

## I. God's Eternal Plan for the Ages

Last week, we finished chapter 16. We looked at part two of the story on God's eternal plan for the ages. I know that it is a very deep and complicated thing. I tried to make it as workable as I could, and hopefully you got your hands on it. Most of you that have been around here for quite a while, you have heard it before. I came at it from a little different angle, but it is something that in time really needs to be the foundation for your understanding of what God is not only doing around this world and history, but what He is doing with you too.

I told you, if you remember, how that in the Bible, the Bible is about God establishing His government. I told you that in the Word of God there are three plans that God has, and they all go together and yet they are separate. Obviously, the first plan that we talked about is that God has a plan for the universe. We call it the universe; the Bible calls it the second heaven. That is the expanse of space that we call eternity, where you send a rocket ship up and it goes forever. God has a reason for that. God has a plan for that. Of course, we laid that out in Isaiah 9:6-7.

The second plan that God has was God has a plan for the earth. You will find this plan begin to be laid out in Isaiah 45:18, where He says:

*Isaiah 45:18*

*For thus saith the LORD that created the heavens; God himself that formed the earth and made it; he hath established it, he created it not in vain, he formed it to be inhabited: I am the LORD; and there is none else.*

That is probably one of the most profound verses anywhere in the Bible talking about God's plan for the earth. God singled out the planet Earth out of the second heaven for a purpose. One of the great studies in the Bible, which we certainly do not have time to get into, is how the Earth has changed position in the last 6,000 to 7,000 years of what God is doing in the overall plan, Plan 1, and then how it is going to be put back in its proper place at some point in time. But God formed the Earth to be inhabited. He did not do it in vain.

You are going to find that God is using planet Earth right now for this little 6,000 years of man's history. God is using the Earth right now to deal with man, getting ready for, as we talked about the last couple of weeks, His eternal plan in the future. In our solar system, we have nine planets. I know science just said that Pluto is not a planet; fine, whatever you want it to be, it is okay with me. But the bottom line is the fact that in our solar system there are nine planets. You are going to find that out of those nine, only one was named by God. The rest of them are named by whoever, after the sons of God in Genesis chapter 6.

You have Venus, she is a female, the goddess of love or sex or whatever. Then you have Mercury, he is the fleeting planet because he is the fastest one. Then you have Earth, and then you have Mars, God of War. Then you have Jupiter, king of the planet, Saturn, another God, and it runs on out through Pluto, which is the last one. Pluto is the God of the underworld because if

you were on Pluto, it would be a pretty dark place. It is so far out there. But out of all those nine, God named only one. The reason why He named that one is Isaiah 45:18. God had a plan for it. The other eight are out there for obvious reasons we do not have time to get into this morning, but there is a definite reason why He put them out there.

So God has a plan for the second heaven or the universe. God has a plan for Earth, which is in this universe. Finally, the third plan: God has a plan for your life and my life. You see, all three are connected to God's overall plan, but each from a different aspect. The Earth is found in the universe, and you and I are now on planet Earth that is in this universe. The grand purpose of God is to fulfill for us our work in doing the work of the Father to establish in our small part His plan. Most people have a very limited understanding of God's plan for them. They get so caught up in everything else that they lose that.

As I showed you, God is establishing His eternal government, Isaiah 9:6-7. When you look at that, when you go over to the book of Ephesians, you will find how that, not only now, but in that time, how we fit into it, when He says in Ephesians 2:6-7:

*Ephesians 2:6*

*And hath raised us up together, and made us sit together in heavenly places in Christ Jesus:*

*Ephesians 2:7*

*That in the ages to come he might shew the exceeding riches of his grace in his kindness toward us through Christ Jesus.*

This is what He says in verse 7, that in the ages to come. That is long after 2022, 2023. This is after the rapture, probably sometime in the ages of ages. But in the ages that come, He might show the exceeding riches of His grace and His kindness toward us through Christ Jesus.

*Ephesians 2:8*

*For by grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God:*

From that verse, "ages of ages," showing somebody in an eternity through us what God has done and who God is. The depth of that verse is unsearchable in many, many ways, but it shows you that God does have a plan for you and for me. It is not just about down here right now. It is not about you going to work tomorrow. It is not about who wins the elections. It is not about any of that stuff, though I get it, that stuff is part of life. But on a larger scale, God has something that He wants to accomplish in your life.

For me, a book that I have always, when people have a real tough time trying to grasp the body of Christ and us getting Christ's body and all these things, I always take them back to the book of Obadiah. Obadiah only has one chapter, and in the last two verses in that chapter, it has always been one of those little gold nuggets that God has just put there that nobody ever sees, but when you show it to them, they do not know what to do with it. It says in verse 20, talking about the second coming of Christ in the context here:

*Obadiah 1:20*

*And the captivity of this host of the children of Israel shall possess that of the Canaanites, even unto Zarephath; and the captivity of Jerusalem, which is in Sepharad, shall possess the cities of the south.*

This context here is the Lord coming back at the Second Coming, Revelation chapter 19, Isaiah 63, all those other places. Look at verse 21:

*Obadiah 1:21*

*And saviours shall come up on mount Zion to judge the mount of Esau; and the kingdom shall be the LORD'S.*

Saviors, plural. If you read Revelation chapter 19, you will find that Jesus comes back on a white horse, and the Bible says that the armies that follow Him are also on white horses. That is the church. We all have a glorified body like Christ, and we are saviors. You might know that that word is taken out of all the new translations, and they put the word "deliverers" in, like you are going to be UPS or FedEx, but it is a thing where it is very clear what you have here. So we covered that the last couple of weeks. We have a good solid foundation now, as good as we can probably have as human beings.

