

John 17:14-26

Sunday 11/27/2022

Last week, we saw the events begin to unfold that will lead us up to the crucifixion of the Lord Jesus Christ. We have seen now where He is about to finish His work. We have looked at the hour of His work and we have made all the applications to our hour of our work. In John 19:30, when Christ was on the cross, He made the statement that it is finished. Many people take many things from that, which I totally understand and agree with. Our salvation was finished; many things were finished. But in particular here, it was the work that God sent Him to do that was now finished.

We saw last week the act of betrayal by Judas to stop the work of Christ. We have seen this pattern literally all through the Bible. I have pointed it out to you many times, and certainly through the history of the world, how when God moved to do something, then the devil moved in opposition to that. This established pattern of history will also be in your own Christian life and Christianity as a whole. The devil will try to stop the work and the calling that God has for Christianity and for each one of us.

Last week, we learned how the attack will always come from the inside. As I told you last week, attacking Christianity from the outside will never work. When you look at history, this is so evident. I guess it was around 100 BC that the Roman Empire defeated Alexander the Great, and there are a lot of things going on there, but Rome came into power approximately about 100 BC. Rome became the final great Gentile nation that brought us up to the time of Christ. It would be safe to say that the greatest enemy Christianity ever had was Rome. Rome's attack on Christ and New Testament Christianity.

When Jesus showed up at the first coming of Christ, we know that Rome was in power and she had really conquered all of Europe and all of what we would call the known world. We have seen the Roman leaders and the Roman governors and the Roman positive that have just spread themselves all over Europe. The greatest outside attack on New Testament Christianity came from Rome.

We call ourselves Christians. In the book of Acts, they were first called Christians at Antioch. We like to call ourselves Christians; that is a name that is synonymous with our belief in Christ. But most people do not know that that is not a Christian term. It is a term that was given to believers by Rome, and it stuck with us because of the doctrine that we believe that Rome thought was so ludicrous that it looked like that was a derogatory term. We wear it as a badge of honor.

Rome had over five or six hundred different gods; they had a god for everything. The temple of Zeus and the temple of all the gods; they had statues. You see them all through the Roman Empire during that period of time, or remnants of it today if you would go to that part of the country. But Christians, you and I, believers, only had one God, and that was the Lord Jesus Christ and God the Father, whom we all know and love, and He is the one who died on a cross for us. Rome looked at that as kind of like a poor man's religion. They thought that any religion that only had one God was not very good because they looked at theirs as being over five or six hundred different gods as being the ultimate. So they called believers back then Christians,

which simply means "little Christ." We have our name as Christians today from the greatest enemy Christianity has ever seen.

Now, we are Baptist. I am a Baptist, and I make no apology for that. Nobody wants to be a Baptist today. They think that Baptists are goofy, and Baptists are certainly goofy. I always claim I am a Baptist with an explanation because there are some really goofy Baptists out there. But Bible-believing churches were always connected to the Baptist if you walk through it. The word "Baptist," again, not a Christian term we call it today, but the word "Baptist" was given to a group of Christians who were believers by the Roman Empire. We got that name because we stood against the central doctrine of the Roman Catholic Church, which was infant baptism and baptism for salvation.

Originally, back in the 1200s, 1300s, 1400s, we were called "Pedobaptist." "Pedo" meaning little child, and "a" being against baptism. "Pedo-anabaptist." As time went on, they dropped the "Pedo," and they just called us "Anabaptist," meaning "against baptism." A little bit later on, they dropped the "Ana," and now we are just Baptist. So what I am trying to tell you is that the greatest enemy of Christianity gave us the names of the two most prominent Bible-believing groups of the early church age: one, first called Christians; two, the Baptist that came out of the Waldensians and the Albigensians out of the Dark Ages of Europe.

With all the bloodshed and all the genocide that Rome tried to do, you had Nero, you had Titus, who in 70 AD destroyed Jerusalem. Nero is said to have liked the chariot games, the chariot races that we are all so familiar with. Have you ever seen the movie *Ben Hur*? What you have there is the fact that he was always so busy with his daily activities, he did not have time, so he would want to have the races at night. Obviously, they did not have the speedway lights that we have today that can run the races into the night. So what he did was a novel idea: he took Bible-believing Christians, some of your ancestors, and for all day long while he was busy doing his deal, they soaked them in pitch and straw wrapped around them. Then that night, they lashed them to high poles and set them on fire so that he could enjoy the races by light. That is your heritage; that is the Christians that actually were really Christians.

In spite of all of that, in spite of the Colosseum and the gladiators and the wild animals and the beasts that killed all the Christians, they never stopped Christianity. Christianity never would be wiped out from the outside. Then, around 300 AD, the devil knew that pagan Rome could never survive and do the job with everything that was happening in Europe. Then it switched to a religion, and now we find the Roman Catholic Church and Papal Rome. The devil now set on destroying Christianity turns now to an attack on the inside. He corrupts that church, people that are in it. He builds his own church out of it to end New Testament Christianity now through a religion, and now the attack against Christians comes from the very inside.

The persecution of the church from the outside only made it stronger because you knew clearly who the enemy was—Rome—and you knew how to take your stand because of what you believed. But like Christ last week, in Christianity, when the real attack came, it was through betrayal from within, just like Judas, one of His twelve. In Christianity, where the real attack to stop the church came, it came from within. It would now try to destroy the Word of God and

could destroy the church from the inside. We see the corrupting of the Word of God from men inside the very circle of the New Testament church, not the world. No, no, it started with men that claimed to be saved, and many of them were.

