to Israel being made whole at the Second Coming of Christ.

Finally, the kicker for me, if I didn't catch any of these things, would be the fact that all this takes place on the Sabbath. If you go back to Genesis, you'll find that when God created everything in six days and rested on the seventh, which is the Sabbath, you'll find on the first day He says, "the evening and the morning," the second day, "the evening and the morning," the third day, "the evening and the morning," the fourth day, "the evening and the morning," the fifth day, "the evening and the morning," the sixth day, "in the morning." But when He gets to the seventh day, which is the Sabbath, He doesn't say "the evening and the morning." Do you know why? Because that's a picture of the millennial Sabbath where it goes into God's eternal day. So these five things, and see how easy that was? That's called learning your Bible by association, by just five key words or phrases: sheep market, mercy, Bethesda pool of water, a certain man with an infirmity, made whole on the Sabbath, picture of the millennium.

All this is a picture at this point of Israel's made whole with the Second Coming of Christ in a story about a certain man that represents the nation of Israel. I have not used one Greek word, one Hebrew word, no spurious passage, and certainly no scholarship, just a plain Bible in English laying itself out to you as you study to show yourself approved.

2 Timothy 2:15

Study to shew thyself approved unto God, a workman that needeth not to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth.

The key to the Scripture, whether you know it or not, is God opening up your understanding, not your education. The key to you learning your Bible is God.

Luke 24:45

Then opened he their understanding, that they might understand the scriptures.

If God Himself, through His Holy Spirit, in your relationship with Him in that book, doesn't open up your understanding, I don't care how many PhDs you get. You see, the key is a common man with a common Bible given in a common language, English, giving man his common sense by putting him in his right mind, the mind of Christ, the Word of God.

Now let's look at this a little bit closer here before we get into the punch time. What you've got here, doctor, and remember in your Bible, when I try to tell you to lay out your Bible, I always tell you, using the keywords and what I've taught you here, find the doctrinal application first. I used to think that was the hardest; it's not. It's really the easiest once you use the rules that we use here. Once you find out what the doctrinal application, and remember now, all Scripture is given by inspiration, is profitable, and the first thing it's profitable is doctrine. You take any passage and get what the doctrinal application is, usually to Israel, the rest of it becomes a piece of cake, but you've got to start there, and you've got to work at getting to that point.

This story is a picture of Israel's spiritual condition, not the First Coming of Christ. Four things: they're impotent, they're blind, they're halt, and they're withered. These four infirmities are exactly what Israel has when you break them down, which we will do here in just a little bit. At the Second Coming of Christ, they're going to get healed. This will be Romans 9 and Romans 11, by the moving of the water. See, that's what this picture is. The moving of the water is a picture of Christ coming back, and you find the moving of the water as the Holy Spirit of God in Ezekiel 47.

Now verse four, our verse in question here by the devil and his crowd, where you were told that angels would never do this, and yet again in the book of Acts, and this is another book that these birds will never get, and we are going to start the book of Acts the next time in Bible Institute, and if you want to learn the book of Acts, which is the key book of the Bible as far as I'm concerned in the New Testament, you're going to get a checker. We're not going to leave any stone unturned in that thing. But in the book of Acts, we are told in Acts 7:53:

Acts 7:53

Who have received the law by the disposition of angels, and have not kept it.

There you are. They wouldn't know what that verse was if their life depended on it. God used the angels in giving them the truth, and the reason why He did what He did in John 5, we'll get there in a second.

Along with this, you'll realize and understand that this takes place at the Passover. This feast is the Passover here, and the Passover came into being all the way back in Exodus 12. Remember when God brought them out of Egypt, and they had to put the blood on the door and kill a lamb, which is a picture of Christ dying for you and for me? The blood on the door, it's a picture of you getting saved and putting your whole family under the blood and getting them saved. It's about their exodus from Egypt, and they are told in Exodus 12:14 that this is their Memorial Day. Last week we had ours, Israel's Memorial Day, and He tells them, "This is a memorial for you," is the Passover. So we're seeing here that this all takes place and represents something that Israel

should understand that is an event that takes place at a time when they should memorialize God bringing them out of Egypt, starting their new year with them. Before that, it was the Feast of Tabernacles, and now God bringing them out of Egypt under the blood. So we've got a sheep gate, we've got a sacrifice, we've got mercy, we've got water that needs to be moved. It's all right here.