## II. Introduction to John Chapter 17

I want to move on today. Today we are going to begin chapter 17. This now will actually be a continuation of what He has been doing, that He is preparing His apostles for what is coming their way. He has told them now numerous times that He is going to go back to the Father. He has not given them everything that they need to know, but He has alluded to that some things are going to be changing. What we now see here is that He is beginning to prepare them in five areas that we will look at in the coming weeks. He is now going to begin in this chapter to talk about His betrayal by Judas. Then He is going to be talking about His crucifixion, which is going to lead us then to the resurrection, which then is going to lead us to Him going back to the Father, and then them finishing His work. Actually, you will find the real layout of this in the early chapters of the book of Acts. But those are the five things now He is preparing them for.

One of the amazing things that I found about God, Christ, and understanding the people that do the work for Him, is that He never lets them get caught unaware. He always reveals to them what is going to happen and tells them before it actually takes place in their life. Many times they do not get it. They have their mind someplace else and they do not listen and hear what He is saying, but He always does that.

I want to begin today in chapter 17, and I want to read the first five verses here. Let us make some comments about this as we kind of crack into this chapter. He says in John 17:1:

*John 17:1*

*These words spake Jesus, and lifted up his eyes to heaven, and said, Father, the hour is come; glorify thy Son, that thy Son also may glorify thee:*

*John 17:2*

*As thou hast given him power over all flesh, that he should give eternal life to as many as thou hast given him.*

*John 17:3*

*And this is life eternal, that they might know thee the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom thou hast sent.*

*John 17:4*

*I have glorified thee on the earth: I have finished the work which thou gavest me to do.*

*John 17:5*

*And now, O Father, glorify thou me with thine own self with the glory which I had with thee before the world was.*

### III. The Sureness of God's Work

One of the things that I find interesting here, He says in verse 4, "I have glorified thee on earth, I have finished the work which thou gavest me to do." In reality, that is not true. He has not finished the work yet. The work will not be finished until His death on the cross. That caught my attention years and years and years ago, and I thought to myself, "Now what is in that?" He just said, "I finished the work," when He had not finished the work. Yet, the more I thought about it and the more I, in my own Christian life, I realized what He is saying here. Even though He did not finish the work yet, there was nothing that was going to stop Him from finishing the work that God gave Him.

That was a question that I had to ask myself: Is my work of God in my life, in God's mind, a sure thing? Every one of us has to look at ourselves if you are saved this morning and you know that God has a work for you, and we are not finished yet. Could you honestly say like Christ said, "I finished the work," because in your heart and in your mind, nothing is going to stop you from doing that? When I saw that, it was a tremendous principle that I looked at, and I thought to myself, "I wonder what God thinks when He looks at me."

I remember when He called Abraham out way back in Genesis, and I have been asked many, many times why God chose Abraham. I mean, there were lots of other people around, and there were lots of other good people around, I am sure. Job is a contemporary of Abraham. Why did He not do this with Job? Why Abraham? But then when you go back and you study the life of Abraham, you will find out that God saw something in Abraham. I know Abraham had his issues, did he not? He goes through a process of spiritual growth where he made a lot of mistakes. God overlooked those mistakes because God saw something in him that Abraham did not see in himself. God, way before he offered Isaac up, way before he did anything, good or bad, God looked at him and He said, "I know him. I know him." In essence, He said, "I have a job for him to do, and I know him that he will do the job." Was Abraham perfect? No. Did he make a lot of mistakes? Certainly, just like you and I do. But I wonder if God sees in you and me what He saw in Abraham.

I wonder when God saw His own Son, and Jesus could look at His Father and said, "I finished the work," when He had not finished the work, but the work was a sure thing as far as Christ was concerned. I had to ask myself, and you need to ask yourself, is your own work with God, is it a sure thing? Is anything going to stop it? Is there anything going to come in and put a hold on it? Or do you have the assurance, no matter what comes in your life, that you can actually say like Christ said to the Father, "I finished the work," when the work is not finished yet? It all comes down to where your heart and your commitment is at with the Lord, that you have that ability to know that you are going to do the work and you are going to finish it.

Now, first off here, I want you to see, look at verse 5 in our little text this morning. He says, "And now will Father glorify thou me with thine own self, with the glory, here it comes, which I had with thee before the world was." You see that thing? Right back to Proverbs chapter 8. Right back to God in the beginning, coming out of the Godhead. You just cannot get away from it. He keeps coming back to that.

#### IV. The Context of Christ's Prayer and Our Role

What is in this chapter as we move on through, and you are going to see, we will get through it in sections as we always do, is I want you to see first of all a viable context here. I understand that what we are going to be looking at here is commonly called, and rightly so, that Christ is praying for His twelve apostles. No question about that. That is the context that is directly within this passage here, squarely He is talking to them. His fear, because He is going to go back, these five things are going to happen, and He is praying for them that they can get through it to finish the work.

I always liked this chapter, ever since I saw that thing about finishing the work, even though the work was not finished. I always really liked this chapter, and in my own personal life, I took some key points that He gave to them, and I think across the board they really apply to me, and obviously you will see that they apply to you, because we both, the apostles and us, we have something in common. Now He is going to go back to the Father, and they are left to do the work. But what we have in common is, we were left to do the work also. We are just in a different time phrase. We are in a different dispensation, so to speak.

Even though there are no apostles today, because there had to be some exact criteria, and I know you will find people out there all the time that claim to be an apostle. There are no apostles today. There had to be, as listed in the book of Acts, there has to be a definite criteria for you to be a bona fide true apostle. So there are no apostles today. But I am His disciple, and so are you if you are saved. My job is the same as their job was: to carry on the work.

