

# Hebrews 12:1-3

Sunday 3/19/2023

For the last couple of weeks, we have been talking about lessons from the cross. I have been showing you a number of things that God gave me so many years ago when I became a new Christian, and I so desperately wanted to learn everything that I could. Many years ago, just like so many of you, I was searching for the truth.

A couple of weeks ago, or maybe three or four weeks ago now, we looked at Pontius Pilate. He was faced with truth, the Lord Jesus Christ standing right in front of him. Pilate asked the age-old question, "What is truth?" As I told you when we came through that, he never really waited for an answer. I was just like him, except I waited for the answer. I found the answer was right there in front of me, found in a King James 1611 Authorized Version, the absolute perfect, complete Word of God. I found out that that was all that I needed.

I have shown you that through yet another character study. Last week, we looked at Simon of Cyrene. The aspect of after my salvation and my picking up the cross, as he was the guy that helped bear the cross of Calvary. Through that, we have been talking a lot about 1 John and John, and how these things back in the day really changed my world and changed my life. We have been talking a lot about John, his books, 1 John, and following a fellowship with him through the light of the Word of God, the Lord Jesus Christ, while we are bearing the cross.

Last week, we looked at the definitive verse, or really passage, on the fellowship of the believer. It was found in Philippians 3:10.

Philippians 3:10

That I may know him, and the power of his resurrection, and the fellowship of his sufferings, being made conformable unto his death;

The mindset today, most people do not understand this verse. They do not understand anything to do with the fellowship of His suffering, like we tried to talk about last week. The mindset today is God's people trying to imitate Christ without bearing the cross and bearing the fellowship of His suffering. Because of that, they are never truly being conformed. The verse says, if you look at it, that we are not to be conformed to His life. That is what most of God's people think when they think about being conformed to Christ. They think about being conformed to His life. It is not talking about being conformed to His ministry. But if you read the verse, verse 10, it is that we are to be conformed to His death. We do that through the fellowship of His suffering of the cross, completely unknown today.

I told you a couple of weeks ago, I think it was on a Thursday night, somebody asked a question out of Genesis 3:15. I told you from 1 Peter 1:11 that in the Old Testament, Christ is laid out in two formats, and always within the same verse or the same passage. This is what the Jews could not understand because of the hardness of their heart. But you remember I told you that the first way that Christ is portrayed in the Old Testament is the suffering of Christ, what He goes through on the cross. Then right next to it, right after that, will be a reference to the glorified Christ.

Obviously, one is dealing with the first coming of Christ, the suffering. The second one is dealing with the second coming of Christ when He is glorified.

I look at that and I totally get where it is at in the Bible, why it is in the Bible the way it is, and why the Jews had a tough time getting it. But you realize that is the way it is with us. Right now, we go through the suffering to be conformed unto His image, but there is coming a day when we will be glorified with Him. Getting God's mind through getting God's heart, not just the fellowship and not just the being conformed unto His life, but being conformed unto His death through the fellowship of the suffering.

Let us say that we decided to have a Bob Alexander lookalike contest, God forbid. Five of you signed up to do it, and we had a special night when we all showed up. You guys had really done a job on me. You looked like me, you talked like me, you picked up my mannerisms, and you really had the crowd fooled. It got down to two guys, and you could not tell which one was really me. I was one of the five. So you called in my sister Sharon from Ohio. She looked at both those guys and she said, "Wow, I do not know, I cannot tell. I do not know which one is my brother. I mean, these two guys, you have it down." So finally, at the end, the real Bob Alexander stood up, and I was the guy. But that guy really did a job on me of looking just like me.

I thought about that. Those guys could look like me, they could dress like me, they could talk like me, they could get my mannerisms. But no matter how much they looked like me, they could never really be me. The thing that makes me me versus anybody imitating me is you will never really be me until you get my mind. That is the way it is with Christianity. You put on the right clothes, say the right things, pick up the mannerisms, go to the right churches, even get the right Bible. But the real mark of being conformed to His death is not about how you look or what you do or what you do not do or what you say or what you do not say. The real key is, have you gotten His mind? You will never be conformed to Him until you get that mind, just like you cannot imitate me without getting my mind to be really me.