Now let me show you how God fixes the educated mind. You've got to love this. Look at verse five. In verse five, this guy is 38 years old. We always talk about Israel wandering for 40 years, and that is true, but that's not how God counted the time. So if you would go back to Deuteronomy 2:14, you are told that God didn't count two years, and that they actually wandered, yes, you heard it first here, 38 years. This man, this certain man, is a picture of the nation of Israel that has been wandering from God and has all these infirmities and needs a moving of water to be made whole. The real lesson here that a scholar could never get to, and most of God's people couldn't either, I mean, back then and now, Pharisee is a Pharisee.

What is this story, bottom line? What is God trying to show them and show us? I know all the pieces of it, but let's get to the bottom line here. This story will illustrate the truth of the book of Hebrews. I try to tell you this all the time that the key to the Bible, if you get up to a level, the key to the Bible will be understanding that the books of the Bible go together and flow together. They'll make a constant thing where the theme will carry itself through, and the flow of the Word of God will never ebb; it'll keep on going.

This story will illustrate the truth of the book of Hebrews. We just finished the book of Hebrews in Bible Institute, and for those of you that came to it, you now should have a really good understanding of that book, but most of God's people do not. I told you that the book of Hebrews lays itself out by comparison, showing you that the Old Testament law was a failure and that Christ and the New Testament is a better way to do it. What this story does for us, it shows us what the book of Hebrews told us: that the Old Testament way failed because only one man could get in the water at a time, and that's a picture of the Old Testament law that was limited. So when you get to the book of Hebrews, and I told you this, you've got 13 chapters in Hebrews, and in every chapter, you find the keyword 14 times, "better." In Hebrews, he compares the Old Testament priesthood, the Old Testament sacrifices, the Old Testament everything, to a better way, which is Christ. So this story, in its fundamental bottom line layout, it shows that the Old Testament law had limits where only one man could get in. Under the New Testament and also the millennium, when Christ comes back, everybody gets in. It shows us that the Old Testament was a failure in that sense. It was only a temporary thing that could cover somebody's sin but could not pay for somebody's sin, and that's why Christ had to make the one eternal, effectual sacrifice, dying for you and me at the cross. That's why in the Old Testament, when they did die, they died in God's grace, but they couldn't go to heaven because the blood hadn't been shed, so they went to Abraham's bosom, and that's why when Christ died, He went down and led captivity captive and took them all up with Him. This story illustrates for us the failure of the Old Testament law. It was limited. In this story, only one man could get in, and he had to be first. In the New Testament, everybody gets in. So the book of Hebrews will be a comparison of that, and

the key word there is "better." See how easy that was? That wasn't complicated. Still no Greek lexicon, no Hebrew lexicon.

VIII. Inspirational Application: The Laodicean Church

Now let's look at our text from an inspirational application for you and for me. Historically and doctrinally, we know now that this will be the spiritual condition of the nation of Israel. In our inspirational application, this will be a picture of the Laodicean church period. Again, the parallels: God's people today laying around doing nothing with all kinds of infirmities, just waiting for the moving of the water, the Holy Spirit of God, waiting for God to do something, but He won't do it because just as the nation of Israel in the Old Testament, the church today, they both dump the greatest thing that is the power of their life, and that is the Word of God. Today, in a national sense of Christianity, there's no moving of the water. There's no more revival. America hasn't seen a true God-honored Holy Spirit revival for 50 to 60 years. When you go back in church history, I should say American history with the church, you're going to find that there's seven great awakenings, starting all the way back at the beginning of our country in the 1700s with Whitfield and Jonathan Edwards, and it moves across this country like waves of water right up till God said, "That's enough. You lose the book, you lose the water." So this is where we're at today.