Last week we talked about how, why did God do what He did of bringing His Son out of Himself in the form of a servant, in the form of a Son? I told you that there were two reasons for that, and one of the reasons was that Jesus could be my perfect model. If God wants me to have a relationship with Him, then for Him to judge me at the judgment seat of Christ, He had to give me a perfect book. If that book is not perfect, then He could never judge any unsaved man in the Great White Throne Judgment, or He could never judge any of us at the judgment seat of Christ,

because the book that He judges us by, that He gave us, is imperfect. You could always cite, "Well, no, that was a mistranslation, Lord. You cannot nail me for that one. Well, Lord, in the Hebrew, that does not mean that. Lord, in the Greek, that word should be." You see, you cannot do that when you have something that is perfect. So it is not going to work, the fact that God would never be able to judge us, either way, saved or lost, if we did not have a perfect book to go by, by the same standard.

Even though He may give you a perfect book, He could not judge either one of us in our walk with God and our relationship with God, if He did not give us a perfect example. I told you last week, there are a lot of guys in the Bible that are really good examples, but they are all imperfect. When I stand at the judgment seat of Christ, I can say, "Well, yeah, Lord. Yeah, that was a bad day. And I know, but you know what? Come back here, look at the problem he had. And look what Jacob did." You see, He is not going to judge my life or your life by Jacob or Abraham. He is going to judge our life by the perfect example of the Lord Jesus Christ. You say, "How can He do that?" Because He is living inside you right now. You have Him inside you. God gave you a perfect model, a perfect example that everything in our life needs to line up to. So we do not have any excuses when we get there. A perfect model as an obedient Son.

I saw many, many years ago, I saw that I can learn something from everything He does here in these chapters, even though He is not directly talking to me, because I too have been left to finish the work. As I broke these first five verses down here years ago, and a lot of this stuff that I give you today, on Sunday mornings, when we do this, it is really easy for me to put it together. My biggest problem is not finding information to give you. My biggest problem is how much do I give you? How much I do not? Because I can go on all day long. But these things are easy for me to put together because I have worked through them many, many years ago, and the notes are right there, and they are something that I stay in intact with, as best I can.

So I want us to look at John 17:1 here, and I just want to break this down into a couple little principles here that I think that if we are going to do the work, I think that if we are going to do it well, and we are going to be able to do what Jesus did, and even though today, I do not know when the Lord is coming. He may be here this afternoon. He may be here before I get this message done. He may be five years, 10 years, 20 years, I do not know. But the thing that we have to ask ourselves today, if we are saved, could we honestly stand before God and say, "I finished the work you gave me to do," and you have not finished the work, but God said, "Yeah, he has not finished it, but I know him. I know her. They will do it." That is the key: confidence. Most of us worry about our confidence in God. How foolish that is. My real worry is God's confidence in me, not my confidence in Him. But that is just where we are at today.

## V. Understanding "The Hour Has Come"

The first thing I want you to see here in verse 1, He says this: "These words spake Jesus and lifted up his eyes to heaven and said, Father, the hour is come. Glorify thy Son that thy Son may also glorify thee." He simply says here, "Father, the hour is come." I have showed you before how that God has broken down, you see this in Matthew chapter 20, you see it in Mark chapter 6, I mean it is in Mark chapter 13, how God has broken down the church age, which is

approximately 2,000 years, depending on how you want to figure it, into an hour system. A 12-hour day usually running from 6 a.m. to 6 p.m., sometimes from 6 p.m. to 6 a.m. But it is based on an hour system.

I showed you before that if we work with the 2,000 years, it breaks down into about each hour is somewhere around 166 years. We are in the final hour of this example, actually in the final moments. You are going to find that God continually makes reference to the times and the seasons. I have told you before, over there in Chicago, they have the Doomsday Clock. It is based on a clock with only one hand on it that at 12 o'clock the end of the world comes, and I think we are like three minutes to 12 as we speak. You are going to find that you and I, given that time frame, we are in the final hour, actually the final minutes.

I personally think you hear this all the time when somebody gets up and does something and somebody says, "Well, that was his 15 minutes of fame." I have often thought to myself in a spiritual Christian format, that is a reference to the time that we have here. If that hour is 166 years and you live to be what, 60, 70 years old, your 15 minutes of fame of your life will show up at the judgment seat of Christ. But that is just me. But I do know this, we are in the final moments of our time before the Lord comes back. There is no question about that. With this last hour, you and I will have a time slot. Just as Jesus said, my model, my example, "the hour has come" when He was going to do the work of the Father and glorify Him.

Once you get saved, you come to the point in your life that your hour has come. Now it is your turn. It is your turn now to honor the Lord Jesus Christ with your life and allow God and you to do the work in the hour that God has given us. Your Bible says three score and 10, 70 years is man's life. I know people go over that. I think it probably always averages out; some die way before that. I think probably if you got everybody together, it would come right out on the money. But the bottom line is this: let us say we only have 70 years out of 166 years. Now, it is a thing where the time you get saved, then you get trained, you get into a New Testament local church that brings you through and gives you everything that you need, and you come into your hour to do His work.

I am not sure when that hour actually starts. I mean, I do not know if it is when you got saved. I do not know if you get to that point in your life when God now really begins to. I do not know that for sure. But I do know this, Jesus made a reference to His hour all through His earthly ministry. In His case, it is always toward a point in time, His crucifixion. In Matthew 24:22, we are told to watch for you know not what hour He is coming. I found out that He says in Revelation 3:10 that there is a coming and hour of temptation that we all have to face. Revelation 14:7 talks about the Second Coming of Christ, and it says the hour of God's judgment. I find that there is an hour of work at the First Coming, but there is also an hour of work that somebody is doing at the Second Coming, and then I find in between that you and I are designated an hour.