In Paul's time, in 2 Thessalonians 2:7, we are told, and we all understand this, that even in his time, "the mystery of iniquity doth already work." We are told in 2 Corinthians 2:17 that in Paul's time, there were already men who were corrupting the Word of God. They were not men from the outside; they were rogue men who portrayed themselves as Christians on the inside. Now, and I laid this out for you a couple of weeks ago, maybe a month ago, we see all the false doctrines begin to enter into Christianity: the idea of the deity of Christ, that He was not God; the fact that He really did not resurrect Himself; the aspect of the virgin birth. A little later on, we see predestination; we see baptism for salvation. It all comes, it all starts, not from the outside world. The devil tried that, and it did not work. Now he comes at it from the inside.

I remember years ago studying church history and coming through the history of the church and those early church fathers. When you read about them in church history, they were truly saved people. You have a guy by the name of Irenaeus. He lived around 33 AD when he was born up to 180, so he was right in the time and everything was happening after Christ went back to heaven. He actually died as a martyr in the Colosseum; he was burnt, he died. He is held up as one of the great church fathers of the early church. But in his writings, and I remember I think he writes 12 or 15 letters, he is the first man, a saved man from within the church, that in his writings he refers to the church as "Catholic" long before the Catholic Church ever started. But when, 200 or 300 years later, the Catholic Church wanted to give itself credibility to call itself Catholic, where do you think they went? To his writings.

Polycarp, 60-some AD to about 155, a great Christian. He too died; they burned him at the stake, and he said, "85 years have I trusted Him; I will not deny Him today." They burned him at the stake. In his writings, he said that the church was the mother of us all, a clear violation of the Bible. In the New Testament, it tells you that Jerusalem, New Jerusalem, is. You see that first corruption when Rome could not do it from the outside. The devil got on the inside, and he took saved people and began to get them to deviate from the clear teachings of the Word of God.

As time goes on, you have guys like Papias. He is around 60 AD. Now he is teaching that Christ was born in a cave. Then you have Basilides about 138. He said that Christ really did not die on the cross; it was Simon the Cyrenian who helped Christ carry the cross. He was the one that was really crucified. I guess you get mixed up on a busy day like that. Justin Martyr, he is not called Justin Martyr because he lived a long life; he is called Justin Martyr because he was murdered around 100 AD, and he taught that Christ was just a philosopher. Then you have Origen about 130 AD, and he is teaching that baptism for salvation is the only true way to be saved. From the inside, not from the outside.

The principle of betrayal from the inside is taught all through the Bible. Go all the way back to one of my favorite stories in the Bible. It may not be too awfully familiar to you, but back in Numbers 22, 23, 24, 25, you have the story of Balaam and Balak. I am not going to take time to

get into that whole thing today, but I will condense it down into a cliff notes for you so you can figure it out.

Here is the storyline: Balak is the enemy of God and God's people, and he wants them cursed and he wants them destroyed. Balaam is a so-called prophet whom Balak tries to pay off to curse God's people and to destroy them. You will find that in Numbers 22:17, he wants him to do an outside attack on them. To make a long story short, Balaam knows that he cannot do that without God killing him. But he wants the money because Balak has said, "I will give you whatever you want, as much as you want. I will do whatever you want if you will just do this for me." He wants that, but he knows he cannot do it that way. So he comes up with a plan. In Numbers 24 and 25, you begin to see the plan that he gave him.

When you get into the New Testament, this will be called in Revelation 2:14, "the doctrine of Balaam." When you get into the New Testament in 2 Peter 2:15, this is called "the way of Balaam." When you get into Jude 11, you will find this is called "the error of Balaam." Three places in the New Testament that will explain what he was trying to do in the Old Testament. You know why? Because they are trying to do it again today.

So he comes up with a plan that he says, "Look, I cannot curse them, but if you get their boys and girls to marry outside Israel and marry your boys and girls, pagans, and bring their gods in, this is the start of Baal worship. He says, "You will not have to kill them because God will kill them." In Numbers 25, the doctrine of Balaam, the way of Balaam, and the error of Balaam are all in play. Interesting: attack them from the inside, not the outside.

I. Christ's Final Instructions and Prayer

Now today, we have the events beginning to unfold to the final hour of His crucifixion. Let us read today John 17, picking it up in verse 14 and down through the end of the chapter. Here is what He says:

John 17:14-26

I have given them thy word; and the world hath hated them, because they are not of the world, even as I am not of the world.

I pray not that thou shouldest take them out of the world, but that thou shouldest keep them from the evil.

They are not of the world, even as I am not of the world.

Sanctify them through thy truth: thy word is truth.

As thou hast sent me into the world, even so have I also sent them into the world.

And for their sakes I sanctify myself, that they also might be sanctified through the truth.

Neither pray I for these alone, but for them also which shall believe on me through their word;

That they all may be one; as thou, Father, art in me, and I in thee, that they also may be one in us: that the world may believe that thou hast sent me.

And the glory which thou gavest me I have given them; that they may be one, even as we are one:

I in them, and thou in me, that they may be made perfect in one; and that the world may know that thou hast sent me, and hast loved them, as thou hast loved me.

Father, I will that they also, whom thou hast given me, be with me where I am; that they may behold my glory, which thou hast given me: for thou lovedst me before the foundation of the world.

O righteous Father, the world hath not known thee: but I have known thee, and these have known that thou hast sent me.

And I have declared unto them thy name, and will declare it: that the love wherewith thou hast loved me may be in them, and I in them.