God's people are just waiting for God to do something. God's people have the most infirmities today that you could ever believe. They're just laying around doing nothing. We saw it a couple of weeks ago in the book of Colossians how that it was all laid out. Then a very familiar passage by now is Revelation 3:14-22.

Revelation 3:14-22

And unto the angel of the church of the Laodiceans write; These things saith the Amen, the faithful and true witness, the beginning of the creation of God;

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

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

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

I counsel thee to buy of me gold tried in the fire, that thou mayest be rich; and white raiment, that thou mayest be clothed, and that the shame of thy nakedness do not appear; and anoint thine eyes with eyesalve, that thou mayest see.

As many as I love, I rebuke and chasten: be zealous therefore, and repent.

Behold, I stand at the door, and knock: if any man hear my voice, and open the door, I will come in to him, and will sup with him, and he with me.

To him that overcometh will I grant to sit with me in my throne, even as I also overcame, and am set down with my Father in his throne.

He that hath an ear, let him hear what the Spirit saith unto the churches.

You've heard me preach, say it a thousand times, the church of the open door versus the church of the closed door, and we are a church of the open door. We will look for every opportunity.

When you look down here, we again see the spiritual condition of the church, just like Israel's condition, and he says in verse 17, that it's wretched, miserable, poor, and blind, and naked. Now let's look at our guy here in John 5 and look at the four major infirmities that he has, and they're the ones we have.

1. Impotent means powerless, and the only power we have as a child of God will be from the supernatural book that God gave us. That's where the power comes from. You don't have the book, you don't have any power. So what you've got to do then is you've got to create an illusion of power by bringing in all the things that are going to tickle people's ears and make them happy and send them out making them think that they had a great spiritual experience. Let me tell you something, if you leave here feeling good this morning, you didn't have a very good spiritual meeting with the Lord, because you're not bad people, you're great people, and I love you to death, but are we going to kid ourselves and say we all don't have something we've got to work on? We all do. It's a thing where that's the conclusion we have to come to here. Impotent, in reality, no working power. The church today has no power. Christianity today has no power. Power comes from the Spirit of God. The Spirit of God comes from the Word of God. The Word in a working relationship with us through the Word of God, that gives you the power. When I train you to be like we talked about early on, I don't have any ability to train you on my own. I may have some understanding on how to take somebody and give them what they need, but the power isn't what I have. The power comes from the Word of God that we use that gets into your world, and that's how that's all. So they're impotent, they're powerless.
2. The next thing he says is that they're blind. That's spiritually blind. They're like the scholars. They're blind to the truth. They can't see John 5 because they've been blinded by the god of this world. So when they come up against something they don't understand, God forbid that they could be wrong in the Bible, right? They have to redirect their thinking. Oh, God forbid that the Bible has to be wrong because I'm so smart. Boy, that's a dangerous position to be in. I'm much rather like my position: the Bible is great because I'm so stupid. That fits a lot better for me. Shut up, you didn't have to say that. You should have said, "Bob, that's not true." You should have said that. Now don't say it. Now don't say it. Talk to your girlfriend later. I'm going to tell her. Spiritually blind. We saw back in Matthew 13:44, Isaiah 54:8, Isaiah 45:60, they're all over the place where God, once Israel rejected God and His Word, then God hid Himself from Israel. Those verses will tell you that, and God has hid Himself from the church today, and God has hid Himself from the wise and the prudent men because they reject the Word of God, and as I've said many, many times, their minds are blinded by the god of this world.
3. Then the third thing he says is that they're halt. "Halt" will be in your legs. That means you have no walk with God. So not only do we have no power with God, not only are we blind to the things of God, now we find out that we have no real walk with God. I got looking at this,

and I got thinking about it, and the great place to go for this is back in 2 Chronicles 16:12, and that's the story of Asa. 2 Chronicles 16:12