Whether you know it or not, you and I are on the clock this morning. I look at my own life, and I would never look at somebody else's like this, because Myron is the one I have to take care of. I wasted the first 20 years of my life. First 20 years of my life, God got nothing from me. I look back at that and I thank God that the Bible says in Ephesians 5:16, and God knows that. Most of

us wasted a good portion of our early life. We got into things we should not have done. Maybe we were 20, 30 years old, 40 years old before we ever found out what we really needed to do. I get that. God understands that. I just thank God for me, and you can do it for yourself if you want, in Ephesians 5:16, that He made a way for me to redeem the time that I lost. It does not get any better than that.

I said all that to say this: once I got my head screwed on straight and once I got right where I needed to be, my goal was to never let anything waste my time for God for the rest of my life. I have not always done that, but that has always been my goal. I look back at what I, once I know what I know now, I look back and see what I wasted. I know we all live in life. Please, I am not somebody that says you need to be a monk and you need to just be ecstatic from the world. I am not saying that. I get it. We are to occupy till I come. But within all of the things that we have in life, all the things that we do, we cannot ever lose sight of the fact that we are on the clock and God has an hour for you. Just like He had for the Lord Jesus, just like He had for me, you are on the clock for your hour whenever that may be in your life. I cannot speak to that for you. I can only speak it to me.

## VI. Power Over All Flesh

The second thing I saw here was in verse 2. After He said that He has given Him an hour and that hour has come, then He said in verse 2, "As thou hast given him power over all flesh." That is an incredible thing. God has now given us the power over the flesh to do His work. This will be the incredible teachings found in Romans chapter 6 and Romans chapter 7. Somebody asked a question just several nights ago about the baptism of Jesus' death in Romans 6. Romans 7 is the great chapter on our flesh versus the old man versus the new man. Now that I am saved, I have been set free from my flesh. Why did He do that? He did that because I have a work. He did that because there is an hour that I need to get that work done, and the flesh will do nothing but get in my way. The flesh will stop me. There is no way as long as I am in the flesh I can do anything spiritually for God. So again, God made a way to separate my flesh from my soul. Now I am set free from my flesh. Why? So I can do the work without any hindrance whatsoever.

*Romans 6:7*

*For he that is dead is freed from sin.*

*Romans 6:8*

*Now if we be dead with Christ, we believe that we shall also live with him:*

*Romans 6:9*

*Knowing that Christ being raised from the dead dieth no more; death hath no more dominion over him.*

*Romans 6:10*

*For in that he died, he died unto sin once: but in that he liveth, he liveth unto God.*

*Romans 6:11*

*Likewise reckon ye also yourselves to be dead indeed unto sin, but alive unto God through Jesus Christ our Lord.*

*Romans 6:12*

*Let not sin therefore reign in your mortal body, that ye should obey it in the lusts thereof.*

*Romans 6:13*

*Neither yield ye your members as instruments of unrighteousness unto sin: but yield yourselves unto God, as those that are alive from the dead, and your members as instruments of righteousness unto God.*

*Romans 6:14*

*For sin shall not have dominion over you: for ye are not under the law, but under grace.*

Romans chapter 6 is probably the greatest single chapter in the Bible, and you might know that it is in Romans, written to the church, that explains to us that now that you are saved based on Christ's death, that sin has no more dominion over us. Colossians chapter 2 explained the process by which we are set free from our soul, our flesh from our soul. That is what makes us a new creature in Christ Jesus. When you get into Romans chapter 7, it begins to show you, based on chapter 6, now we see the warfare between the old man and the new man, the flesh and the spirit. Simply put, as best as I can put it down where you can grab it, before we were saved, sin was our nature. Before you and I ever trusted Christ as our own personal Savior, we were dead in trespasses of sin. Because of that, sin is our nature. Now after salvation, sin is our choice. We do not have to sin anymore. The flesh has no more dominion over us. Before you got saved, sin was your old sin nature. After you and I are saved, whatever sin we get in, whatever we do, we now choose to do that.

We have talked several times back in Proverbs 6:16 where it lists the six things that God hates. The seventh, the seventh one, is the capstone of it, so to speak, and makes it an abomination. I have talked to you before how that when you look at these, they actually are a picture of the whole Bible. The proud look starts in Genesis, the seventh one all the way up to the church. You find everything in between as you come through your Bible. I know that they are written in Proverbs and they are dealing with the seven unclean spirits of the Antichrist over there in Matthew chapter 12 and 13. I get that. I understand that. But without a doubt, these seven are the sins of the saints. These are the six things, seven things that God hates, but yet these are actually the six or seven things that God's favorite things that they do. It is a choice. You are not under this anymore. You fall into one of these, it is because you chose to for whatever reason.

Before you were saved, as I said, your sin as an old sin nature, you sinned by nature. Now we sin by choice. You better take that home with you today. I have always liked the progression by which he comes down through this. Not only does it fit from Genesis up until the church age, but it fits into everything that we get into in our Christian life when we choose to put these things in our life.

The first thing he says, and this is very, very fitting, he says the first thing he lists back there is a proud look. He does that or he says that because that was the first sin in the Bible. The first sin in the Bible goes back to Lucifer all the way back there, and it was pride. That is going to be the number one problem that God's people get into: pride. If you work with people, you deal with people, you know that pride is always the thing that keeps them from ever doing what is right sometimes. Pride blinds people. It comes to the point where people, I have known people who had done the stupidest, dumbest, damnable things throughout the Bible in their life. Yet they would argue with you up one side and down the other how much they love God and how much they are in fellowship with God. You know why? Pride. Pride will keep us from really seeing not just who we are, but where we are at.

