

I. Review of Christ's Deity and God's Sovereign Plan

I have some good news and bad news. The good news is this will be the last week in John chapter 5. The bad news is I have no idea anything about chapter 6. Last week we dedicated our time to what, without question, is the single greatest doctrine in all the Bible: the deity of the Lord Jesus Christ. Christ being the Son of God. That term, clearly defined in the Bible, means that He is very God Himself.

The devil hates that concept and wants that title for himself. We took a lot of time to look at the different aspects of that, and we saw that all down through history, that's exactly what the devil has done. He has used churches, he's used his men, nations, kings, queens, and popes to steal that title for himself. In most cases, it really wasn't a question of stealing it; it was offered up to him fairly easily through history.

We need to understand God's original plan, which we've talked about many, many times. We know that God put Adam and Eve down in the garden, and God gives Adam a commission to be fulfilled: "Be fruitful, multiply, and replenish the earth." We know from our Bible studies over the last months and years what that plan really was and what that purpose was.

We also know that, as I've said many, many times, the Bible, as all history, is simply broken down into God moving to accomplish something and then the devil moving to stop what He's doing. If you don't really understand what's happening with God and the Bible and how it all plays out, it's easy to get the idea that the devil keeps getting one up on God, and God is trying to run around trying to fix what the devil does. That's not the case. God has a plan.

And we know that all things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are the called according to his purpose.

That is a great promise to you and to me that no matter what happens in your life, good or bad, God is going to use it. All things work together for good. Of course, that's also true with what God is doing; it all works out to His good. God is never caught unaware. God is never caught, so to speak, where the angels run in and say, "You ain't going to believe this, but the devil is doing this," and God says, "Oh man, I didn't know that." No, that's not the way it works. He has a sovereign plan. When the devil tries to stop it, God will always have another plan behind that plan to accomplish something from what the devil did. Certainly, Adam and Eve is a great study on that.

II. Man's Inability and God's Solution

What we see is that when God put Adam and Eve down in the garden, the devil comes in Genesis 3, and it ends in failure. It ends in disaster. As I said, somebody would say, "Wow, God didn't see that one coming." No, He saw it coming. He knew exactly what was going to happen. God has a plan within His own plan.

From that point on, God gives that crown to the kingdom of heaven, passes it on from men up to Israel when it becomes a nation. Noah gets it, and then Abraham gets it, Jacob gets it, right on down the line. But the devil wants that crown. Every time God gave that crown to a patriarch in the Old Testament, the devil came in and took it back. Again, somebody looks at that and says, "Well, there's God. He just can't get ahead of the devil." No, He's way ahead of the devil.

The bottom line is simply this: it goes from man to man to man, and then to Israel in Exodus 12, First Samuel, once they get established, and they forfeit it. Then the devil has it, and he has it up to the first coming of Christ. Somebody would say, "Well, what is all going on here?" No, what God is doing is this: God is giving everybody who begins to understand what He's doing. He leaves no question to man's inability to keep what God gives him.

I don't care who you are, the greatest, wisest, godliest, holiest man that ever walked through the pages of the Bible, the devil found out their weakness and he got them. So we have from Genesis 3 all the way up to the first coming of Christ where God is proving to anybody with any ounce of intelligence that God's creation, man, cannot hold on to what God gives him.

So, here it comes. It's so simple. God came down and did it Himself. By doing that, He ensured forever that there would never be another failure. You and I fail every day, don't we? But you know where we don't fail? We don't fail in our salvation. You know why? If these guys who go around teaching you can lose your salvation, let me tell you something: if it was possible for you to lose it, that's exactly what you would do. Who do you think you are? The wisest, godliest men in the Bible, they couldn't hold on to it.

If you could actually lose your salvation, and you'd walk around life holding on to it, just saying, "I'm not going to look at anything so I don't lose it. I'm not going to think anything so I don't think something bad. I'm not going to say anything so I don't lose it. I'm just going to..." You'd be on your deathbed with 10 seconds to go, and some thought would fly through your head, and you'd be in hell. You can't keep it yourself. That's what He did. He showed you all through the Bible: God's creation, man, cannot keep what God has given him.

So at the first coming of Christ, God said, "I'll fix it. I'll ensure that it'll never fail again. I'll ensure that nobody will ever drop that crown." So God was manifested in the flesh. He came down in the fashion of a man, Philippians 2:8, and He pays the price for our sin debt, ensuring forever that God's plan will never fail.

The Bible is a great book. My mom asked me one time about the Bible, "How come it's got all the rotten, dirty things in the Bible that you see in the world?" She asked me why God put all that in the Bible. I told her, "Because God wants to show us the depravity of man." Based on man's ungodliness, it illustrates His godliness and the fact that we fail. Adam failed, Noah failed, Abraham failed, Jacob failed, Isaac failed, Joseph failed; they all failed. Jesus Christ did not fail. God manifested in the flesh.

This is laid out so clearly in the book of Romans chapter 5. I've told you before how the book of Romans is a great book.

- Romans 1 talks about how the Gentiles are in a terrible predicament and going to die and go to hell.
- Romans 2 tells us how the Jews are in the same mess, just by a different route, but they're in the same mess and they're going to die and go to hell.
- Romans 4 shows us that getting the law and following your conscience will not solve the problem that either the Gentiles have or the Jews have.

Then we come to Romans 5. Romans 5 tells us why God's answer to it is the only answer. He says in Romans 5, starting in verse 8, coming down through verse 15, here's what he says:

But God commendeth his love toward us, in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us.

Much more then, being now justified by his blood, we shall be saved from wrath through him.