Father, we ask You now to take all of this, and there is so much here, but help us to systematically look at everything that is here that we need to see today. Truly, this is the most important statement that Christ has made to these men because it is the last statement that He has made to them. So help us today to learn, to glean from it, to apply it, and we will love You and thank You and praise You in Jesus' name and for His sake we ask it. Amen.

II. Three Key Areas for the Church

Now, in this remaining verse in this chapter, I do not know if you picked it up or not, but He gives them three distinct areas to always keep in mind and to remember for them to follow and to do. As I said in my prayer, you can see that this is literally the last thing He says to them before the coming events of His death on the cross and going back to heaven. I have told you many times, I even preached a message out of 2 Timothy to you, which is my favorite message to preach, how the last thing a man in the Bible says before he dies or before he goes home to be with the Lord, in the expense of Christ here, or some of the great men like Paul, the last thing that they say is usually very important to look at and study. I will tell you why: because it kind of sums up their whole life, and you get now the perspective of what they have been through, and it is very important. Here we have the last thing that He says to them before He goes back.

I want you to notice in John 17:15, these three areas that He is giving them that I am about to lay out for you are given to them to keep them from "the evil." "The evil," as we will see, as we have already seen down through history, will be the betrayal of Christianity from within.

➤ Three key areas to keep the church from the evil:

1.) The Word of God

In John 17:14, He says, "I have given them thy word." In John 17:17, He quantifies that and He tells us that "thy word is truth." The Word of God will keep us from the evil; there is no question

about that. We all know that the main aspect of the Word of God is to give us the insight and lead, to guide us through the Holy Spirit of God through life in God's truth by its principles and by its truth.

I have learned, I have been in this business for over 50 years, and one of the things I learned to do very quickly was to watch people. People watching is one of the greatest things that you will ever undertake in your life. It does not cost you anything; it is free. It is not something you have to wait for to come on a TV channel; there are people that are all around you. But I have watched human nature. Once I began to get somewhat of a handle on the Word of God, I began to see the patterns of human nature. We are not complicated people. We like to pretend we are because we can hide the real issues within that so-called complication, but we are not complicated people. You are going to find that human beings just follow simple patterns, and those patterns are clearly laid out in the Word of God.

When I got looking and dealing with Christians, and I have dealt with 50 years worth of God's people in every scenario you could think of, in every circumstance you could hope to imagine, I have watched how they deal with things. I have watched how they react to things. I have watched how they have to face consequences or face challenges or face obstacles. I have pretty much come to the conclusion that when it comes to the Word of God, which He is talking about here, that He has given us, that is the truth, God's people will simply do one of three things with the Bible. There is not a fourth. I have watched this for years and years and years before I ever said anything. I am telling you today, you and me as God's people, when we are faced with something, God's people will do just one of three things with the Word of God.

➤ Three Responses to the Word of God:

1.) Never Use It

The first thing that many of them will do with the Word of God is never use it. Most folks, their answer to the problems they have in life, the problems that they create in their life, instead of going to the Word of God, which has the answers to solve every issue that we will get into, they will never do that. They will blame somebody else. They will blame some circumstance. They will lose job after job after job, and they will blame their boss. I have seen pastors lose church after church after church, and he blames the people. I have seen husbands and wives lose marriage after marriage after marriage, and in every case, the wife will always look back and blame all the husbands, and the husbands will look back and blame all the wives.

This is why God's people never get any victory in their life, and this is why you will find many times that people, Christians, will just simply jump from church to church to church to church. What they do is, as they go to one church for a while, everything is fine because nobody knows them. Then problems begin to come up; the preaching gets too close. So they blame the preacher, go to another church. It happens all the time. You are going to see that the first thing that guides people in their relationship to the Bible is they do not do anything with it. They do not do a thing with it. It sits on their coffee table, they bring it to church, they never read it, they never open it. They do not have any principles of life. I am not sure why they come to church. I guess it is some kind of status symbol for them or some kind of placating of their spirit that they actually

went to church. But the bottom line is, the Word of God was given to us for a reason, and God's people never do anything with it. So you are going to begin to see that, and it is a thing where you begin to just follow it all the way through.

2.) Pick and Choose

Now the second thing that I have watched them do, and I see this one all the time, is you are going to find that God's people, they have got the Bible, and they actually read the Bible, and I believe they study the Bible. But what happens is that they are famous for picking and choosing out of the Bible what they want to follow and what they do not want to follow. I told you a couple of weeks ago, before salvation, all of us, sin was our nature. But after salvation, sin now is a choice. There was absolutely no reason for anybody in this room who was saved and on your way to heaven not to have the victory of Christ and live above every circumstance in life. But what happens is, in this second group, there will be people who take what they want to follow but will not use other places in the Bible that clearly are given to them.

I have had this all through my life. Every pastor has. I remember years and years ago, when we were having our prayer groups, we had them up at the old place. We had a guy who did not think that that was real prayer. He thought that he was the king of prayer. So I gave him a shot. I said, "Okay, I will give you your own prayer group." Well, he was a flop in the thing. He was the kind of guy that he thought that we were not praying right because if you do not get someplace alone and have this really not prayer that you guys sitting around tables cannot really pray. He told me straight out, he said, "You know what, this church really does not have what I call a biblical prayer." Well, I came to find out later, this guy was immersed in pornography beyond belief. I later told him, when I confronted him, I said, "You know what, you wanted to tell me how to pray in this church. Let me clarify something for you. If I want to find a good porn site, I will call you. If I want to know what prayer really is in a church, you are not the guy I am going to call." You know what that is? You are making and choosing what you want. He is the king of prayer, but in reality, he is the king of porn. It is okay to be involved in that, but it is not okay to pray because you see how it works? It always works that way.