## I. The Race Set Before Us

The Bible tells us in Hebrews 12:1-3:

*Hebrews 12:1-3*

*Wherefore seeing we also are compassed about with so great a cloud of witnesses, let us lay aside every weight, and the sin which doth so easily beset us, and let us run with patience the race that is set before us,*

*Looking unto Jesus the author and finisher of our faith; who for the joy that was set before him endured the cross, despising the shame, and is set down at the right hand of the throne of God.*

*For consider him that endured such contradiction of sinners against himself, lest ye be wearied and faint in your minds.*

Father, we do thank you and praise you for the Lord Jesus. We ask you today to open up our hearts, open up our eyes, and open up our ears, that we might understand the great truths and the

lessons of the cross. We thank you for those that are here today. We pray, Father, your blessings upon our time in your word today, and we will be careful, Lord, to give you all the honor and the glory and the praise. In Jesus' name we ask it, amen.

There are a number of things here that I want to really start with and then work them through the sermon as we come to here today. The key to not getting off track and fading in our minds, verse 2 says, "looking unto Jesus." It says that He is the author and the finisher of our faith. You want to mark that. It simply says that it began with Him and it ended with Him. It says down through there that the joy that was set before Him, that is the cross. Yet the Bible says that He endured the cross, but He despised the shame, but it was a joy that was set, that the joy that was set before Him to endure the cross. That is an incredible picture of you and I being conformed to the image, His image, and suffering through the fellowship but enjoying it, having a relationship with Him that really overrides the enduring.

One time, I have told you this before, I asked my father in the Lord, Mel Sabaka, if he was enjoying his salvation or enduring his salvation. His answer was razor sharp back, and he simply said, "I am enjoying my enduring." That is the key. It says, "consider him that endured such contradictions of sinners." You can buy books, in fact, I put them in the bookstore, a couple of those old books that talk about all the contradictions in the Bible, and man will try to tell you that the Bible is full of contradictions. Well, the Bible is not full of contradictions, but I must confess to you, there is one major contradiction in the Bible. It is this one right here. The contradiction that my Lord Jesus Christ could be even equated with sin. He was perfect, and the greatest contradiction on the face of the planet and probably throughout the universe is that the sinless Son of God could be equated with sin, but He was for you and for me. That is an incredible thing.

Consider Him. He says consider Him that it was such contradictions of sinners against Himself, and if we do not do that, then here it comes, "lest ye be wearied and faint in your minds." I told you that back in my day how I heard that sermon by Roy Thompson. He said in his sermon, "The cross has everything for everybody," and then he said that a new life in Christ Jesus has to start at the cross. I have never forgotten that.

## II. Going All The Way With Christ

Today, I want to show you the next lesson I learned from the lessons of the cross, and again, from another character study, going back to the Apostle John. We have looked at every one of these as we come through. We looked at Peter, we looked at Pilate, we looked at John several times, we looked at Simon of Cyrene, and we have tried to cover all of them. But John, without a doubt, is my greatest example of a practical New Testament relationship and the balance of the New Testament child of God. With all the men and the women in the Bible, and there are thousands of them, for me, he is the best example that I have. If all I had in all of my Bible was the example of John and his detailed life and everything that he did, I could build my relationship with the Lord just from watching his life and what he does and how God had really used him. It is an incredible concept.

The final thing that God taught me about John was without a doubt the key and the most valuable and important thing for me that I ever learned. John went all the way to the end with the Lord Jesus Christ, and he winds up at the feet of Jesus. From that, I realized that not only did my life start at the cross, but I too need to go all the way, and at the end of my life, I need to still be found at the cross. No side trips, no detours in life. My message today is simply going all the way with Christ right up to the end. The question for all of you that every one of you has to answer is the same question that I had to look at my own life and I had to answer for myself: Will you finish your life where you started as a Christian? That is the question.

It is a proven fact of life for all of us that many people start things that they never finish. Your wife, I am sure, could amen that with your husbands. I have seen some kids start college and they never finish. I have seen them get a really good job and they never finish. There are people who never finish high school. There are people who go out for sports but yet they never finish and get off the team and never go any farther. I have seen guys get out of the military. Back in my day, you could not get out of the military; you were stuck. But now it is so easy and soft that if you just do not like it, you can go home. I have seen people start in marriages and never finish it. I have seen people get into relationships and they never finish it. It all basically comes down, I am sure there are many excuses or many things that people could say, but fundamentally, it all comes down for all of us to a lack of discipline, self-discipline.

