

I. Understanding God's Way and the Urgency of the Hour

If you have your Bibles this morning, I want you to turn to John chapter 14. You will remember last week what I tried to do for you after all the information we have been assessing in John chapter 13 and 14. I wanted to try to pull away some of the information so that you might have a better understanding of what is taking place up here in the upper room. These are Christ's final times with His apostles. What He is doing here is He is giving them their final instructions to carry out after He goes back to the Father. We all know that; we have been through that. I wanted all of you to see all of the material within the proper context. We as a church could get it all together for our own work because what He is doing to them is in direct relation to what we ought to be doing for Him today and how we can apply it to ourselves.

Hopefully, we all now have a better understanding of where God is at today and what He is doing, and where His primary focus is: to the nation of Israel, regathering them, restoring them, and bringing them back. Also, I wanted you to understand His path, His footsteps. We have looked at it under the term of His way, His way down through history, seeing where His undivided attention has been. I can think of nothing more important for an in-depth Christian, someone who really wants to have a relationship with God and really wants to understand what He is doing, than seeing this one aspect.

I showed you last week that in the Old Testament, His focus was squarely on the nation of Israel. In the New Testament, I have also showed you this, that His intention is squarely on the church and what He is doing. When you see those two mixing in and out, when you see the transition in the Book of Acts from the nation of Israel after Acts 7 into the church age, now we are living in the transition from the church age back to the nation of Israel. It is so important to see that. Just as equally important is the fact that He had a work for both of them. He had a work for the nation of Israel, and He has a work for the church. Just as equally important is the fact that both of them failed miserably in carrying out that work, and yet for the same reason. It all goes back to the sure calling that God gave Israel when He called Abraham out of Ur of the Chaldees, and once you and I got saved, the Bible says that you and I have a sure calling through the sure Word.

You will remember I also took you through the incredible Book of Esther. As far as I am concerned, Esther is the key to all of it. I also tied that in to Matthew 20 and answered the questions there from our Bible study a couple of weeks ago, and then looked at our 12-hour workday based on from early morning, which would be approximately 60 AD in Bible time, the Book of Ephesus, Acts 20, and then right up to the time we are living in today. We understand that we today are the last shift; in fact, we are the last part of that shift to do the work before the Lord comes back.

I showed you how that, and this is vitally important to anybody who wants to put it all together, how that Israel goes back to the land two times in history. I cannot impress upon you the importance of that. The first time around 540 BC with Ezra and Nehemiah when they go back

under Esther and Persia, and then the second time from 1918 to 1948, that time period in there in our time, under England and under the Balfour Declaration, when they go back to the land. And how we are in 2022 at the end of the times of the Gentiles. I showed you how that God moved through history, His footsteps from east to west. That is a very, very, very clearly laid out pattern in the Bible.

I will tell you, the reason I know that it is all over—we may have a few years yet, we may have some time yet. I am not up here predicting the day or the year of the rapture; anybody that does that, you need to stay away from them. And yet we see that the reason I know that it is over is because once I saw the pattern of the Holy Spirit of God moving east to west, once I saw how the Bible began, and then I see how the Bible for us ends, I know now that with that Holy Spirit of God going east to west, the Bible has pretty much come full circle.

Let me explain it to you. In Genesis 3, you have a woman by the name of Eve, and she is a type of the church. When the devil comes to destroy what God is doing, he does it while her husband is not at home. Now Adam is a type of Christ, so it is a picture of the church age. What does the devil do? The first thing he does, the first thing you see that he does, is he takes the Word of God from her. He says to her, "Yea, hath God said?" Then he takes the Word of God from her and revises it and changes it. That is the first thing you find in the Bible with Eve, who is a type of the church where the Spirit of God is starting to move.

Now we come down 6,000 years of history. Here we are today, 1 Corinthians 11, when Paul was worried about the church being corrupted, he used what the devil did in Genesis 3 with Eve as a type of the church. The reason I know it is over is because we have all come full circle; most of God's people just never saw it. It started in the garden with the devil taking away the Bible from Eve, and here we are today with the church that Eve was a type of, and the devil is taking the Bible from us again today. It is over. It is over. We need to be about our Father's business. It may be over as far as God is getting ready, but it is not over for us. We have a job to do, a job that is probably more intense at this point in time because of the urgency of the hour.