You have women in the church. This is the standard joke. You have women in the church, and I do not know why women are always tagged with being the most gossip. That is not true in any way, shape, or form. I think that is a male thing, after you ladies, I want to tell you that. I heard a preacher one time say, "I had a lady come down, the biggest gossip in my church. She said, 'Preacher, I want to lay my tongue on the altar for God.' He looked down and said, 'We need a bigger altar.'" You women get a bad rap sometimes. But I know that it is true. You know what the Bible says about gossip? You know what the Bible says about slander? You know what the Bible says about backbiting? You know what the Bible says about talking about people for their destruction or their damage? But these same people will hold themselves up as loving God, loving the Bible, doing this and doing that. In other words, they pick and choose what they want to follow. I find that this group of people do exactly the same thing.

You are going to find that the key to Christianity, folks, is not being perfect. I want you to know that. I think some of you beat yourself up sometimes because you try to be perfect. You are not

going to be perfect until Jesus comes back. You need to try to be holy, but you are never going to be perfect. God never asked you or me to be perfect, but what He did ask for each of us is to be consistent with the Word of God. When Paul wrote to the church over there, in Acts 20:27, the church in Ephesus, you know what he said to them? He says, "Hey, guys, when I preach to you, I preach to you the whole counsel of God." We do not get to pick and choose what we want to believe out of the Bible. We do not want to pick what we do this, and then we do this over here, and we are okay with that. That is what you find today. It is a thing where instead of being totally honest about where they are at, pride comes up. Instead of running everything they do through the Word of God and having a good biblical principle behind every decision we make, it does not work that way.

3.) Use It for Everything

Then the third group that I found is people who will use the Word of God for everything in their life. The Bible becomes to them all things in faith and practice. Faith being what you believe, practice being what you do. They live to the best of their ability a principled life. They have good, solid principles behind the things that they do. They learn the patterns of life, and they stay within the principles that will help you through the patterns of life. Picking and choosing what you want to apply will always lead to inconsistency in our lives. It is a thing where this is why you find a group of people who simply, the Bible is the Bible. They stay between the white lines to the best of their ability.

No matter what your situation or your issue is in life, us as Christians, when you do not follow the biblical protocol and patterns to deal with it and to fix it, you are done. The evil has just arrived in your life. We are told in Ephesians 4:27 that we are to "give no place to the devil." You know what that verse means? You know what that verse is saying? We do not give the devil any latitude in our lives. We do not give him any place in our lives. You know what that place is for all of us? When he says, "Do not give any place to the devil," you know where that place is? That place is the distance between what the Word of God says and how you apply it. The latitude in between becomes the devil's playground. This is where the old expression, "the devil gets into the details," comes from.

You young men and young ladies, this is one of the reasons why once we got to a certain point, when we got this last year and had our programming for what we want to do the next year, this is why I wanted to take our people ministry to another level and have times, not on a regular consistent thing, but every six or seven weeks where we just get together, sit down, have dinner together, come up and let you guys ask me anything you want to ask about the ministry. The church is like a movie. It is like an action-packed thriller. It is always moving someplace. The problem is that most of God's people never see the whole movie. They will get two or three frames out of the movie and think that they understand what the movie is all about. Of course, that will never work.

I remember with me and Mel, my father in the Lord, for those of you that do not know him, that taught me everything I know, I did not always understand why he did what he did. I was a young guy like you guys. He was a pretty tough guy, and he would make some decisions that I did not

always understand why he did what he did. In the military, and you guys have been in the military, you know what I am about to say is true. When you are in a situation where you are just a private or a corporal or even a sergeant, and the CO comes down and he gives you an order to go do this, you may not like the order. The order may look like you may get killed in the process, but you do not have a right or you do not have an opportunity to say to him, "Sir, why are we doing it this way?" You do not have that right. In the military, you get an order, you carry it out. Yes, you may die in the process, but the military is built on strict discipline that you do not question orders. You do what you are told to do, and the military runs that way. Many of you guys have followed those rules and paid for it with your life, but they knew what they were doing was probably a certain death, but they follow without questioning. They do not stop and say, "Have you thought this through, sir?" You do not get that option.

That is the difference between the military and Christianity. Though we are a military unit from God's standpoint, Jesus Christ is the captain of our salvation, and we are told to endure hardness as a good soldier of Jesus Christ, but you have a right to question every order that is given. That is how you guys learn. You see something you do not understand, you see something, "Why did Bob do it this way?" Do what I did with Mel. I must have driven him crazy. I would say, "Why did you do that? Why did you say that? I just want to learn, Mel, why did you do it?" He would explain it to me because a church, a moving church, a living church, is like a motion picture by Cecil B. DeMille, and most of God's people only see a few frameworks of it, and you cannot judge a movie by just a couple of snapshots. You have to see the whole thing, and sometimes you have to ask questions to understand those things. You find a pastor who will not sit down and explain why he does what he does, you find another church because you have a right. That is how you grow, that is how you know, that is how you learn.