For if, when we were enemies, we were reconciled to God by the death of his Son, much more, being reconciled, we shall be saved by his life.

And not only so, but we also joy in God through our Lord Jesus Christ, by whom we have now received the atonement.

Wherefore, as by one man sin entered into the world, and death by sin; and so death passed upon all men, for that all have sinned:

(For until the law sin was in the world: but sin is not imputed when there is no law.

Nevertheless death reigned from Adam to Moses, even over them that had not sinned after the similitude of Adam's transgression, who is the figure of him that was to come.

But not as the offence, so also is the free gift. For if through the offence of one many be dead, much more the grace of God, and the gift by grace, which is by one man, Jesus Christ, hath abounded unto many.

What he's saying there is simply that we were once God's enemies before we got saved. What Christ did when He came down was He reconciled. He brought the two opposing parties together—God and me and you—through His sacrifice on Calvary's cross. Not only so, but we also joy in God through our Lord Jesus Christ, by whom we have now received the atonement.

Because of everything He said so far, as by one man, Adam, sin entered into the world, and death by sin, so death passed upon all men, you and me, for all have sinned. For until the law, sin was in the world, but sin is not imputed where there is no law. Nevertheless, death reigned from Adam to Moses, even over them that had not sinned after the similitude of Adam's transgression, who is the figure of Him that was to come. But not as the offense, so also is the free gift. For if through the offense of one, many be made dead, there's Adam, much more the grace of God and the gift by grace, which is by one man, Jesus Christ, has abounded unto many.

He just said what I just said. Adam destroyed it. The devil thought he had it beat. The devil thought he was going to defeat every man. Until the cross of Calvary, when Jesus Christ comes

out of that tomb, He has the keys of death and hell. Because of that, we never have to die again, in a spiritual sense of death, if you trust the Lord Jesus Christ as your personal Savior. So the deity of Christ is an absolute doctrine for our salvation. Without that doctrine, there can be no salvation. No one can be saved.

Verse 12 says, "By one man, sin came into the world," and by one man it was taken from the world by the God-man, the Lord Jesus Christ, God Himself, God manifested in the flesh.

III. The Root of Heresy and Biblical Authority

I showed you the root source of all heresy today. I told you there were two types of heresies:

1. Heresy that's in the body of Christ that saved people get caught up in.
2. Heresy without the body of Christ that unsaved people teach that will send you to hell.

All this is found in the Babylon Mystery religion, the mother of harlots. I showed you how all down through church history, God broke it down into seven periods. In each church period, each one of these churches had a main fundamental heretical doctrine that came up that tried to be infiltrated into the church that the true church had to deal with. By doing that, through the course of history, it formed for us what we believe today to be true, based on not only what the Bible says, but the true biblical church, the true biblical line.

We know now that Babylon Mystery religion, the mother of harlots, without a doubt, will be the greatest enemy that Christianity or the world has ever seen. We started last Saturday morning in the book of Acts. I told everybody how important the book of Acts was, that if you're ever going to figure out the New Testament, you have got to have the book of Acts and understand what's going on there. I basically told them, among other things, that one of the easy ways to, and there's a number of easy outlines that walk you through Acts. One of them is the natural breakdown that I actually gave you that morning.

I also told you that the book of Acts is built around three cities. If you can see these three cities, not only in the book of Acts, but from a historical standpoint, it'll catapult you into the twenty-first century and show you that these are the same three cities that you need to understand today.

➤ The first city I told them about was the church at Antioch, or Antioch in Syria. Antioch is where the true biblical line begins. If you have a King James Bible in your lap this morning, you could trace that book back to Antioch in Syria. In fact, during the Dark Ages, they only had two Bibles that all the Bible believers had. One of them was the Old Latin, and the other one was the Old Syriac, which is Syriac, Syria, which came out of Antioch. That was the true biblical line. It always has been. When we get into church history, ten, twelve years from now, I will make sure you get that down. So the true biblical line starts in Antioch, and you can trace it right up to our church here at Old Path Baptist Church.

➤ The next city you want to look at is Alexandria, Egypt. Where Antioch is the source of Bible truth, Alexandria, Egypt will be the source of biblical corruption. Those are the ones who begin to destroy the Word of God and do the damage there. We've talked about that many, many times.

➤ The third city is Rome itself. Without a doubt, Rome is the greatest enemy of God and God's people and God's church anywhere in history.

It always amazes me how ridiculously stupid most pastors are when it comes to not only the Book of Acts, but these three cities. They just don't have a clue. Once you understand that all your new Bibles come out of Rome, they come off of two manuscripts: Sinaiticus, which was found in the Sinai in a Catholic monastery, and Vaticanus, which was found in the Vatican. All your new Bibles come out of those two sets of manuscripts, never the King James Bible.

It always amazed me how a guy could know that or believe that, and maybe they don't, and think that anything good can come out of Rome. It was Rome that killed John the Baptist. It was Rome that persecuted the early Christians in Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John. They persecuted the Jews. They had Christ whipped and beaten. They put nails in His hands and a spear in His side. They had Him crucified. They killed James with the sword. They murdered millions and millions of God's Bible-believing people from 500 to 1500. The greatest enemy of God's people has always been Rome. Why in the world would you think that God would bring you a Bible from there? It just is beyond my understanding.

I tell you all the time, my job is to help develop you to the point where you can actually have the ability to go behind the scenes, like we've talked about, of history and the Bible, and see the real issues. Being able to see, not just at face value what you have, but what really is going on.

IV. Four Witnesses of Christ's Deity

Then I showed you four witnesses of Christ's deity from John 5, right in the chapter.