And Asa in the thirty and ninth year of his reign was diseased in his feet, until his disease was exceeding great: yet in his disease he sought not to the LORD, but to the physicians. The Bible says back there that Asa got a disease in his feet, and instead of going to God with his disease, he went to the physicians of his day, and he wound up dying. What that is a picture of is that if you have a spiritual problem, there is no psychologist, no therapist, there's no psychiatrist on this planet that's going to fix your problem. You're going to have to get that with God and the Word of God and get the principles in your life, and you're going to have to change something. I tell people all the time, do you know why you can't solve the problems in your life? Because you can't solve the problems in your life with the same screwed up thinking that caused the problems in your life. You have to get a new mindset. You have to start looking at things differently.

Asa, he got a disease in his feet. Instead of crying to God and saying, "God, give mercy on me," he didn't. He went to his psychologist. He went to his psychiatrist. He went to Dr. Fine, Dr. Howard, Dr. Fine, and he died. That's usually where the story stops, but you know me, I'm never satisfied with where the story stops. I wanted to find out why he got a disease in his feet. So I go back a chapter, and I just, peeling around, my video games broke, I was forced to get into that old Bible channel. The TV went off, the only programs on there was the Hallmark Channel, I wasn't watching that, so I got into my Bible, and I got going back to the chapter before in 2 Chronicles 15, because I wanted to find out there has to be some connection here that I can learn from.

I found out that he made a great proclamation going to clean out all the false gods in Israel, and here's what he said: "If I find anybody who has false images or false gods, we're going to kill him." That sounded really good. But then somebody told him, "Your mama has a whole bunch of them." His mom had them. So what he did was, he goes over to his mother, doesn't kill her, takes all of her images, burns them, puts them on the ground, stamps them with his feet. So when you disobey God, you want to find back where it all started with him. It started with him not obeying the Word of God or wiping out all the people that were doing the witchcraft, but he pretended it wasn't. It's true with his mom, and he stamped it with his feet, and he got a disease in his feet. Do you know what that tells me? This is going to be hard for some of you, but it's the truth, and I love you. Sometimes your own family will be a stumbling block to you. Please, in the world that we live in today, if I would have said, if I would say he should have killed her, I can just hear it now. So I'm not saying he should have killed his mother, but I wished I had. It's a thing where that's just the example. When I looked at that disease in his feet, I wasn't just satisfied with that. I wanted to find out the root cause. Do you know why? Because in every one of our problems, mine, yours, and everybody else's, don't tell me what your problem is, let's go back and find the root of that problem. That's where we've got to start. When you do it that way, you'll find out that he disobeyed what the Word of God told him to do with the false prophets and all the idolaters, and then he took those things instead of doing what he should have done. He just melted them down, put them on the ground, and stomped them, and it was through that stomping of his feet that he got the disease. Maybe there was something in that metal, that's endless, you could go with

that all day long, or maybe it was just God saying, "You know what? You don't do what's right. You stomp those with your feet. I'm going to show you something about your feet," and he died. Incredible stuff.

4. Then withered. Withered is no work for God, and God's people today are certainly just laying around waiting for God to do something. It's all talk and no real work because God's people have withered, they're dried up. Christianity should be, we know we're in a field, and the field is the world, but Christianity ought to be a vineyard of trees in that field that are bearing fruit, and wherever we go in this world, because we're God's vineyard and we're God's tree, we bear fruit. But instead, the field of Christianity today has become a disease-ridden vineyard, and God's people are withered. It's a thing where, as Song of Solomon 2:15 says: Song of Solomon 2:15

Take us the foxes, the little foxes, that spoil the vines: for our vines have tender grapes. Wherever our major problems are, and I'm not saying you have any, but some of you came in with major problems, just like Asa, he had a major problem with his feet. But it says, "the little foxes have spoiled the vine." You didn't start out having major malfunction problems. You started out with little problems that you didn't take care of, and they compounded, and they grew into big ones.