You have to understand that there is a biblical protocol to the way that you do things. Someday, some of you guys and your wives, you are going to be your pastor's wives, you are going to be in a situation where you have to make some tough calls. When you are in charge, you have to make it based on your perspective of what you see that not everybody else always sees, and sometimes they do not understand. That is okay. All I am telling you is when you do not understand, find out why. Do not just sit there and make a judgment on something. Find out why. That is what you have to do to grow, to learn. All of you have incredible potential, but you will never realize it just looking at two or three frames of the movie.

The Word of God, its principles in particular, will hold Christianity together from the inside, never from the outside. We are told that the Word of God does its work; we are thoroughly furnished to all good works, truly from the inside out, not the outside ever. There is not one area of your life and my life dealing with your personal walk with God, your marriage, your family, your job, your relationship to the world, your relationship to other Christians, and that issues will arise with people at work or people in a church that you should ever become a problem. However, why? Because there is a format laid out how to deal with everything through the Bible. What problems we get into is picking and choosing what we want to do and what we do not want to do. You have an issue, you take it to the person, and then both of you take it to the Book. That

is the protocol. It is not complicated. Some people will pick and choose to do that; others will choose not to do that.

III. Sanctification and Accountability

2.) Sanctification / Set Apart

Now the second thing He tells them, He says they have been set apart. John 17:17, 19. He uses the word "sanctify them through thy word is truth." The Word of God sets us apart. That is what the word "sanctify" means. But only if we use it. He tells them in John 17:15-18 that He has sent them into the world as He was sent to do the work. That is directly to them, but it is also to you and me. But the evil that tries to stop His work, He says, comes from within. Sometimes you have to separate yourself from that evil and the world and also in Christianity.

We know that I have said it enough times, you have got it. We do not have the liberty to pick and choose what we want to follow out of the Bible. I get that. You get that. You do have the liberty to pick and choose of what and who you want to associate with. One of the great studies in the Bible will be a study of the anatomy of the nation of Israel. It is a picture of every church, any church you find today. You will find the breakdown that it breaks down in the Old Testament. You will find back there in the three distinct areas, just like God's people with the Word of God today and what they do or what they will not do with it.

When the nation of Israel camped, the Ark of the Covenant was the central aspect of Israel's worship with God. For us in the New Testament, that Ark represents the Lord Jesus Christ. You are going to find that there were three families. There were three families that took care of the Ark. They were the Kohathites, they were the Gershonites, and they were the Merarites. Those three families were given the responsibility that every time the Ark was taken down and moved, and when they camped, it was set up again, that they were the three families that dealt with that. I have always looked at that, and when I studied this years ago, I looked at these three families that probably the greatest picture of what our consistency should be with ministry, the Word of God, and everything that we have as Christians.

Now, I thank God I was not alive back then because I would not have made it as one of those three because my way of doing things, and so is yours by the way, I would put that Ark up with all of its pieces and all of that stuff, and it had to be done. Everyone knows how long to do it. I guarantee you I would have been thinking of a faster way to get it up because you did not need all the parts because you have duct tape. They did not have that option. For 40 years, how many thousands of times did they put that Ark and that tent and every piece that is listed that is unbelievable up the same way without any deviation from anything? You know why they did it that way? Because they knew that God had a pattern, and they were not allowed to deviate from the pattern. I am telling you right now, folks, you can do whatever you want to do with it. You have a pattern to deal with every issue in your Christian life. You can either do nothing with it, you can pick and choose out of it, or you can do what those three families did. Life is choices, is it not?

Once they got that set up, then it was time for the 12 tribes to camp. If you will get Clarence Larkin's book on this, or you can read it back there for yourself in the Old Testament, the Ark was in the center. We had the three families doing all the ministry work there, and then around that, as close as they could get to that Ark, the 12 tribes camped in a big circle. They got as close to the Ark as they could because they knew that the Ark was the central part of everything that they went. That is a picture in Christianity for us getting as close to Jesus Christ as we can because He is the central part of our life in everything that we do.

Then we had a third part, did we not? The third part was the mixed multitude. Where the three families were right with the Ark, and everybody else got as close as they could, the mixed multitude got as far away from the Ark as they could. These were the ones who came out of Egypt with them, but they cared nothing for the promises that God had given to Abraham. These are the ones who always had an issue with Moses. These are the ones when Moses was up on the mount getting the Word of God, they wanted a golden calf. These are the ones when they got to the Red Sea, and it was there, they thought they were trapped. They wanted to kill Moses. God opened up the Red Sea. They got across, and they looked back, and Pharaoh was coming across, and they wanted to kill Him again. This will be the mixed multitude. They never saw what God was doing with Israel. They only saw what directly affected them. In other words, they could not see the movie, the Nation of Israel. All they could see was a couple of frames that they were in.

For us, the model and the pattern is clear. God's people need to get as close to the Bible-based ministry as you can, the Word of God. Through the local New Testament church, it provides the most crucial part of New Testament Christianity. I know you probably do not think about this, but the most crucial part of your relationship with Christ after salvation is not your fellowship. It is not even your relationship with the Word of God. It is not your ministry. It is not how much you pray. It is not how much you sing. It is none of those things. The most crucial part of New Testament Christianity is one word: accountability.

You can have the Word of God but not be accountable to it. You can be saved and have the Holy Spirit of God inside you but not be accountable to Him. Accountability is the most crucial single word that God's people need. We all need to be held accountable. We are held accountable to the Word of God first, but then we are held accountable to each other because accountability in Christianity will be the checks and the balances of the Christian life. It will completely eliminate the picking and choosing of what you want to follow in the Word of God and what you do not. It forms the basis, and I am going to the third thing that He says here in a little bit, and then all of this will make maybe better sense to you, but it forms the basis for solving issues in your life with everything you have to face.