3. The first one was John the Baptist. John the Baptist, as you know, was the forerunner of Christ. He shows up six months; he's born six months before Christ. He opens up his ministry six months before Christ. He heralds the coming King that was prophesied back in the Old Testament.
4. The second thing was His works Himself. I ran you back to Exodus 4 and showed you how the works were key in recognizing who He was.
5. The third one was God the Father Himself. In Matthew 17, a voice was heard from heaven. It was God's voice. It said, "This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased," talking about Christ. Then it said, "Hear ye Him."
6. The fourth one was the Scriptures themselves. Hebrews 10:5-7 talks about Christ coming in the volume of a book. You have that book today. There are four key things in that chapter that show you that.

We finished up last week with the Bible as the most scientific book the world has ever seen. We talked about the 48 prophecies given about Christ 600 to 1000, 1500 years before He was born, and the mathematical statistical probability of all those coming to pass at the first coming of Christ, 10 to the 157th power. As I said, more than the electrons in the universe. Somebody told me, if you want to put that into an understandable thing for us, that would be like anybody winning the Mega Powerball 19 times in a row. Not very successful at that.

V. The Christian's Witness: Separated Unto the Gospel

Today, I want to finish out John 5. We kind of took this chapter a little differently. We just didn't follow through verse by verse. Some chapters are this way, where you've got to glean out of it different things to get the whole chapter. We have gleaned just about all that we could get out of it.

You remember, He told us in John 5:46-47 that if the nation of Israel would have believed Moses—Moses wrote the first five books of the Bible, it's called the Pentateuch, and every Jew had these books and knew these books—He told them if they would have believed Moses, they would have believed Him, Christ, because he wrote of Him. He said, "But if you believe not his writings, Moses, how shall you believe my words?" Of course, this is the fundamental problem. They didn't, because they didn't believe either one of them. So now we see a complete rejection of all the Old Testament scriptures that without a doubt point toward Christ as the only true Messiah for the nation of Israel.

I want to talk to you today about being a witness for Christ. I think this is a good way to end this chapter. I want to talk about you and me being a witness. Acts 1:8, we're told that after we received the Holy Spirit of God, power, that Jesus said, "You shall be witnesses unto me in Jerusalem, Judea, the uttermost parts of the earth."

I want to read now John 5:32-35, and then we're going to talk about us as Christ's witness.

Let's pray. Father, help us today to glean from this last message, Father, on our ability to be Christ's witness. We love You. We thank You, Father, for all that You do. We pray now Your hand upon us today and all the events that we've had for a good weekend and the rest of this day. Keep us safe. Lord, let us minister to those that are around us and let our witness go forth to all the people that will be there tonight. Yet, Father, in our lives every day, let us be conscious of the fact that we are Your witness. We'll thank You and praise You in Jesus' name, for His sake we ask it. Amen.

There is another that beareth witness of me; and I know that the witness which he witnesseth of me is true.

Ye sent unto John, and he bare witness unto the truth.

But I receive not testimony from man: but these things I say, that ye might be saved.

He was a burning and a shining light: and ye were willing for a season to rejoice in his light.

There's a key word here in these verses that I want you to see. I want you to first of all understand what it really means, then see how it's used, and then as you find it through the scriptures, it'll make more sense to you. This will be the word "unto." Not a very big, exciting word, but yet one that carries a punch that will help you. That's a great word to use in studying our own lives as a Christian. It's incredible the way God uses it.

For me, I have a definitive passage or verse for every principle found in the Bible. I saw that years and years and years ago, and I just simply, anything that I say or teach, I will be able to run you back to the definitive verse. By the definitive verse, I mean the verse that I talked about last week that brings it down to the lowest common denominator. For me, the definitive passage on this word "unto" will be found in Romans 1:1.

Let's go back there for a moment and let's see how this all pulls together for us as being a witness for Christ.

Paul, a servant of Jesus Christ, called to be an apostle, separated unto the gospel of God.

That's a picture fundamentally of you and me as a New Testament Christian. It says, "Paul, a servant." You and I are to be a servant. We are to have a servant's attitude. We are to do the work of a servant. We are to do the work of God as a servant. So that fits for you and for me.

Then he says, "called to be an apostle." I know there are no apostles today. This is talking about Paul. Paul was called to be an apostle. You will not be called to be an apostle, but I'm going to tell you this: every one of you this morning, if you're saved, you have a calling. God's called you to do something. You won't be an apostle. There are no apostles today. That was limited to Jesus' time. But God has something that He wants you to do that He's going to call you to do. So you have a calling.

Then he says, "separated unto the gospel of God." The word "separated" or "separation" is a big deal in your Bible. We find the word "sanctified" or "sanctification." The first time that word shows up in the Bible is found in Genesis 2:3, where God finished the six days of creation, and on the seventh day, He sanctified it. That means He set that day apart. That's what the word "sanctification" means. It means to be separated. It means to separate you out. That's exactly what it's talking about.

Once we get saved, we're sanctified. Everybody thinks that that means that you're godly or you're holy, you're sanctified. Well, okay, but that's not what the word is talking about. When you got saved, you got sanctified. That means you got set apart from the world. God took you out of the darkness and put you into the light, and the two should never get back together again. In other words, you're separated. You're sanctified. That's what the word means. It's a key teaching in the New Testament. We should be separate from the world.

Wherefore come out from among them, and be ye separate, saith the Lord, and touch not the unclean thing; and I will receive you,

Because it is written, Be ye holy; for I am holy.

In 1 Corinthians 6:9-11, it lists what an unsaved man is and goes down through that whole thing. Then he says this, "And such were some of you," talking to believers. But he says, "But now," here it comes, three things:

7. You're washed in the blood.
8. You're sanctified, you're set apart.
9. You're justified in God's sight. In other words, you're saved.