I think that is the number one problem with God's people today, because they do not know anything about the Bible. They have no understanding of the footsteps of God or His way. There is just no urgency. We live our lives like we are going to live forever. We live our lives like Jesus is not ever coming back. Our tragedy is, I think, so many of God's people hope that He does not come back. It is the mess that we are in today. Now we know that we are at the end of the church age, and the devil has come full circle from Genesis to the Laodicean church period. No book completely comes east to west in the full circle understanding God's way.

II. Christ's Promise and Prayer

Now today I want to move on in John chapter 14, and I want to look at the next section. So let us read John 14:12-15. Here is what He says:

John 14:12-15

Verily, verily, I say unto you, He that believeth on me, the works that I do shall he do also; and greater works than these shall he do; because I go unto my Father.

And whatsoever ye shall ask in my name, that will I do, that the Father may be glorified in the Son.

If ye shall ask any thing in my name, I will do it.

If ye love me, keep my commandments.

Now Father, we thank You and praise You for the Lord Jesus. We ask You, Father, to be with Zach this morning as he is preaching down there, probably at the same time. We ask You to guide him and let him be an impact in the lives down there and help those folks as they want to learn the Word of God. We thank You for the opportunity that You give our boys out of our church to go and open up the Word of God to people. And yet today, at the nursing home, and do all the things that we do, Father, and the people in our lives we try to touch. We just pray, Father, Your blessings upon today. Give me the Word, the clarity of thought, and all the things that we try to do, endeavor to do for You. We will thank You in Jesus' name, for His sake we ask it. Amen.

III. The Reality Check: Do We Truly Love God?

Now today I want to go back to a practical aspect of all this, and I want to take us all to the bottom line. This is not going to be an easy message for any of us today because this message is going to nail every one of us right where we need to be nailed. So I want you to understand that going in. I wish now I would have said that before I prayed; that would have given you a chance to slip out.

Years ago, I was on staff of a large Baptist church here in town, and the people hated me there because of my stand on the Bible. Every time the pastor was gone, he would have me preach, and he would have anybody—all the other big Baptists would find a way around the Bible with a laser beam and a flashlight. So I would get up there, and it was like 2,000 people, and they did not know I was preaching, and they saw me sitting on the platform and the other pastor was not there, and they started to get an inkling. So I used to play with it. I would get up there and I would say, "Now folks, I am preaching today, and I know a lot of you do not like me, so I am going to pray, then you can slip out if you would like to," and give them a chance to get out of here. I actually would say that, and they all would laugh.

You know, I always liked Jack Hyles. One time, he had people that would come to church and they would come to Sunday school, but then they would leave after Sunday school and not stay for his preaching. Now Jack Hyles was an eagle, just so there is magnitude degrees, and you just did not walk out on Jack Hyles' preaching. But he was an innovative guy, and he thought of a lot of things, so he had some of his deacons—this is a true story—he had them dress up in devil outfits and wait out in the parking lot. When the people left after Sunday school, the deacon in the devil suit would come up and say, "I am sure glad you did not stay for church today." I saw it, man. Only he could get away with that.

But it is a thing where we are going to talk about some things today. I think that given the time that we are living in and where we are at at the end, I would do a great injustice. Now, just do not take this personally. I am not thinking with anybody in mind, but the lady just walked in back there, and I will probably preach to her about this. I do not have anybody in mind. But yes, I do: me. So it is a thing where I am going to throw up today, and if a little bit gets on you, that is probably okay. So bear with me here. I am just giving you fair warning.