Accountability demands responsibility. Accountability means you cannot blame somebody else for your problems anymore. Accountability means that you cannot blame somebody for this if you did not go and find out what is going wrong and hold them accountable. This is the reason you see so many folks today, as I said earlier, simply jumping from church to church to church to church. They want no accountability in their life, yet if you would talk to them, they will pretend they are spiritual and they love God and all the things that go along about that. This is why you

find some who cannot fit into any church anywhere, and they just, they cannot, they do not want to be held accountable to anybody.

Most of you have teenagers, some of you not yet, but it is coming your way. When that kid hits the magical, what, four? It used to be 15 or 16, not anymore. When that kid hits that magical age, you know what the biggest issue that you are going to have to deal with them is? Accountability. We could translate that as authority. That is the biggest problem you are going to have. They do not want to be accountable to you anymore. They do not want to be accountable to anything, and that is the biggest problem that you are going to have to deal with as your kids grow up. You are going to have to realize that there comes a day, and I say that if you have to deal with that as a parent, how do you think God feels about it when He has to deal with us? You see, we do not want accountability either. We want to do our own thing. Oh, we love the Bible. King James Bible, yeah, we just pick and choose out of it what we really want to do with it. No accountability.

I do not care how spiritual you think you are or how much Bible you think you know. No one, I mean no one, is above the accountability of a New Testament local church, which is the structure by God of New Testament Christianity. Look at the book of Acts. Accountability is what the structure of the Word of God really sets us apart and sanctifies us. The issue in America, the problems America has, I mean we can clearly see it. I do not care where you go, what you do, what you get into, the issue in America and the issue with God's people is nobody, nobody wants to be held accountable. It is always somebody else's fault. Somebody else caused this for me. Somebody else said this about me. Somebody else did this to me. Accountability is the key.

Years ago, and I use this as an example, he is one of my favorite examples. I had a young kid. This is 40 some years ago. This kid grew up in my college and career class back then. The one thing I could say about him that would be the one word that would sum him up is that he always, he always did his own thing. He was not accountable to anything or anybody, and yet he was a diehard for the King James Bible. You are going to find most of them have to hang their hat someplace. He grew up in my ministry and never really did anything because you could not hold him accountable. He was a freewheeling cannon as you ever saw in your life. Nobody could tell him anything to do. He got married. At some point, he left the church that I was with back then in that day, and he went from that, I know of, five or six or seven different churches over the next 15 years of his life. He never lasted in any of them because he would not submit himself to anybody's accountability. This guy was literally not going to be accountable to anybody. You could not tell him anything. You could not reason with him about anything. He just would not submit himself to any accountability.

So you know what he did? After about 15 years of that and not fitting into any church anywhere, he started his own church. That church is still in existence today. I am not even going to tell you north, south, east, or west so you have no idea who I am talking about, but you will find the answer in Psalms 76. Now he has had a church for what, 25 years? Still running the same 14 people that he had when he started. A house of cards, as legalistic as you could ever imagine to be. You see, when you look at that situation with just a couple of snapshots, you do not get the picture. I have a 40-year running movie. You know why he started his own church? Because he

could not be accountable to anybody else's church. So he thought the answer to it was to start his own church.

Now, do you want to see the picking and the choosing? Here it is. Now he has his own church, and believe me, he requires his people to be accountable to him. But he never made himself accountable to any church. See how it works? Second verse, same as the first. It is the way it works. You cannot get out from under accountability. None of us. It is a thing where we like to pretend. But I am telling you right now what the Word of God does for us is it holds us accountable.

IV. The Importance of Unity

3.) Unity

Now the third thing, and then the third aspect will be, as far as I am concerned, this one will be the key to it all. It will be one single word also. It will be the word "unity." Look at what He says to them over and over again before He goes back. I want you to see this. Three times. Look at John 17:21. We are going to look at each one in itself, and then we are going to look at what He is saying so you do not have to get the conglomerate and not get it all laid out.

Look what He says in John 17:21:

John 17:21

That they all may be one; as thou, Father, art in me, and I in thee, that they also may be one in us: that the world may believe that thou hast sent me.

Now you know what He just told you? The key to the world seeing in Christianity that Christ is real will be the difference, or should be the difference, in God's people of unity that the world does not have. It is simply the world's system versus God's family. When the devil attacked the early church at Corinth, which he certainly did, we have a book there where the division is so strong that the devil attacked them from the inside. You can read the book and see where the attack came. Paul had to deal with those issues. You know what he said in 1 Corinthians 12:24-27?

1 Corinthians 12:24-27

For our comely parts have no need: but God hath tempered the body together, having given more abundant honour to that part which lacked;

That there should be no schism in the body; but that the members should have the same care one for another.

And whether one member suffer, all the members suffer with it; or one member be honoured, all the members rejoice with it.

Now ye are the body of Christ, and members in particular.

You see, the world has no unity. The world has no unity. They look at Christianity, and this is why people want nothing to do with Christianity today if you have not figured this out yet. They see the world where there is no unity, and it is full of schisms. Then they see Christianity in churches today that have the exact same problem. There is no unity. Nothing holds them together. You have schism after schism after schism. You have church split after church split. You have people gossip about other people. You have people doing all kinds of things. The world sees that and says, "Why do I want to be part of that?" Because there is no difference. You know what He told them? He says, "I am going to send you into the world that the world may believe, but I want them to see that I am in you and you are in Me, and we are both in the Father, and that there is no schism. Everything is accountable."