Most preachers that I've been around, and rightly so, they preach that once you get saved, you shouldn't be part of the world. I get that. You've got some of God's people that have no balance at all, and they think you ought to be separated from everything. We had a question the other night in Bible study from a lady who someone told her that if you're saved, you shouldn't even joke or laugh. Now, that's separated, and that's not just separated, that's boring, man. But that's the way some in the extreme are.

You find all kinds of degrees of separation. As a Christian, Paul says, "All things are lawful, but not all things are expedient." You need to understand, given your witness, what you can do and what you can't do. But fundamentally, you're separated from the world. You don't go to the same old places. You don't talk the same old way. You don't do the same old things. It's different now. You're a new creature in Christ Jesus. Old things are passed away. All things become new. That's separated. That's sanctified. That's sanctification in the Bible.

Most preachers will preach that. They'll get up there and preach about liquor. They'll preach about giving up this. They'll talk about, "You don't do this. You don't do that. You don't drink, smoke, or chew, or go with girls that do." They go that whole nine yards. I'm okay with that. That's okay. You should be separate. But here's where they fail: they'll preach that, "separated from the world," but it's more than that. It's more than that based on Romans 1. He said, "Paul, the servant of Jesus Christ, called to be an apostle. He'll separate unto the gospel of God."

Baptist preachers today want to get you separated from the world, but they don't want to get you separated *unto* anything. That's where the failure comes in. What good is it if I separate you from the world if I don't separate you *unto* the gospel? "Unto" is defined in Romans 1. It means you're not just leaving the old things, but joining yourself *unto* the truth of God, *unto* the gospel of God. The failure of most pastors and churches is they have no clue.

I'm going to tell you right now, you will never do anything meaningful for God until, one, you get obviously separated from the world, but two, you then, through that, you get separated *unto* the gospel of Jesus Christ. In other words, it's a waste of time to separate you from the world if He doesn't separate you *unto* something. "Unto" means you become part of that. You leave what you're part of here, but you become part of this over here, the gospel.

The word "unto" is an incredible word.

- 1 Thessalonians 4:7: "God has called us *unto* holiness."
- Ephesians 2:10: The Bible says that "we're his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus *unto* good works."

- Luke 20:25 is a great one on separated from the world. He says, "Render *unto* Caesar, which is Caesar's, but render *unto* God, which is His." There has to be a balance in your life.
- Acts 1:8, which I already gave you, that "we're going to be the witnesses *unto* Christ to reach the world."

All of that is found under the umbrella of being separated *unto* the gospel.

In John 5:33, He tells us that John's witness was *unto* the truth. Ah, there it is. When you get separated from the world, you need to get separated *unto* the gospel, and you get separated *unto* God's holiness, *unto* God's good works, and then you get separated *unto* the truth. That's what it means for us. It means that we are separate from this world, but *unto* the gospel. My witness is not just the words that I say, but the very life that I now live *unto* the truth. Separated from the world and its falsehood of lies, and separated *unto* the truth, a life of truth.

I'm separated from something, the world, but I'm separated *unto* something, the gospel of truth. I want to say right now, we've got the bad idea that we witness with our words for Christ, but our lives can be whatever we want them to be. That's not *unto* the gospel. You've got to live what you say.

My buddy Greg McClintock, who is a good friend of mine, and I just talked to him a couple of weeks ago as he was driving down to Florida, he preached one time for me, and he said something I never forgot. He said, "Every Christian ought to witness. And sometimes they should even use words." I thought to myself, what a powerful thing that is. The real witness that you have is not what you say. The real witness that you have is what you live.

As I've said many times, it's the difference between telling somebody what God will do for them, instead of telling somebody what God has done for you. That's the difference between just putting out the words and then having a life that God has changed yours, and everything about it is a witness. We ought to be able to use every facet. I know we're human, and I know we make mistakes, and I get that. We're all that way. But every aspect of our life should be a witness. The way we deal with problems, the way we deal with issues. The way things come up that we have to face, where the world falls apart.

I always say it like this: Christians ought to be different from the world, that when a disaster takes place, all the world is running from the disaster, all the Christians ought to run into the disaster. I think of 9/11, what a terrible tragedy that was in the life of all our first responders, the police department, and the firemen, and the rescue workers. I've heard it many, many times from different people telling the story that one group was trying to get out of that burning building, and there was a whole line of people coming down the stairwell, getting out. As they were going down, all the firemen were going up, and every one of them lost their lives. Every one of them, they said, had a look on his face that they knew that they probably were not going to make it, but that was their job. I've thought to myself, "Boy, if we could just get God's people with that kind of dedication.

Policemen and firemen, and this can be a good thing or a bad thing, it gets them in trouble sometimes, but it's a great quality they've got to have. They're not just cops or firemen when they're on the job. They're all the time. If a police officer is off duty and he sees somebody in help or he gets a robbery and he's there, he's not going to say, "Well, I'm not working today." If you're a paramedic or a fireman and you're driving down the street and somebody falls out of their car and has a heart attack, you're not going to dial 911. You're going to get out there and try to do what you can do.

Too many of God's people are just passersby on the tragedies of life. You know why? Because they don't have anything to say because they don't have anything in their world to back it up. Everywhere you go, Romans 14:7 says, "No man liveth to himself, and no man dieth to himself." There's always somebody watching your life. I've said it many, many times: it's the difference of telling them what God will do for them or what He's done for you. Separated *unto* the gospel as a servant with God's calling in your life.