We get to the point sometimes, and this is where it starts, and I have told you this before, it starts when God's people start picking and choosing out of the Bible what you want to believe and what you do not want to believe. You want to believe these things here, but when it comes to these things here, you are just willing to not even look at them or just forget them or just bypass them, and that is where it starts. We as a child of God, I am telling you folks, we do not have a right to pick and choose out of that book what we want to believe and what we do not. When we do not do what is right, you know what you do? You get it right with God or whoever the case may be or whatever the case may be, and you never let pride get into it. Pride was the number one problem in the Bible first, and it will be the number one problem all through the Bible, and it is the number one problem with God's people today. These are the sins of the saints. Dr. Ruckman had a message years and years ago, I probably know that there is some place, called "The Sins of the Saints." You know where he preached that? Right here.

So he says a proud look, that is a choice. That is a choice we all make. We look at a circumstance, we may not like it, we do not do this, we do not do that. We have an option now through the Word of God, a protocol that we take, but we do not choose that one, we choose pride. Pride is a choice. They are all choices. Before we were saved, we did not have a choice. Now that you are saved, sin should have no more dominion over you. You have a choice.

- 1.) A proud look.
- 2.) A lying tongue.
- 3.) Hands that shed innocent blood.
- 4.) A heart that devises wicked imaginations.
- 5.) Feet swift running to mischief.
- 6.) A false witness.
- 7.) Sowing discord among the brethren.

The lying tongue. I get that because most of the guys when they preach this, and I understand it, I agree with it, they talk about, "Well, once you get prideful, then you cannot deal with the truth and you tell lies and all that." I get that, I understand. But for my dealings with people, and dealing with myself, when the first thing is a proud look, the second thing is a lying tongue. It is not just lying about something or somebody, but it is lying about where you are really at with the Lord to yourself. That is the real key.

Hands that shed innocent blood, that is the collateral damage that happens in a family or whatever when somebody does not do what is right and some young child or some young Christian sees what is happening and the collateral damage. A heart that devises wicked imaginations. Your heart, that is where it all starts. I have watched over the years and I have always said over and over and over again. I have seen it in churches. I have seen it in every aspect of ministry. When people leave a church, usually in 99.99% of the cases, their heart left a long time before their body went out the door. That is just the way it works. Feet swift running to mischief. False witness. Then of course the last one, sowing discord among the brethren. These are the sins of the saints, but they are choices we all make. It is not something as Flip Wilson used to say, "The devil made you do it." These are solid choices that we make, and in every case there is an alternative in the Word of God that you do not have to make that choice.

He comes down through here and he says, the reason why he says the seventh is sowing discord among the brethren is the capstone of all this and which makes it an abomination, because in Israel's time when all these things were going on, that is what destroyed the unity of the nation of Israel, and that is what destroyed the unity of anything in Christianity when these things are the choices that people make. As I always say, life is about choices.

## VII. Giving Life More Abundantly

The third thing He says here in verse 2 continued. He says that He should give life eternal to as many as Thou hast given Him. That is to me personally, that is right to me as a pastor, but it ought to be right to you as a parent. It ought to be right to you, to anybody who is ministering in a New Testament church. In John 10:10, we looked at this a while back. He says, "I have come that they might have life and that they might have it more abundantly." What a great verse that is. You see, the job of my job as a pastor and your job as the Christian is to give people life. God gave the life to me, He gave it to you, we ought to be witnesses unto Him, and when we are witnesses unto Him, we give other people life, obviously that is salvation.

Then the Bible says that we are not, "I have come to give them a life and that they may have it more abundantly." You see, the "more abundantly" takes place of what we give people after salvation. A life of teaching you the biblical principles of life, helping you with your family, its blessings, the power of God in your life, understanding who God sent you to, understanding who God has put into your life, giving you everything you need for your hour. You see, He says "life," that is salvation, but "life more abundantly," that is after salvation. That is taking the people that God has given you and making sure beyond salvation the blessings of God never end. The power of God never dries up. The fruit of God never withers on the vine. The life that you got with salvation is incredibly wonderful, but it does not stop there. It is only the beginning. Now you go into the abundance of a life with Christ that just never stops.

That is the problem with most of God's people. They got saved and that is where it ended. They took God's salvation but they never did anything with it to bring about any abundance in their life. That is why they are miserable today. That is why they are unsatisfied today. That is why so many of God's people have the problems that they have today. They do not even understand why. It is simply because when God saved you, He gave you life, but He does not want it to stop there.

He wants to give it to you more abundantly. That is all the things that go along with the salvation God gave you. Giving you and me everything that we need.

I have told you before, and we have a lot of young men and young ladies here that are really good leaders. You really are. I am proud to be associated with you. I watch you as you do with people, as you work with people, you do ministry. You have really embraced the idea biblically of what it means to be a true leader. I have told you before, a true leader today in the church, like Paul, he establishes himself first in the church. Then he will take the people that God gives him and absorb them, not into just his own ministry, but absorb them into his life. It becomes a thing where it is not about the static ministry that you come and do. It is the fact that you get absorbed into a person's life. You become actually part and understand everything that God is doing. You too enjoy the unity of the abundance of the life that God gives you. A true leader will give you life, then he will develop that life to an abundance.

When I look at Christ, my model, my example, He always took care of the ones who did the work for Him. They did not always do it right, and He had to deal with them sometimes. But there was never a time that He did not look out for them. I mean, stop and just think about it from a purely aesthetic example. When He called them out in Matthew chapter 10 and they went with Him, what did He tell them? He says, "Take no thought of your food, take no thought of your coat, take no thought of your raiment, take no thought of anything, just come and follow me." Now that is a pretty bold statement. But when you put it into the context of what He has done with the people God gave Him when you get into chapter 17, you know why they did not need any of that? Because He was going to provide for them everything they needed. He was all they needed. Everything that they would get in a physical world came through Him. Now there are a lot of ramifications to that, but to me, to me personally, I take that to heart in my own ministry with the people that God has given me to make sure in your hour, whether you do with it what you are supposed to or not, is not my concern. My job is to make sure you have everything that you need to do that.