Then He tells them again in John 17:22:

John 17:22

And the glory which thou gavest me I have given them; that they may be one, even as we are one.

Note the oneness. There was no division between Christ and the Father because they are the Word of God personified together. So there should be no division between God's people because we have the Word of God and Christ living inside us. We just like to pick and choose.

Now the devil's plan all down through history to destroy and stop the work of God is a simple one. We see it from the very beginning of Genesis, the idea of "divide and conquer." Destroy the unity from the inside out. He has always done it in the Old Testament, in the New Testament, with God's people. All the way back in Genesis 3 with Adam and Eve, which we know was a type of Christ and the church. He divided Eve from Adam, church from Christ, then conquered them both. Then in time, once he did what he did, he divided them from God. You have to be pretty brain dead not to see that. He divided them from what God had told them to what the devil told them. "Yea, hath God said?" First great lesson in the Bible of picking and choosing is right there. They knew what God said, and they heard what the devil said. They had to pick and choose.

Then again, the third time He tells them in John 17:26:

John 17:26

And I have declared unto them thy name, and will declare it: that the love wherewith thou hast loved me may be in them, and I in them.

What a novel idea. Us loving each other based on God's love for us. Through that love, never allowing a division in the unity. You know the book of Ephesians is probably the most intimate book in the New Testament to us dealing with the church and certainly the theme of the church and the oneness of the unity of the church. He says in Ephesians 4:1-6:

Ephesians 4:1-6

I therefore, the prisoner of the Lord, beseech you that ye walk worthy of the vocation wherewith ye are called,

With all lowliness and meekness, with longsuffering, forbearing one another in love;

Endeavouring to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace.

There is one body, and one Spirit, even as ye are called in one hope of your calling;

One Lord, one faith, one baptism,

One God and Father of all, who is above all, and through all, and in you all.

He says there is one body, unity; one Spirit, unity; one Lord, unity; one faith, unity; one baptism, unity; and one God and all. And He is in all of us. He says in Ephesians 4:3, "Endeavouring to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace."

You know, when you go back to the book of 1 Corinthians again, I was thinking about this this morning, back in 1 Corinthians 6, the church has got so many divisions and so many problems with people. They have everything they need to solve the problem, but they are just picking and choosing. In 1 Corinthians 6, they are actually suing each other over something, taking another brother or sister in Christ to court. Paul tells them, he says, "What in the world are you doing? Why in the world are you taking the problems that you guys have in this church and displaying them before the world in a court of law of unsaved people?" He says, "Do you not guys understand that someday when you stand with Christ, you are going to judge angels?" In reference to the Great White Throne. "And yet you are not able to judge in these smallest matters." You know what he is telling them? "What is your problem, guys? Why are you displaying the problems that you have before the open world when you as God's people have one body, one Spirit, one mind, one Book that you ought to be able to solve every issue that comes up in this church?" Which of course, you know why that answer is they could not do it? Picking and choosing.

V. Lessons from the Animal Kingdom and Military

There is no more crucial teaching in all the Bible for God's people than the teaching of unity. Unity up against the concept of divide and conquer. When you think about it, even in the natural world of the animal kingdom, you see this principle. It is why certain animals always travel in herds. When you go back to the 1800s when the buffalo roamed the plains of North America, they all were in herds. I have been in Africa, and I have seen the herds of zebras. I have seen the herds of giraffes. I have seen the herds of antelope. I have seen the herds of geese; they are flocks. I have seen the flocks of ducks. That is a concept that man has learned from. That is why when you are told to go, if you want to go to New York City or Chicago and you are in a group of people, the first thing they will tell you, "Do not go out alone at night." I would like to revise that: "Do not go out alone anytime." There is safety in numbers. There is safety in unity.

The animals, they bunch up in herds because they know that there are natural predators that want to feast on them. So they always travel in herds. When a predator, if you see the movies, they are on YouTube, I mean they are graphic but they are good about the lion chasing the antelope or this or that and getting them, or the deer going down to the water to get a drink and a crocodile about 16 feet long. Great stuff. But when the predator attacks, it is when he picks off those little

stragglers. Who are they? Oh yeah. They are the ones who left the herd. Job 12:10 tells us very clearly that we are to learn from the animals because they will teach you.

A more modern thing that I have really based my whole ministry on when I saw it, read this long before I was right with the Lord. During World War II, most people are not aware that we did not invade into the European continent until June 6, 1944, which we all know is D-Day. We fought in Africa up through Palermo and Sicily and Italy, but we never got into the European continent until June 6, 1944, D-Day. But most people do not know that we were attacking the German and French mainland of Europe all the way back to 1942 and 1943. The way they were doing it was through the U.S. Army Air Corps and what they called daylight precision bombing. The bases in England housed thousands and thousands of American servicemen and airfields with B-17s, B-24s, and all of our big flying bombers that we used today. Every nice weather day when they had bombing, they would fly 600 to 1,000 planes over into France, and a little later on into Germany, and they would bomb these targets with 600 to 1,000 different planes.

It was a thing where the English, they had tried daylight bombing, and the losses were too great, so they switched to nighttime bombing. But America, undaunted, was going to prove their point in daylight precision bombing, of bombing these targets in daylight, because obviously they could get better results in the clear of the day versus at night. So these B-17s would fly 600 to 700 miles into the European continent. They would fly from the bases in England. They did not have any fighter cover back then because the fighter planes did not have the fuel to get that far, but the bombers did. The losses were terrible. They would send 600 to 1,000 planes on a raid, and they would lose 50, 60 planes to the fighter attacks. If you want to watch, and we will probably show this movie in our war movie segment here, but if you want to watch a couple of movies that really depict it in a very accurate way, that were made back in the late 50s and 60s, one would be a movie called *12 O'Clock High* and the other would be a movie called *Command Decision*. They are two of the most graphic that would really give you the picture of what is happening.