We have a natural draw here for people. We don't have a big billboard someplace, or we didn't have a sign for the first six or seven years. Larry put it up. I didn't even tell him to put it up. He put it up because he wanted people to know where we were. I didn't really care because I knew that the real signs of Old Path Baptist Church wasn't something you screwed up on the wall out there. It was you, your life, people seeing you, the difference in you.

I'm telling you right now, the reason why we've got so many young adults in here and young singles and young couples is because they knew you. They saw the change in you, and they were honest enough to know that they needed a change. So they wanted to know where that change took place. That's what's going to happen at the rest home. They're going to go there and they're going to see somebody that cares about their dad or their mom or their grandma or whatever when nobody else does. They're going to look at you going up there and taking your afternoon on Sunday after you've already been to church and probably got something planned afterwards, and yet you take the time to go up there to be with them. Not just preach to them. You're going through and shaking hands with the crowd. You're introducing yourself. You're meeting people. That is what I'm talking about. You are separated *unto* the gospel of God.

That's really where our church growth is. As far as I'm concerned, the COVID never hurt us at all. We lost 20, 30 people, but it's just the way that it is. We've already gained half of that back, and now it just keeps coming and keeps coming. It's just the way that it is. It doesn't matter. It's not about the numbers that you have. It's about the people that you have. What are they separated *unto*? When it's the gospel, then your whole life's a witness. Not just what you say. You're careful where you go because you know that that can hurt your witness. You're careful with what you say. You're careful how you deal with it.

I want you guys, as you get a little bit of Bible under your belt, God will bring people into your world that have issues, and they look to you, and you have the answers that they're looking for. Why are they even asking you? Because they see something different in you. That's really the key. No man liveth to himself and no man dieth to himself.

But I receive not testimony from man: but these things I say, that ye might be saved.

There's the bottom line right there. So we are to be like John the Baptist in our witness, as his witness was to bear witness of Christ and to who He is for men to be saved. That'll be our witness at work. That'll be our marriage, our witness in our marriage, our kids, our families. All of it is a witness.

You will find people out there. You take the average family unit. You will find people out there that are looking for your witness in those three things because they have issues, and they want help. They see that something different about you, not just by our words, but our very way of life, our lifestyle.

In the Bible, the word "conversation" is used differently than we use it today. We talk about conversation in the sense of talking to somebody. "Well, I had a conversation with so-and-so." "Let's have a conversation about that." But in the Bible, it's more than that. In the Bible, the word "conversation" follows the biblical principle of Luke 6:45, that "out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaks." So conversation and lifestyle are used interchangeably in the Bible because they take for granted that what you're saying should be your lifestyle. It doesn't give you any variance out of that.

Now, we make a variance today. We have lots of people that have conversation about the Lord, but their life is terrible. But from a Bible standpoint, the word "conversation" is more than just the word that you speak. It's the lifestyle behind the word that you speak.

We see in 2 Corinthians 1:12, and again in Ephesians 2:3, and in Ephesians 4:22, all those verses talk about our past conversations, how they were in the flesh or in the world. There wasn't any glory to God in those things. But now, you go to Philippians 1:27, and it says, "my conversation is around the gospel." You know why it is? Because you're separated *unto* the gospel. Philippians 3:20 says that "our conversation is in heaven, looking for Christ." Now, that's more than just what you talk about. That's your lifestyle.

Let no man despise thy youth; but be thou an example of the believers, in word, in conversation, in charity, in spirit, in faith, in purity.

I use this all the time when I speak to young men and young ladies, singles, young adults, young couples, because you are the best example of that. I know we're limited now going down to the mission. I know there was a time when we used to take 80 people down to the mission. That just got to be too much for them. We had more down there than they did. In fact, I think some of you stayed a weekend because you found out you got free food.

But you watch when we go down there and you young guys preach. If I got up and preached or some of the older guys get up and preach, if you don't say something they like, they'll challenge you. But you put the guys like Drake or some of you young guys, Age Age preached before, you young guys, when you get up there, they listen to every word that you say. When they're done, they'll applaud. You know why? Because every one of them once was where you were at, and now they know the mistakes that they have made that have put them where they're at. They love cleanliness. They need a young man that looks like he's got it together.

Years ago, the Bible colleges, you can talk to Penny Hansinger about this. She sang with a group for a while, and we would still laugh about it. But these Bible colleges would send singing groups around all these churches. They'd go for one reason, and that is to recruit all your young people. They'd have really pretty girls and really handsome guys. Afterwards, the girls would be very nice to the guys who could never get a girlfriend, and they'd think, "Oh boy, I'm going to go to school there. I'll find a girl and God," instead of God and forget the girl. No, no.

It was all phony. It was all choreography all the way. They'd get up there and they'd sing, and they'd look great. They gave the appearance of very clean-cut kids who love God, and they probably did. They were good kids and what you want your kids to be, because they wanted to show the parents, "If you send your kids to us, they'll be like that." It was all fake. They'd get up there and they'd sing, and then he'd look at her and sing, and she'd look back at him. Then somebody would get up and give the testimony, and they'd cry at the same spot every church when they gave that testimony. It was all choreography. It was all put together.

The girls, they got the guy, they'd all, they'd have like eight or nine of them, half girls, half guys, and they sang great. They were set up that when the girls would sing and the guys would not, all the guys would turn to look at the girls. Then when the guys sang, all the girls would turn to look at the guys. It was beautiful. They were the most perfect kids you could ever see in your life, and it was absolutely fake. They gave the same testimony every time, cried in the same spots, sang the same songs, same fake plastic smiles, same gazing over at the girls, gazing over the guys, getting up there and saying, "Oh, I love God." Maybe you do, but get a real job. Get a life. I always wondered how Mary Slessor, who was a missionary to the lepers, how they'd have fit in with her crowd.