There is a missing word in churches today with pastors. I guess probably it is also true with Christians, but being a pastor myself and being it for a long time and seeing them out there, I know it is a missing word with them. It is simply the word "gratitude." They look at their people and they think that those people are there for them. They think that, "Hey, I grew up in it all my life." I saw that when a person back in the old days would come down and get saved or a family would join a church or somebody would come down and get saved, they would deal with them down in the altar, and they would get saved, and everybody would say, "Praise the Lord," and be happy, slap them on the back. Then it was not 15 minutes after that that either the bus captain or this guy or this guy or this guy called him over here and said, "I think God has called you to work in the bus ministry. I think God has called you to work here. God called you to work there." That young person, young couple, young family was so enamored with just being saved, they actually believed what that person was saying was the right thing. So they got swallowed up in this big machine. They got no discipleship. Nobody ever asked them what they understood about the Bible or what they did not. They were put into the great Christian meat grinder called Baptist churches. Then after two or three years with no training, no discipleship, nobody working with

them, nobody, no place to go if they had issues, which you know every young Christian is going to have, when they got burned out and they fell by the wayside, then they had the audacity to blame the people instead of looking at their own selves and their own system. That is what it was, ingratitude, ingratitude, not looking and being thankful for the people that God gave you to be your co-laborers, to be by your side, and never, never, never, never take them for granted.

I have a lot of problems. I am just human like anybody else. I have my struggles, I have my issues, and there are times that I just have to deal with things just like you do. But let me tell you a problem I have never had, and I can honestly say this before God, I have never had a problem not being thankful for the folks that God has given me. You guys have been around, some of you have been around me for 30, 40 years. I know it has been a labor, but you know what? I have given people all my life everything that I have, everything that is in me. I have never hurt anybody. Even if people have done me wrong, I never got vindictive. I always had somebody else that could take them out. I never got vindictive. I never got to the point where I just realized that you know what? You never focus on what you do not have, folks. You are always going to have negative things. Never focus on what you do not have. Focus and be thankful for what God gave you that you do have.

In all my life, in all my ministry, when I look at the pastors out there, honestly, and I know some people will disagree with what I am about to say, I do not care. I have been in, hey, if you have not been in the ministry and you have not been a pastor, shut your mouth when it comes to understanding what somebody else is really doing and what they are not. You do not have any perspective on it. I am telling you, I have seen these guys. They care nothing about their people. They are a giving record on a card someplace. They want everything from you, but if you have a problem in your life, your kids run away or your kids do this or you have marital problems, you cannot get in the door with them. They will sign you out to some second string or someplace who knows no more about it than the next guy. I am telling you right now, they never see the people that God gave them as the most important asset that they have in the ministry. They do not take care of them. They do not care about them. They use them, they abuse them, and then they throw them on the ash heap, and that is the end of it. They never come to the point where they really understand what He is talking about here, that my job, any pastor's job, is to not only give you life, but then make sure you get it more abundantly.

I told you Thursday night when I forget who asked the question, we were talking about churches and the churches that God has given us and the blessings of it. It is a thing where I look at these guys and they, honestly guys, they spend 20 million, 30 million, 40 million, 50 million, 60 million, 100 million on church buildings. Their sound system is \$150,000. It is a thing where the churches, they are nothing more than a monument to the man who is building it. I have never bought into that. I have always been thrifty with what we have. I have looked at the churches that fit our needs. But at the end of the day, the money that I have goes for two things in this church. It goes for ministry, making sure whatever you do, you have everything you need. I have people come to me sometimes say, "Bob, I need..." I say, "What?" "Well, you know, we got this thing and we need..." "What?" "Well, you know, I just, you know, we need..." "You need a what?"

"Well, I need this." "Okay, go get it." "Well, it is \$200." "Get one that is \$400, it will probably be better." I do not care. You get what you need to do the job.

You see, folks? I understand the sacrifice that many of you make for this church and my ministry. I do. I will never take you for granted. I know you spend long hours. Sometimes I do not know how you do it. I am thankful that all the ones that we have sat down and we have got to get a balance in your life so you do not get crazy over the edge. But I tell you, even with that, I am just overwhelmed. But I never take it for granted. I look at what God has given me here with you and how God has put us together and how you just, you do not look back and you just, I watch you. I do not understand. You just keep doing and going and you work with this and you do that, and there are things that I do not even have to tell you to do that you now see them that need to be done. I want you to know, as your pastor, I know and understand. That is one of the sacrifices that you make. So I try to make it as a two-way street as I can. That is why I will take all the families down to Branson. That is a thank you for what you are doing for me. It is a thing where, you know, I take you down there and we pay for so much of it. I think it probably cost \$10,000, \$15,000 to do that. I do not care. You know why? Because you are worth every penny of it. You do for this church over and above. The day I get to the point that I just think that is what you are supposed to do and show ingratitude is the day you need to fire me and get somebody in here that shows you the gratitude that you deserve.

I understand what you do for me. I understand the sacrifices you make. I know you all got your life. You got your job. You got your kids. That even makes it more special to me that you are willing to balance all that out because you believe that God put us together. I look at what we did for Halloween. The impact that we made into this neighborhood, we will get rewards out of that forever. I look at the camps we have had in the past. I do not have any qualms about what we spend for camp. I do not care. You know why? Because there is no greater—if I had a choice between putting money in a \$60 million building or \$60 million into your kids, I would not have to pray about which way I am going to put it because your kids are everything. You are everything. We are everything because we have an hour. We only got an hour. The clock is running. It is going to be a thing where it is going to be over. The buzzer is going to sound. The lunch whistle is going to blow. The clock is going to be out of time. My job is to not only give you life but help develop it that you get it more abundantly. I can do things to help you with that. Your special needs. I am not even going to get into it. The needs that many people have that we are here for. I mean, and going back to the ministry, whatever you need. We are developing new things all the time. I am not going to sink millions and millions of dollars in a building or a sound system when we need what we need to reach people and do what we need to do.