IX. Learning from Israel's Examples and Admonitions

Now you can see that this will be one of the most powerful stories in the Bible. That's why I like it. Also, how God will hide the truth of the Word of God from anybody who won't keep His Word, and I like that too. The incredible parallels between the church and the nation of Israel and our failures to learn from them through the history of God and what He's doing, and through the mistakes that they've made with God. You watch the nation of Israel and their walk with God in the Old Testament, they made some terrible mistakes, but we fail to learn from that. Paul tells us in 1 Corinthians 10:1-12, and for me, it's the key passage for all of us.

1 Corinthians 10:1-12

Moreover, brethren, I would not that ye should be ignorant, how that all our fathers were under the cloud, and all passed through the sea;

And were all baptized unto Moses in the cloud and in the sea;

And did all eat the same spiritual meat;

And did all drink the same spiritual drink: for they drank of that spiritual Rock that followed them: and that Rock was Christ.

But with many of them God was not well pleased: for they were overthrown in the wilderness.

Now these things were our examples, to the intent we should not lust after evil things, as they also lusted.

Neither be ye idolaters, as were some of them; as it is written, The people sat down to eat and drink, and rose up to play.

Neither let us commit fornication, as some of them committed, and fell in one day three and twenty thousand.

Neither let us tempt Christ, as some of them also tempted, and were destroyed of serpents.

Neither murmur ye, as some of them also murmured, and were destroyed of the destroyer.

Now all these things happened unto them for ensamples: and they are written for our admonition, upon whom the ends of the world are come.

Wherefore let him that thinketh he standeth take heed lest he fall.

If you're going to stand, then you need to understand this. This is one of the best places in all the Bible that show you how you put the Old Testament stories into the New Testament life principles. He says in verse six, "all this is for an example," and then he says in verse 11, "all this for ensample." There's a difference between an example and an ensample. An example is something that you do, and an ensample is something you are. He's saying you learn from them, and he says then they happened to them that were given to us for our admonition. What they went through, we are to learn from. We are to look at the examples and look at the ensamples, and then therefore our admonition. It's a learning experience. It's a course correction in life based on the mistakes of somebody else, and it's definitely for us on whom the end of the world is about to unfold. That's you and me. Then verse 12 he says, "and to us take heed therefore, or you'll deceive yourself and you'll fall." Welcome to where we're at in Laodicean Christianity.

Clearly, you can see now what a powerful story this is, and also how it fits going not only into Israel at the Second Coming, but also to you and me, or Israel at the First Coming, excuse me, but also for you and me in the church at the Second Coming. What a parallel, the examples and the ensamples and the admonition that comes along with it. Now for sure you understand why scholarship, Satan's tool. At the First Coming of Christ, it was the scribes and the Pharisees and the Sadducees that wanted to destroy every miracle that He did, and also at the Second Coming, it'll be our scribes and Pharisees and Sadducees that want to take away the miracles of the Bible of what He did. The God of the Bible is replaced by the god of education, the god of human mind, the god of human spirit, and men telling you that places like John 5, God simply made a mistake. When God put His Bible together, He was off that day when John 5 was put together, and so don't worry about it, God, even though You made a mistake in John 5, I'll fix the mistake for You. It doesn't even sound anywhere right. Men telling you that places like John 5, God simply didn't know what He was doing and allowed a place in your Bible that never should be, "but I'll take care of it. I'll fix God's mistakes." Let me tell you something, we don't need to fix God's mistakes. We need Him to fix our mistakes.

The only way that happens is getting into a church that teaches the Bible, getting the Bible through the teaching in that church, and doing what so many of these young men and young ladies and moms and dads and young couples have allowed God to do in their life: build you, make you, mold you, taking the structure for the New Testament, a church, a church of an open door, who's always looking for opportunities, but yet always training you to be dropped into

those opportunities, and that's where it all works. We'll hold up there. Thank you for being here, and we'll keep you posted on all the fun things that were going on.