If you want to read a book, I would encourage you to get the book, get it on Amazon I am sure, get the book called *Black Thursday*. Black Thursday was August 17, 1943, when 600 B-17s flew into Germany, into the Schweinfurt raid to bomb the ball bearing plants there at Schweinfurt. They lost 60 planes in one day. There were 10 men in each plane. On one raid, they lost 600 men in one day. There were times that they lost 100 planes, and they would lose 1,000 men in one day. You do the math: 10 men in a plane, 500 to 600 men lost each mission. It was an incredible thing, and the people back home were screaming. It got so bad that the life expectancy of a crew of a B-17 was only three or four missions, and yet they had to fly 25 missions to come home.

A couple of years ago, we went down to the air place down here at the city airport. Remember the B-17, the *Memphis Belle*? The *Memphis Belle*, they made a movie about that, but the *Memphis Belle* was one of the most famous B-17s because she was the first B-17 that accomplished all 25 missions. I met her captain and navigator before they died. I got autographed pictures from them. For years, the plane sat down on Mud Island down there in Tennessee, and now they have got it back up and flying, and off it goes.

Then a general came up with an idea that changed the whole face of aerial bombardment. His idea was taking these 500 to 600 B-17s or 100, whatever it was, and putting them in flights of 100 or 200 and having them fly the tightest formations that they could, almost wing tip to wing tip. Because what was happening, the Luftwaffe boys, the German pilots, they would come out of the sun, and they would come down through and dive through the formations firing their cannons and hitting many of the planes, and then they would come down through the formation, do a loop out roll, and come down through again. They could only fire at them from coming down or going down because if they got into the formation, and there were sometimes several layers of formation, they would shoot each other. So they were shooting these B-17s to pieces. This general came up with the idea of flying very tight formations. So we put all of these planes in a super tight formation. The groups of 100 or whatever they had could beat off any single attack.

Now here again, do the math. Each B-17, I know this is boring to some of you, but hang on here, I am going to make a point here probably by tomorrow morning. Each B-17 carried 10 .50 caliber machine guns. Each gun, that is a thousand guns if you have a hundred planes in your formation. Each gun fired around 500 rounds a minute. You do the math. That is over a million rounds fired a minute at one plane coming in for an attack. You cannot come down through the middle anymore. He has got to come from the back, he has got to come from the front, or he has got to come from the side, and every gun in that formation. How would you like to be a pilot that is flying your F-109 through over a million .50 caliber slugs coming at you? It changed the whole face of it. The plan of flying tight formations changed aerial bombardment.

Now I read that years and years and years and years ago before I was ever in the ministry. When I read that years ago, I decided, based on all of the things out there that you can learn, that when I started a church and I was going to have a ministry, I knew that the key to keeping the unity was to simply fly tight formations. Let the attacks come from the outside, but build the church wing tip to wing tip that no F-109s can get in from the inside. These are great lessons for every one of us. They are lessons in the upper room for the guys that are up there because they are going to have to start out doing it when He goes back. It is a thing where for us, He tells that the key to it all is to keep the evil from destroying the unity. We have everything, they have everything they need to fix every problem that they are going to face.

The question is, what do God's people do with the Word of God? Some of them do nothing, some of them pick and choose, some of them follow it consistently all the way. Again, you younger guys and gals, learn from the ministry. Do not just do the ministry, learn from what you are experiencing, ask questions. It is a thing where we have our talk time together or one on one where you can just, I have guys come in and just sit out and say, "Hey, how does this work?" You have got to learn. To be effective in the ministry, you cannot just do it with one snapshot. You have got to learn the nuts and the bolts, the whys and the hows, the cause and the effect. You have got to see the path and effect and see how the way things work.

For some of you someday, I have no doubt in my mind that where God has got you right now and what you are trying to accomplish in your life and where you are headed and what you are doing and your own relationship with the Word of God, I have no doubt someplace down the

line, you and your wife, maybe from here or someplace else, that you will stand in a pulpit someday, and you too will have to take the shots. You too will have to make the hard decisions. You too will have to play out the movie while people are only taking frames of it. You too will have to understand that when you are in charge, you have to make the decision, but never, never, never come to the place that you do not sit down with your people that want to know and explain to them why you do what you do. Otherwise, you will never train anybody because the key to the New Testament church today is the same as it was when Christ was sending them out. "Thy word is truth." We are sanctified and set apart, and we keep the unity, and if you do not, then the evil will show up, and that was His worst fear.

I encourage you to do what I did. Learn everything you can while you can because there will come a time when you wished you would have asked, and you are faced with the same scenario, and you will not have anybody to ask. Paul had Timothy, you have me. I had Mel. Everybody has somebody, and it is a thing where you can either pick and choose with that or you can learn everything you can. As my old grandmother used to say, "Learn all you can," and she was an old people who used to can stuff in her mason jars. You know what I am talking about. She said, "Learn all you can, Bobby, and then can all you get." I said, "Yes, Grandma." She was a very wise woman, terrible cook, but a very good, wise woman. I told you the dog story before; I will not tell you that again. We are done. Let us have a word of prayer.