I looked at the veterans' things the other night. Twenty guys came out here that I will tell you. We gave them little gifts. We gave them presents just to thank them for what they did. It is a thing where I never see a police officer. I never see a man in uniform that I do not go over and thank them for what they are doing and tell you, "I pray for your safety." You see? You are special. You are not just special because you are a group of people here. You are special because God brought us all together because we got an hour that we are all going to work through. I will never come to the place where I am having ingratitude toward any of you. Even if you do not do anything,

which is kind of a rare thing here, but even if you do not, I am still thankful for who you are and that you are here. You know why? Because at some point you may find the legitimacy of your hour. I have never closed the door on anybody. You know why? Because I learned a long time ago, leave that door open because you never know what God is going to do. But you see, sometimes we get our pride involved. Sometimes we get our emotions involved. Sometimes we do not like this, we do not like that. I learned a long time ago, this is God's church. I am just a pawn put in charge. But it is His. He will protect it. He will not only give us life, but He will give us life more abundantly.

## VIII. Glorifying Christ and Finishing the Work

The fourth thing, look at verse 4. The main two areas of my Christian life. He says, "I have glorified Thee on the earth. I have finished the work which Thou gavest me to do." The first thing my job is, your job is, once you realize you have an hour, is to glorify Christ on earth with our lives. Really allowing God to take you and me and our ministry together to the ends of the earth. Families ministering together. I watch some of you young couples. I really do. I am not going to get into names this morning, but I am telling you, there is a host of you out there that you have little kids. You are doing exactly what you need to do with them. It shows. I watch them. I watch you. I watch how you interface with them. I watch how you, what you do and how they are growing up and how they are polite and how they are respectful. My mind still goes back to years ago. We had a couple in the church that had two little hellions, and they are probably big hellions now. I went up to the kid one day and I said, "Hey, how you doing?" He kicked me. I looked at his mom and dad. I said, "I love him. I wish he was mine for just about 20 minutes." Kicked me.

Are we standing still in our walk with God or are we moving out? In the military, there is a term called "Oscar Mike." The military has got all these goofy terms. Oscar Mike means we are moving out. A couple of months ago, I told the people this, the blessings that God just gives you in the abundance of life. I mean, it is great to be saved, but He does not want us to stop there. He has got so many things that He wants to bless us with, give us. He wants to take your life and my life to the ends of the world. I know you do not see how that is possible, but I am telling you right now, it is. It is.

I told him Thursday. I think it was Thursday night. I was scrolling down through YouTube. I get these old war movies you can find on there, some of the old science fiction. I am going down through there. You know how YouTube is. You find one and then they are listed and you can just scroll down through them all. I was going down and I was going across with them. It was probably 11 o'clock at night. I am coming across that thing and all of a sudden I looked at that and there was Old Paths Baptist Church. This was not on the website. This was in the YouTube world, wherever that is at. Right there in the middle was, it was like three or four years ago on a Sunday morning. I looked at that and I thought, "How in the world did you jump out of the website and get over to here?" Then I opened it up and looked at it, 5,000 views in three years. I went down and looked at the comments all over this world. I do not say things about that. Anybody, but to me, things like that are blessings in our lives. It does not take, I am not looking

for big blessings. I am really not. I am a guy who just likes the little blessings. I mean, I go to Burger King, and I get a cheese whopper and I get some fries, and I wish I would have got an order of onion rings too, but I cannot. But you know what God does? He will have that guy that is doing that stuff and I will get the fries. There will be a couple onion rings in it. Praise God from whom all onion rings flow, brother. I am in, man. Or I will be walking someplace, and you know, walking there, my morning walk, and you know, you see those, you know, you have to floss your teeth and they have them now where they have those little plastic sticks with the string in them and you will be walking on. Give me one perfectly good right there.

Glorifying Christ while we are here. Bible says no man lives to himself and no man dies to himself. There is always somebody watching our lives. What do they see? That is really the key. Then the second aspect, He says, "I have finished the work which thou hast given me to do." No, He had not. But God saw in His heart what He was going to do. Look, we all got a job to do. We all got a work to do. We are all running out of time. Most pastors my age, they have already retired. I went to the dentist last week. I hate going to the dentist, by the way. There is just a tooth cleaning, teeth cleaning. Honestly, why they think they have to make conversation, I am here to clean my teeth. I open my mouth and they start asking you questions. "What do you do for a living?" I mean, come on, get in there, get it done. I got to get home.

She stopped there and she says, and you know, the lady that used to do my teeth, she watched Bible study every Thursday night, every Sunday morning. We had a great time together. She moved out to Green Valley or someplace. So I am getting new people every time now. They do not know me. She is down there and she is, you know, I love to make you wear those sunglasses because I do not want to look into their eyes while they are looking down in my mouth. She is down there and she is doing this. She says, "Well," she says, "what are you going to do for the rest of your day?" I said, "Well, I am just going to go home." She says, "Well, are you retired?" I said, "No." She says, "What do you do?" I says, "What are you writing, a book, lady? Leave that chapter out." I said, "I am a pastor." Everybody is happy when you tell them they are a pastor until they find your first church service. No, they are not happy anymore. But anyway, I said, "I am a pastor." "Oh, that is wonderful." She says, and she said, she says, "How long have you been a pastor?" I said, "I have been doing it for 50 years." Well, you know what is coming next. "How much longer do you think you want to do that?" I looked out, "50 more years is what I want." I mean, you do not quit. You do not stop. When God saved you, there was no expiration date on your foot. You are in this thing, man. You got an hour. You know when it will be time for all of us to quit? When the clock sounds and our hour is up. Until that time, you stay with it. I mean, it is, I make no apology for the urgency of the hour. We are all up on a clock and it is running out. Paul likened it to 1 Corinthians 9:24 of running a race. But it is a race. It is a race against time. Finding the balance, finding out what God really has for you to do, and then going to town on it.