It's got to be real. They see it in you guys down there. When you guys go to the mission, they see a young man who could have been where they're at, but made the right choices, and they applaud you because vicariously they're saying, "I wish I had done that when I was his age." That's why this verse is so important. This is why he says here that we are to be an example of the believer. He said, "Let no man despise thy youth." The greatest time for your life to be a witness for Christ is when you're just a young guy or a young gal before you hit 40 or 50. Because most kids your age don't want anything to do with God. Their lives are all messed upside down and all messed up in every way possible. To see somebody like you who is real, not plastic like the singing groups, who is real.

He says, "Be thou an example of the believer. Let no man despise thy youth." A lot of times preachers will say, "Well, you're too young to do anything." You're never too young to let your body be a testimony for the Lord Jesus Christ. Younger the better. He said, "Let no man despise thy youth. Be thou an example of the believer."

Now look what he says, six things here:

10. In word, that's what you say.
11. In conversation, that's what you live.
12. In charity, that's your honesty.
13. In spirit, that's how you deal with people and things.

14. In faith, do you really believe what that Bible says when push comes to shove?
15. In purity.

Notice how "word" and "conversation" are used as two separate things. Your word is what you say, and your conversation is how you live, based on whether that book is real to you. The Bible says, "Out of the abundance of the heart, the mouth speaks," Luke 6:45. What's really on the inside will always come out, whether it's a good treasure or an evil treasure.

VI. The Burning and Shining Light

When you look at John's witness, we see two aspects to it that really line up to what our witness should be. John 5:35 tells us that "he was a burning and a shining light: and ye were willing for a season to rejoice in his light." That's really a good example of what our witness should be. Our witness is based on us being a servant, based on understanding our calling, and the fact that we are separated **unto** the gospel. Now we can bear witness to the truth in two ways. I think many of you do this without even knowing this. I'm just going to put a little bit of intelligence to what most of you are already doing.

➤ The first thing he says here in John 5:35 is that his witness was a burning light.

That will be my witness to the unsaved world. This light will burn you. That burning light will be the reference to the eternal damnation of a man or woman who rejects the light of God's salvation. You get burnt. Our witness will either set a man free to be saved or it will set his eternal destiny to the lake of fire based on what he does with the witness that we give him.

Every Christian is a witness. You're either a good witness or a bad witness. You're either a good treasure or an evil treasure. The world will look at you one way or the other, and that is your witness. There will be people who send men and women to hell, and you never say an unkind word to them. You just live a completely different lifestyle. You claim to be a Christian, they knew it, and you live like the world. They didn't want any part of it.

Why do you think Baptist churches have such a hard time today with people thinking that Baptists are the most terrible people on the planet? Unfortunately, 99% of them are. So the Baptists all want to change their name so they'll get into a good light. I don't. I always tell people I'm a Baptist with an explanation. I explain to them why I'm a Baptist. I know. But changing your name isn't going to change anything because then you just go be a neo-evangelical, and now you're into another whole mess. It's better off just to stay with the true line and proclaim it.

Verily I say unto you, Whatsoever ye shall bind on earth shall be bound in heaven: and whatsoever ye shall loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven.

This is one of these verses that a lot of Christians, young Christians, old Christians too, they have a hard time with. It says there, "Verily I say unto you," this is Jesus speaking now to His apostles. He says, "Whatsoever ye shall bind on earth shall be bound in heaven: and whatsoever ye shall loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven." A lot of people look at that, and I get asked that

question a lot, "What is that? What is that talking about? Binding and loosing? What is all that talking about?"

First of all, historically, He's talking to His apostles. He sent them out in Matthew 10. He sent them to the House of Israel. They have the authority and the power to deal with them. Doctrinally, it will be the 144,000 in the tribulation period who are under the same commission and the same power to do what they've got to do. But inspirationally, it's me and you.

People look at it and say, "Well, how in the world do I have the ability to bind somebody or loose somebody?" You on your own do not have that ability. But if you're saved here this morning, you do have the Holy Spirit of God inside you. When you were separated *unto* the Gospel and you are a witness for Christ, then through that witness, you as an individual don't have the power. But the Holy Spirit of God working through you, you have the power to loose a man of his sins or bind him to his sins.

How does that work? It works like this: I sit down and talk with a guy, and I say to him, "You need to trust Christ as your own personal Savior. Jesus died for you on the cross, and He loves you." I go through the whole plan of salvation. If the guy says, "Wow, I really need to trust Christ as my own personal Savior," and you get him to that point where he gets saved, you've just loosed him from his sins.

Now, if you sit down with the same guy or another guy and you do the same thing and walk him through it, and he says, "Ah, no, I don't need that. I've never killed anybody. I don't need that salvation. I live a good life." And then he walks away. Then through your witness, you have bound him to his sin. Not you personally, but the Holy Spirit of God inside you working through you, using you to be a witness for Christ. That witness will bear witness of a burning light. You lay it out. You come to the point where you witness to a man and he rejects, you've bound him to his sin. You witness to a man that gets saved, you have loosed him from his sin. Not through any power that you and I have, but through the power of the Word of God. Here's the word from last week, abiding in you, abiding in you, and God using it working through you.