Any church will have a list, any church, they will have what they call two lists. They will have the active list and the inactive list. The active list will be people that are coming to church on a regular basis, and the inactive list will be people that used to come to that church and do not come anymore. Every church that I have ever been associated with, they have an active and inactive list. They all do. The inactive list is much bigger than the active list because through their whole time, maybe 10, 15, 20 years, you have many, many of God's people who started at the cross. They got sidetracked. They went on a detour, and they never returned. There is nowhere that that is more evident, as I said, than in Christianity. The simple reason, Hebrews 12:1-3, is a failure to consider Him, a failure to consider what He endured, the shame that He despised, but yet for your sakes and my sakes, He went all the way because for the joy that was set before Him.

There is something in that, that if we could ever get to the bottom of that and really make it part of our life, it would change everything. When you really understand all that He went through on the cross, and you will in a couple of weeks when it comes to Easter. When you really come to grips and terms with what He really, the price that He really paid, and all that He went on, and all that happened, and you really mean what it means for the despising the shame and endured the cross, and yet the Bible says that it was a joy set before Him. It was not a joy set before Him because He enjoyed the pain. It was not a joy that He went all the way to the cross because of the fact that He just liked all the abuse. The joy was because of you and me on the cross of Calvary. When most men would have quit, when most people would have given up through the shame and the agony and all the things that were going on that day, He went all the way for you and for me, and it was a joy for Him. But how easily you and I will give up for Him when the least little glitch comes into our life. Our enduring is not our joy, and our suffering is not in fellowship with

His. This is the reason: a failure to consider Him, and then because we do not, we faint in our minds.

Paul likened the Christian life as a race. He said in 1 Corinthians 9:24-27:

*1 Corinthians 9:24-27*

*Know ye not that they which run in a race run all, but one receiveth the prize? So run, that ye may obtain.*

*And every man that striveth for the mastery is temperate in all things. Now they do it to obtain a corruptible crown; but we an incorruptible.*

*I therefore so run, not as uncertainly; so fight I, not as one that beateth the air:*

*But I keep under my body, and bring it into subjection: lest that by any means, when I have preached to others, I myself should be a castaway.*

He says in verse 26 that he knows why he is running the race. He says in verse 26 that it is no mystery to him the fight that he is in. Then he says, "But I keep under my body and bring it into subjection, lest by any means, when I have preached to others, I myself should be a castaway." I have looked at that over the years, and I actually have built that into a sermon that I have preached before. It makes a great little devotion if you are doing devotion for softball or volleyball. It is simply six rules for the race that God has put us in.

1. You run as hard as you can. You will never see a high school track team where they are running the hurdles or they are running a 50-yard dash or 100-yard dash or whatever they run that anybody just walks while everybody else is running. They run as hard as they can.
2. Not only do I run as hard as I can, but we need to stay in our own lane.
3. I know this is true, especially when you run the hurdles, you do not look at the hurdles. You keep your eye on the end, and the hurdles just become a natural thing you go over. Just watch little Kinsey down there hit those hurdles. Everything I taught her, she has done.
4. No false starts. You have got to start when the gun goes off.
5. This is found over in 2 Timothy 2:5, that you have to run this race lawfully. You have to do it by the book, or there is no crown.
6. You finish the race. You do not stop and go to the concession stand to get a Coke. You do not take a break to have a cigarette. You run as hard as you can, as long as you can, as far as you can, and you finish the race.

I watch runners with amazement when they run marathons. I used to run a lot, not anymore, but I never ran a marathon. But I watch how guys will run that in record time. The record for a marathon, the marathon is a long deal, was set in 2019 in Austria. It is the fastest marathon in history with a man from Kenya. He ran a complete marathon in one hour and 59 minutes and 40 seconds. That is flying. That is running. I am impressed by that, but I must be honest with you, I am impressed more by other guys and women that I have seen run races. I have seen a guy run at one time that only had one leg. He had an artificial leg, yet he was running. I saw a guy one time that had no legs. He had two artificial legs, and he ran. I saw a guy that was in a wheelchair, and

I let him be in the race, and he wheeled his chair all the way through that race. I look at those kind of people and I think to myself, there is something special about that because every one of those guys, where the guy ran it in an hour and 59 minutes and 40 seconds, these guys may take four hours to do it, four and a half hours to do it. But you know what really makes it special for me? No matter how long it took them, they finished the race.