Because I want us to see the primary reason today—I think we need to see this—why some of God's people serve God and some of God's people do not. Now I am going to give you a little grace here. If you have been saved five years or less, do not take any of this to heart because I am going to help you get there. Five years from now, I will preach this message again, and I will knock you right between the eyes if you have not done what is going on. I think you probably will, and this church is here. I am here to help you get there. So I do not want you beating yourself up because that is what good people do. It is like every time I preach a hard message, the people who are already doing the work, they take it to heart and beat themselves up. The people who do not do anything, they just have a cigarette and go home. I mean, it is a thing where that is God's people. But if you have been saved five years or less, do not take this personally. Listen to it. Learn from it. But do not beat yourself up and say, "Man, I am not doing it." I am not expecting you to at this point in time. Five years from now, it will be a different story. And for those of you who have been saved five years or more, it is definitely a different story. So let us have some fun today. Let us beat each other up.

We have defined a lot of things in John chapter 14, and I purposely have focused on giving you every aspect of that that I possibly could. I have defined a lot of things for you. Today we are going to define us. Every one of us. Now before we look at our verse today, allow me to be the master of the obvious. The reason we finish the work for Him is because we understand, or should understand, our sure salvation, why God saved us in the first place. My understanding of what God did for me in His death, and me never taking my salvation for granted from God.

IV. Two Foundational Rules for Life and Ministry

I have fundamentally two absolute rules that I follow when it comes to people that I have to deal with in the ministry or work with, or you folks in the church today. I try to follow them to the best of my ability every day and all the time. I am sure I fail, but that is my goal.

1. One of them I gave you already a couple of weeks ago, and that is that I always try to leave people better than when I find them.

Now, having said that, sin in the world will never leave a man any better than it finds him, and its goal will be to destroy you. I try to work against that. If I am going someplace and there is a police officer over there, I will go over and thank him and tell him that I pray for his protection. Now that probably would mean a whole lot to me, but he knows for a short time anyhow that they get so much bad press. I went out this morning and got a cup of coffee up at Hy-Vee, that little fast food place up there, and I walked in to get my coffee. There was a guy that was in front of me, and he chewed himself, and I said, "Oh, you got no problem, plenty of time." I turned around, and he had a Marine Corps sweatshirt on. So I got my

coffee, and he is getting his, and I said, "Hey, I want to thank you for your service, and I just want you to know that I appreciate all that." So we walked up to the cash register to pay for the coffee, and I said, "I want to pay for this Marine Corps coffee here." Well, he said, "Well, I already paid for it." Then he saw my hat, and we had a great conversation. People were lined up trying to check out. We did not care. We were talking about our army base, and you know, but I do not know who he was. It was just a little bit of a surprise. But I guarantee you he will carry with him today that somebody took the time to thank him for something that he did. I do not care. It does not matter to me. I always try to leave people better than I find them. I try to with the Word of God. Now I understand that is not always possible. Some people hate the Word of God or have no part or want no part of anything to do with God's work. Those kinds of people will be covered in detail in the whole book of 1 Corinthians. Paul faced those kinds of people all the time.

2. My second rule is to always take care of the people who have taken care of me.

I never want to take anybody who has been part of my life or my ministry for granted. I never want to look at them as like they are just the wallpaper on the wall of the room. I never want to take for granted anybody that God has put into my world to help me do what God has called me to do. My life has been filled with people. From the time I got saved, from the time I first committed my life to the Lord, I can look back and see God putting people, men, in my life to guide me, to help me, to give me what I needed. I think of guys like Chuck Shuster. When I first got saved, I went to my first camp. They really did not know what to expect from me. I told Mel Zabaka I got a telescope, and I would like to go out and show the kids the moon and all that. Well, he looked beyond that. He had been trying to get me to church for 15 years. So he looked at it and was great about it, but he put me with Chuck Shuster. Chuck Shuster was a young guy who really knew his Bible. I would look back at him lovingly today and think that he was my handler. He knew a lot about the gospel and the stars, and he and I together formed the ministry that we did for years and years and years, and he was so beneficial in my life. I will never forget that. Jim Lake. Jim Lake was my friend all the way back in Ohio. In fact, when I first moved out here, Barbara just had our baby Kelly, and she had to stay home, and he came out here with me with the moving van. It was he and him and the little dog, Dutchess. He hated that dog. The dog wet on him in the truck. That is probably one of the reasons why I was here. But anyway, Herb Kootz is another one. In my early years, I had a good balance in my life between Mel Zabaka and Herb Kootz. One was going Mach 5 with his hair on fire. The other one was more laid back in more of a practical way, and he would take me out making hospital calls, visitation calls. I never forget things like that. I will tell you another one: old Glen Mays. Nobody knows who Glen. Old Glen Mays had a burden for Jehovah's Witnesses, and he took me out every Wednesday night and taught me how to deal with a cult. See, I do not want to forget that. I never take people for granted. My life has been filled in my 50-plus years, and the day I got saved, I look back. I see God putting the people in my life that I needed to get me where God wanted me to go.