## IX. God's Foreknowledge and Our Calling

Then He says in verse 5, "And now will Father glorify thou me with thine own self and glory which I had with thee before the world was." I gave you what just fits into last week already. I know, I know that does not directly fit into me because I was not there. Christ was, physically.

But believe me, even though you and I were not back there in a physical sense, if you think that even back then you and I were not in God's mind, you do not know much about God in the Bible. The foreknowledge of God is one of the greatest studies in the Word of God. God looked down through all the expanse of time for 7,000 years and He saw every man, every woman that ever lived. He saw every circumstance that they would face. He saw little kids losing their lives when they were little. He saw people dying of cancer when they were in their 20s or 30s. He has seen the old salts who were going to live to be 80 or 90 years old. He saw the boys coming off the ramp in Normandy. He saw all the fears and things that you and I were going to struggle with. He saw it. It was not where He was just out there and He says, "Oh, I am God and we are going to get this thing together and here we go." He had a plan. He had a plan for the second heaven. He had a plan for Earth and in His mind is you and me.

I do not know what to tell you. It is hard for me to wrap my mind around that. I asked many, many times, many, many times, "God, why me?" Then I say, "Why you?" Why did God care enough about us to put up with us? I mean our calling of God before I was ever, ever born. God had, and I cannot speak for you, but God had my birth and my calling match up to my hour by being born in 1950. God for whatever reason wanted me to live half of the 20th century and hopefully half of the 21st century. I often think of what He did back there in Jeremiah chapter 1 with Jeremiah where He said to Jeremiah:

*Jeremiah 1:5*

*Before I formed thee in the belly I knew thee; and before thou camest forth out of the womb I sanctified thee, and I ordained thee a prophet unto the nations.*

*Jeremiah 1:6*

*Then said I, Ah, Lord GOD! behold, I cannot speak: for I am a child.*

*Jeremiah 1:7*

*But the LORD said unto me, Say not, I am a child: for thou shalt go to all that I shall send thee, and whatsoever I command thee thou shalt speak.*

*Jeremiah 1:8*

*Be not afraid of their faces: for I am with thee to deliver thee, saith the LORD.*

Then, I cannot speak for you, but this is me. This was me back 50 some years ago when I was contemplating all the fears and anxiety of what God wanted me to do, how I was going to do it, my own deficiencies and not knowing how I was going to ever be able to do this. I will never forget the day God took His hand and took that word and touched my mouth. You see that is the day it all begins. Maybe that is the day your hour starts. The day that you stand there and you honestly, legitimately say, "Lord, I am a child, I cannot do this, I am afraid of their faces." Then you know what the Lord does? He says, "Do not be afraid of them, Bob, it is okay. Let me show you what I am going to do for you."

*Jeremiah 1:9*

*Then the LORD put forth his hand, and touched my mouth. And the LORD said unto me, Behold, I have put my words in thy mouth.*

That is the day your hour starts. The day God puts His words into your mouth, and what we do or we do not do from that point on is a choice. It is just that simple. It is a choice. You either choose to do it or you choose not to do it. You choose to follow everything in the Bible or you choose to pick and choose. You choose to like everything you got to do for God or you choose to do nothing for God. Hey, there are problems and issues in everything in the world you are going to have to deal with, certainly in Christianity, but everything you deal with is laid out in the Word of God through a protocol and it is our choice. It is our choice.

He says, "I put the words into your mouth to root out, to pull down, to destroy, to throw down and then after you get all that done, Bob, then you build and plant." The process of giving people life but making sure they get it more abundantly. Giving them what they need, taking care of them, never hurting them, always making yourself available to them. Coming to the place that you always try to be ahead of the game of where they are at, what their struggles are. Always come to the place that you realize that God, just like He had the 12 apostles which we will see next week. Every pastor has the people that God gives him and it is his responsibility to show gratitude to them for what they do. Never take it for granted. Never get to the point where you get so high on yourself that you think that you are the lifeblood of the ministry here. We labor together and it is a thing where my job is to make sure you get life but then to make sure you get it more abundantly.

I want you to get everything that God has for you. I want your families to have everything that God wants for them to have. I want you as a young man or a young lady, single, to grow up strong and straight and have everything, every blessing that God has for you. I want you young couples to grow up in this ministry and together learn to serve God, learn to hold the line with God, and it is a thing where that is exactly what the more abundance is. It is you getting saved and then God developing and taking that through a New Testament local church and make sure you get everything you need because we are on the clock and we got a job to do. In Christianity where some of God's people will wither on the vine, I have simply decided to hold the line, and that is where we are at with it. In our balance, understanding your hour and then finishing the work that He has given us to do. We are all on the clock.

Chapter 17 was a great chapter for me. I know most guys would not preach it this way. They would preach it from the aesthetics of what is going on. This is Christ praying for His apostles. That is all good. But this is really something to me. This chapter is something that God gave me as a young pastor exactly what I needed to know, and there is no doubt in my mind that someday some of you, some of you young men and some of you young ladies will be married to a young man. It is your pastor or church, and you need to understand now all the things that you need to look for, all the things that you need to understand now. God will take you and train you now for what He is going to have you to do at some point in life because your hour is here, and He wants you to not only have life, He wants you to have it more abundantly, and then He took His words and put it into your mouth, and what we do with it is our choice. We either take His words and do what He wants to do or we take our own words and do what we want to do. The choice is yours.