The question for all of us today is, you started that race at Calvary, but are you going to finish? That is the real question. In the Christian life, for me anyhow, it is not how you start. I have seen it, you have seen it, everybody is great guns when they first get saved. How about five years later, where are you? How about three months later, where are you? How about where are you today? Churches are filled. It is no secret. We have seen it here. You see it everywhere you go. It is not something that is just local in one or two churches. People start things that they never finish when it comes to bearing the cross.

Paul said at the end of his life in 2 Timothy 4:7-8:

*2 Timothy 4:7-8*

*I have fought a good fight, I have finished my course, I have kept the faith:*

*Henceforth there is laid up for me a crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous judge, shall give me at that day: and not to me only, but unto all them also that love his appearing.*

Could we say that at the end of our life? When you got saved, God set a course out for each one of us. It is a course of life, but I know it is also an obstacle course. There are things in it that you and I are going to have to negotiate and work around and navigate through. But it is not how you start, it is how you finish. At the cross where you started, or are you somewhere else?

### III. John's Model for Finishing

I showed you over the course of the last month or so, the five areas of John's life that are laid out so clearly for us, and they form a great model for us. They were the key to him going all the way to the end, and they will be for us too. We see that John had a special love for the Lord Jesus Christ that the others did not necessarily have, though I know they all loved Him. You will find that there was no betrayal in him when it came to the Lord Jesus. We have talked about all of these in great detail. We talked about how he had God's heartbeat, by laying his head on the breast of Jesus. I had read that for years and years and even preached on that a couple of times. Then one day I was reading back in Song of Solomon chapter two. Song of Solomon chapter two is a picture of what our relationship with the Lord should really be. In fact, when you look at it, it starts with our salvation and then works itself right down through the relationship and the fellowship that we should have. In Song of Solomon chapter two, when I got down to verse six one time, it was talking about me and Christ, you and Christ. I read this thing, and it just like the lights came on, and it says in chapter two, verse six:

*Song of Solomon 2:6*

*His left hand is under my head, and his right hand doth embrace me.*

He is talking about me and you and our relationship. When I saw that immediately, it went back to John. John is sitting by His side, and he leans his head on the breast of the Lord Jesus. He hears the heartbeat. When he did that, Jesus's left hand is under his head, and His right hand is around his waist embracing him. That picture in John laying the head on the breast of Jesus is exactly where our relationship should be and why we will finish if we hear His heartbeat.

Then I showed you how that he had a perfect balance. These three really make a balance that we all need to have. Then I showed you, we talked about his ability to rest in Christ through the promises of God through any circumstance. The Bible tells us, Hebrews 12:3, to consider Him. When you look at John and the cross and him going all the way, him being there at the cross, seeing it actually being there, it gave him three perspectives of the cross that he never forgot. It certainly changed his life and carried him all the way through to his death. Where the other 97% of the 12 apostles never saw this. It says, "consider him."