You have all kinds of power once you become a child of God, once you get separated *unto* the gospel. God will use you in so many ways in so many different places. My job, obviously, is to train you to get ready. We've made no secret about this. My job is to train you to get you ready on higher levels that God can put you wherever He wants you to go. Charles and his family and Josh and Kelly and all you young guys going down there to the rest home, and I use that because it's a fresh example. But it could be anything. There was a time in your life when you never could have done that. But now you can do it. Why? Because you're being trained. You've separated yourself *unto* the gospel. Now you're learning in these situations. The higher you go, the better off you're going to be and the more you're going to learn. Pretty soon, God will be able to drop you in any scenario that He feels you need to be in. It'll be like Philip over there in Acts 8. God pulled him out of the revival in Samaria and dropped him right in the desert. God felt comfortable with that because He knew he could do.

This is what you want. You want God so comfortable with you that He can put you anywhere. But you know what it takes for God to be comfortable with you? It takes you being comfortable

with God. It takes a lifestyle, a witness. Not just what you say. But through the power of God abiding in you and working through your lifestyle, the power of your witness that no man can deny. People will and can deny what you say. They'll do it all the time. They cannot deny what you live. The consistency of a witness for Him abiding in the truth, *unto* the truth, cannot be denied. Where they may blow off your words and go their way, they'll never blow off your life. Because that Holy Spirit of God will take that thing and just dig down inside of them, and they'll never rest. So the first aspect in John 5:35 is a burning light. That's for unsaved people.

➤ Then he says that his witness was a shining light.

That will be my witness to the saved world. Matthew 5:16 says, "Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father which is in heaven." The little kids back there sing, "This little light of mine, I'm going to let it shine." It's a shining light now versus the burning light. This one illuminates. It doesn't burn anybody. It illuminates.

Matthew 5:14 says that "we are to, a city that is set on an hill cannot be hid." Most people don't see the power of that illustration. If you ever drove someplace and it's at nighttime and you come around a corner and there's a city up there on the top side of the mountain with all the lights on, you can't miss it. From a practical standpoint, that's a picture of this church or any church. Because every one of you is a building, a temple. If you're saved this morning, you are a temple. The question is, are the lights on? Of course, when you get a church that is made up of buildings, then you have a city. When all the lights are turned on, that church can't be hid. God lifts it up. People see it. It's why we've got a thousand plus people on the website. That's why we've got the people we've got here. That's why they're moving from all across the country to come and be part of this. It isn't because of me. It isn't because we're problem-free here. No, it's none of that. It's because for the majority of you, the lights are on. Your witness is more than what you say. Your witness is how you live your life. People are drawn to that. They see that.

We live in a world, I hear guys all the time, they talk about how dark this world is and it's so dark. "Boy, this is the worst time to ever be alive in history because the darkness, everywhere you turn, the darkness, the government, this and that, everywhere. You can't trust anybody. It's darkness, darkness, darkness. So dark." That's probably all true. But I've learned that the darker it gets, the more the darkness illuminates whatever light you have.

In the Navy, when they had a blackout at night, you couldn't smoke a cigarette on the bridge because you could see somebody smoking a cigarette 10 miles away. If you've ever been on the ocean at night, it is as dark as it could ever be in your life. You can't see the hand in front of your face. Some guy standing on the bridge smoking a cigarette, somebody looking binoculars 10 miles away can see that thing and put a torpedo right in your ship. So it wasn't allowed to do that. A cigarette's just a little thing compared to the vast ocean, but it's the darkness that's the key. Because the darker it gets, the more any darkness illuminates any light. If you want this church to be seen, you want your life to be seen, then the intense darkness is a good thing. Because it lights for people to see in a world of darkness. It's the way it works.

God will give you His true light to the point where you can find out where you're at, but you can help others get to that light too. That's what so many of you do. Just because a man will have the

light of God's salvation, you see this all the time, you know this is true, just because a man will have the light of God's salvation doesn't mean he has the light of understanding with the Bible. He's got to grow into that light.

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

So when you open up the book, the lights come on.

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

There again, "Thy word is a lamp *unto* my feet and *unto* my path." Once you get past the burning light, the judgment of God, and you get saved, now that book becomes a shining light. The illumination of the Word of God in our lives by the light of the Holy Spirit of God, and there's two aspects to it.

16. The first aspect is what I try to do for you, and that is to make it a personal illumination that you can see the Bible yourself.

17. The second one, I really don't have any control over. It's a natural process if I do my job with the first one. The first one is for me personally to get you into the Word of God and get your lights turned on, and the second one is once you get the lights turned on, you take that light to others, and that'll take care of itself.

My job is helping you turn the lights on and to develop a brightness, a bright shining light. As you grow, when you get saved, you've got the little candle. By the time I'm done with you, praise the Lord, I want it to be a floodlight. I want it to be one of them searchlights that they use in World War II to shoot down airplanes. I'm not satisfied with you just having a little candle or being a little flashlight. I want you to be a beaming light in the darkness of this world, and you can do it, because "let no man despise thy youth." Maybe I can't do it, or somebody in their 70s and 80s can still do it, but not to the strength that you can. You've got your whole life ahead of you. People look at me and they think of John Knox Village. They look at you and they think, in fact, I thought they'd be here today. I ordered my shoes with the Velcro straps on them.

That's the job of a real Bible-based, Bible-believing church. You are first, taking everybody that God gives you. I firmly believe, and I've preached this for years and years and years, God won't give you any more than you're willing to take care of. So when you see the job is to take you and to develop that light. You get past a burning light, then you become a shining light. I want it to illuminate you first. That shining light, just so you get it into perspective here, that shining light is not given so you can judge other people with it. It's given so first you can judge yourself. Because the only way you're going to grow is to look at yourself. The brighter the light gets, the more you see the imperfections. The more you see the imperfections, the more you want to fix it, the more and the brighter the light gets. Pretty soon you have the ability through your own understanding of yourself to help somebody else, not to judge them. You realize that they are in the same boat that you're in. You've got where you're at because of where you're at. So you cut them some slack, and it isn't the fact that you judge them or make fun of them or take an attitude toward them. You realize that they don't have the light that you've got. So you'll never help them get along if you have an attitude toward them.