Thursday night, we talked about the seven stages of spiritual growth, and I walked through those. I had to go through those. I was a baby of baby Christians when I first got right with the Lord. But it was these men that every step of my life gave me what I needed. Some of them are still fighting the fight. Some of them have gone home to be with the Lord. And actually, some of

them have gotten messed up, and they are not doing anything now. But that does not matter to me. I will never forget what people did for me to help them. It formed for me what I want my life to be: that my life is about giving to others. I want to be a giver, not a taker. I learned that from the people that God put in my life, and also what God gave me when He gave me my sure salvation, and then through these people that God put in my life, I learned the sure Word. Based on that, honestly folks, there was just no way I could walk away from His pure calling for me. It boggles my mind sometimes how some of God's people can walk away from it. But I understand why, and I am going to talk to you about that here as we move through this. Understanding what He did for me. Understanding He gave His all to me. How could I not give Him all I had to Him after all He has given to me? For me, it goes back to that loyalty thing I talked to you a couple of weeks ago.

V. The Definition of True Love for God

I want to focus on John 14:15 today and lay out the real reason we should finish the work, and the real reason why we do not finish the work in some cases. John 14:15 says, "If ye love me, keep my commandments." If we would drop down to John 14:23, we would also be in connection with this: "If a man love me, he will keep my words."

Now this will be a very unpopular message today, as I have said. This message will strip all of us of our layers of paint that we put on ourselves to pretend that we really love the Lord. This message will define all of us. There are things in all of our lives, and you need to know this. Maybe you are not aware of it. Hopefully, most of you are. But everything that comes into our life, good or bad, if you are a Christian, it will be a defining moment in our lives. Do you understand that? You are going to go one way or the other. Whichever way you go is going to define where you are at with the Lord. I can look back at my life and see many defining moments. If you look back in yours, you probably could see in your life, we always did not take the right course. We always did not take the right path. And that defined us. But once we come to the place in our life that we understand the things that I am going to be talking about this morning, we see how important a message like this really is. Because it is going to define all of us today. Me, you, everybody in this room, the Holy Spirit of God will use things like this that you will walk out of here, and you may say nothing to your wife or your kids or your friends or whatever. But the Holy Spirit of God inside you will define yourself today. You will not be able to hide from this one. All you will be able to do is to blast me, our church, or you can throw the spotlight off yourself onto something else or somebody else. Well, buddy boy, it is not going to work on this one. Maybe last week you could do it. Maybe throughout some of the things I say, you could pull it off to somebody else. Uh-uh, not today. You cannot get around this one.

A while back I gave you the seven things—I have given them to you several times—the seven things that you lose when you lose your Bible. One of them was your ability to love God the right way, as we have seen today in John 14:15 and then John 14:23, our text today. And yet if you ask the average Christian, or even the way-out Christian, somebody that is way out there in La La Land, "Do you really love God?" If you would ask them that, you would get an, "Oh yes, I do. Yes, yes. Oh, I do not do right, but I love Him." All that stuff, you see. This will be the

mindset today of the Laodicean Christian because of the Laodicean church, whether he has a King James Bible or whether he does not. One of the things that I have learned is that you will learn that just having a King James Bible and believing a King James Bible and standing on a King James Bible does not guarantee anything. Not a thing. A lot of people use that as a whitewash so they can not do anything for God, but because they have got the right Bible. See?

I would say, and I have said this before to you, I would say that in the New Testament, the greatest book on loving God would be the epistle of 1 John. I would say that the greatest book in the Old Testament would be the Song of Solomon. All the pastors that I know and would listen to—do not listen to, but if I would waste