7. He understood what really happened firsthand. Too many times we get the story of the crucifixion and Christ's death on the cross through a message, through a book we read, through a Sunday school teacher, through somebody that relates the story to us. I am not fighting that at all. I understand faith comes by hearing and hearing by the word of God. I get that. But there has to come a time in your life, in my life, if you are really going to understand what happened that day, that you yourself are going to go back to the Old Testament. Come line it up to the New Testament and get every piece and every hour and every minute firsthand. Just like John was standing there seeing it, the Holy Spirit of God will take you back, and you yourself will stand there through the Old Testament prophets, and you will see it, just as John did.
8. He saw for himself the real price that was paid through His suffering. I know most of us are saved here this morning. I would not doubt that for a minute. You are good people. I believe that you love the Lord. I really do with all of my heart. But I am going to tell you right now, none of us really understand the real price that was paid, or we would not be so frivolous with our lives and what we do. When you come to the place, when I come to the place that I understand like John, every aspect of His suffering. From the sixth to the ninth hour, the Bible says that the sun refused to shine. John was standing there when that darkness came over the earth. From the sixth to the ninth hour, the Bible says that the earthquakes and the earth shook. John was there. He did not read about it. He experienced it. He was all the way where Jesus was on that cross. He was there. From the time they dragged Him in on that cross with Simon bearing it, and they put Him on the ground, and they put the nails in His hands and the nails in His feet, and they lifted up that cross to the wind, which is found in the Old Testament exactly as I am telling it to you. You do not get that in Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John. Oh, but you get it in the Old Testament prophets. The cross happened, what, 2000 years ago? John stood there and witnessed it firsthand, and do not ever think for a heartbeat, you as a New Testament Christian cannot go back to the cross and see it firsthand because God recorded it for you. You have just been looking in the wrong places. He stood there when he heard Him say, "I thirst." He stood there when He said, "My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?" He was right there. He was there when he heard the final words, "It is

finished." Yes, he was there when that old Roman soldier took that spear and ran it up into His side. Consider Him.

9. He saw the indifference of God's people to the death of Israel's only hope, their Messiah. John said in John 1:11, I cannot help but think that he wrote that well after the crucifixion. I cannot help but think that he was thinking in that day when he said: John 1:11

He came unto his own, and his own received him not. It was not talking about the unsaved world. He was talking about the very people that Christ came to save, His own people, the nation of Israel. The indifference of God's people today of Christ dying on the cross, we make sure that we get everything that we want first out of life, and then the scraps that are left over, maybe, just maybe, we will give them to the Lord and just say, "Use them as best you can." Indifference. All because we all fail to consider Him.

## IV. The Danger of Side Trips

This is what leads to our not finishing our course that Paul made a reference to, and not going all the way like John did. The fainting in our mind. Because we will not see the cross has everything that we need. Because of that, we get weary. I get it. We get weary. We get weary. Realize that we started at the cross the day we got saved. At the end of our lives, we need to find ourselves still there with Him. Through the fellowship of His suffering. Never letting go of the cross. Holding the same truths at the end of our lives that God gave us the day we found Jesus Christ as our own personal Savior, and we found out we had a Bible. And not forsaking Him like the 12 did, the 11. Like Israel did. And like so many of God's people do today. What happens to all of us is we too forsake Him in His most crucial hour.

When I look at the first coming of Christ, I see that as probably the most crucial time up to that point in the history of the world. Most people do not see it. They do not understand it. Maybe they do not even believe it. But that first coming of Christ was called His hour. It was an hour that the world hung in the balance between heaven and hell. You would think that in that time, when He went through everything that He was going through for everybody, you would have thought that the support would have rallied around Him and been there for Him. That there would have been 10,000 people at that cross. But there was only one. Where were the rest? Where were the rest? At the crucial hour of the first coming of Christ, out of the 12, one man was there.

Let me just tell you right now, we are coming up on the second coming of the Lord Jesus Christ. It again will be the most crucial time in history. Because it is a time when life on planet earth as we know it ends. All the corruption goes away. After a harsh period of time with the nation of Israel, God comes back and establishes His kingdom that He wanted to give them at the first coming, but they rejected it. Now the second most crucial time in the history of the world is about to be upon us. You know what? God's people today ought to be rallying around that cross. Hanging on to every minute of it. God's people today ought to be busy about their Father's business, understanding the urgency of the hour. But I am telling you, I am telling you, just like back in the day, it was one out of 12. You can just take that to the bank that today in all of Christianity, who will finish at the end? One out of 12. One out of 12.

This is what leads us to our not finishing our course and going all the way. We need to hold the same truth at the end of our lives that we had the day we got saved. Hebrews 12:1 tells us, "...let us lay aside every weight, and the sin which doth so easily beset us." Something weighs us down in this race. The word "beset" means to offset. It means to set aside. It simply means that for a child of God, we get out of the race. We do not make it to the end. We do not wind up at the cross where we started. We get set apart from the course God sets for us.