Of course, it's that shining light, the Word of God, that helps you get better, guiding you and me through every issue of life. The world is darkness and it's filled with snares and traps and pitfalls. The Word of God is the shining light for me that illuminates where I'm going, my feet, my walk, my path. I can stay away from them and I don't become a victim of them. The power of our witness through being a servant with a calling.

VII. The Importance of a Local Church and Calling

Sooner or later, and this is the importance of a Bible-believing New Testament local church that is here for you, not you here for me. Sooner or later you're going to have to deal with the issue, you young guys and gals. You older folks too, if you haven't already. But sooner or later, you're going to have to deal with the issue, what your calling is. Right now, you're young in the Lord. I can use my own self. I remember when I first got right with God, I was thrown into a mix just like here, where there were guys that were older, they were preaching, they were doing everything. Here I was, the newbie on the block. I went through a lot of flood of emotions too, because I felt every time I heard a guy do something, I thought that's what I wanted to do. When a guy came in and preached good, I wanted to be a preacher. When a guy came in and talked about mission, well maybe I wanted to be a missionary. When a guy did this, well maybe I want to do that.

But I was in a place, when you're not in a place where somebody can help you and hold you and understand how this works, this is how people get messed up. You get the wrong calling because you make a calling based on your inexperience and your inability to really understand the calling. Your calling will come through this church, as mine did. Your calling of what God wants you to do as you grow here and you get to the point where God begins to use you, and you begin to make yourself available. Your calling will be the easiest thing in your life. You see that in Acts 13 and Acts 16 with Timothy and Paul.

I'm sure that everybody out there gets right with God and you start to have a flood of emotions of what God wants you to do. We see it in 1 Samuel 3 there where young Samuel, he's dropped off by his mom at the temple there to serve the Lord, and he's struggling with everything that he should do and the calling of God in his life. But thank God he had a man in his life, Eli, that every time he got some idea, he told him to go back to sleep and don't worry about it. In the process of time, God revealed his calling to Samuel. Samuel became without a doubt the greatest prophet, probably, or the greatest judge anyhow that Israel had.

God wants you to have the best. So He put a structure together called the New Testament Local Church under the pastor, some guy who's supposed to know what he's doing and knows what he's doing to build people. There's a systematic thing that you follow. You don't fly by the seat of your pants. You don't just go out and do this and do that. You follow a dedicated procedure that is laid out in the Scriptures. Through that, in time, God will show you your calling. When He shows you your calling, it'll come to the place where through that calling, you'll find your real true meaning of separation. You won't just be separated from the world. You'll be separated from the world, but separated *unto* the gospel.

Through that separation *unto* the gospel, which is defined for you in 1 Corinthians 15:1-3, then you'll become God's witness *unto* His truth. The rest of your life, "Paul, a servant of Jesus Christ, called to be an apostle, separated *unto* the gospel of God." Once you put those three things in your life, the rest of your life, you will be a burning light to unsaved people, and you'll be a shining light to saved people.

This is the road that most of you are on today. This is the road that's going to get you to the point where you understand God's calling. I don't understand God's calling in your life. I only understand God's calling in my life. But I understand the process by which God does it, and when it really comes to your life, we'll all see it, just like they did with Timothy and Paul. We'll be witness to the calling of God in your life, and then you go from there.

This is the importance of having a Bible-based, Bible-believing church that actually takes you and helps develop you. Having places along the way that God drops in like the mission down there, and the rest home ministry. The devotion that you do on, I watch you guys on softball, the devotion that you do. Wherever God will give you an opportunity, somebody says, "Oh, they're just doing a devo." Oh no, you're out of your mind. That is a piece of your calling. You are developing part of your life toward that that God is going to take, He's going to develop, and it's those little things that it all pull together, and all things work together for good. Even the bad things, even the downside of things. If you have your focus that you're going to be separated *unto* the Gospel, there's nothing that will stop you.

This church is here understanding that concept to help you be everything that God wants you to be. We have all the tools, we have the resources, we have the Bible, we have the older Christians who will help you along. We have everything that you need. There's no reason for you not to get everything that God has for you other than the fact that you just don't want it. So it's an incredible opportunity to see that our witness is not just about what we say, it's *unto* the Gospel, our lifestyle. We become that burning light and that shining light. So many of you are well on your way to doing it, and many of you older ones, you're already there. You are part of the establishment here of helping bring others along. That's the name of the game. God keeps bringing them in from all across the country, our own city, coming in.

This place is a great test to see if somebody really wants to do what's right. Some of them will come in and say, "Yeah, I really like this, I really want this." And then when they see what it takes, they say, "Eh." But come back to John 5. Isn't that so true?

There is another that beareth witness of me; and I know that the witness which he witnesseth of me is true.

Ye sent unto John, and he bare witness unto the truth.

But I receive not testimony from man: but these things I say, that ye might be saved.

He was a burning and a shining light: and ye were willing for a season to rejoice in his light.

Some people only come for a season. They come in, they say, "Wow, this is great. Look at all this, look at all that." When they have to see what they have to change, it's only for a season.

Then you have others who you get in here and you say, "This is it, this is what I'm looking for. I will spend the rest of my life being what God wants me to be because I finally found the truth." That's the way it works. We'll hold up there.