I want you to notice, and I must point this out, it says, "lay aside every weight and the sin." It did not say "sins." It said "sin." I will just take this to the next step for all of us, me included. For every one of us. When a person gets saved and they start at the cross, I know you have to give up the world. Many people do. But in many, many cases, there is one thing that holds us back that we are just not willing to turn over to the Lord. Many times, it is just one sin. Not "sin," just one sin. Something that we want to hang on to. Something we do not want to give up. Something like, when we talk about, we always focus on the things, but we do not focus on the one thing that is really our problem. That is the very thing that adds the weight to your running of this course. All the side trips that we all take that never get back to the course. All the places that when God sets a course and we are walking down that narrow road and we are on the road and with fellowship of His suffering, and then you see all the signs of "go here" and "go there" and "oh, look at this" and "go look at that" and "oh, this is great."

Every year, we take our annual pilgrimage to Ohio. I am from Ohio. Barb is from Ohio. Her family is back there. Mom and Dad have passed away. My mom and dad have passed away, but my sister is still there. Her sister and brother are still there. All the kids go and the grandkids go. It is always a great time. We do it every year. I always look forward, Sharon, to come and get my room ready. I will be back sometime this year. When you go to Ohio, you get on I-70 and you stay on I-70 all the way to Columbus, which is a long way. It is 800 miles back to Canton. When you get down to Columbus, then you have got to go north, and then you kind of jog over, and there it is. It is a 12-hour trip driving. Unless you go with Jamie. One time, we followed them out. Never again. When I drive, I hate to drive anyhow. I am not a long-distance drive guy. I do not like it. It is a thing where I hate it. I do it because I want to see my sister and John and everybody and have fun and got a good place to eat. But when I get in the car, I want to get there. Straight. Right.

We went one time, and I get on the phone. Phone rings. They are up in front. "Dad, we are going to pull off a place for lunch. It is our favorite place." Why can we not just grab a sandwich when we get gas? That is what I do. I get gas, go in there, go to the bathroom, get me a hot dog or something, and I am good. She said, "No, no, Dad, this is our favorite place, and it is just right off the thing." 30 miles off the thing. Now, do the math. 30 miles there. 30 miles back. Eating time. I eat fast. People make fun of that all the time. That goes back to my military days. We used to have to eat while we were running. So I will sit down. I will beat anybody anytime. Jamie eats slow. The girls eat slow. When you eat, you do not talk. You eat. Talking is times that when you eat, you eat. So now it is 30 miles there, 30 miles back, and two hours at the restaurant. So we finally get back on the road. We are three hours behind now. Oh, let us not forget the outlet mall that has all the really nice purses that everybody wants to get. When I buy something, no matter

what it is, I go in, get it, and leave. I do not look around to see if it is anything better, because that is what I want. I look at it. It functionally fits what I need it for. I buy it. You do not have to look at 30,000 things to find which one you want.

My point is this: You go to Ohio with us, drive yourself. Or fly. That is what we do now, anyhow. Side trips, man. In the Christian life, those side trips will kill you. They will kill you. You will have a plan that I am going to get here in my life, and I am going to be here, and I am going to serve the Lord. You are going down that road, and all of a sudden, "Oh, yeah. Boy, you are down here, and boy, that looks exciting. Maybe I will just check that out." You know what happens? Before you know it, you never get back on the course again.

I love Wichita, Kansas. Wichita, Kansas is about three and a half hours away from my house. I love it because that was my stomping ground back in the late 70s and the 80s. I preached back down through all through there. All through Wichita, Kansas. I preached at Ruth Bell's church down there. Doyle Hopper was a great preacher down there. It is just one of those things where I just preached so much down there. That is where I met Mike and Debbie Smith. They were not even married yet. Debbie was still in the Air Force, and I would go down there and teach Bible studies. We would have a great time, and then we would go out. Whiteman Air Force Base is down there, and we would go out down at the end of the thing and sit on the tailgate of the station wagon or wherever it was and watch all the F-4s take off at night down through there. Wichita is a great place. It is a straight three and a half hour shot down the Kansas Turnpike. Unless...

The Flint Hills are incredible. The Flint Hills are those big rolling hills of the prairie. I will tell you what, I could get off at the Flint Hills every exit and just look at all the history that they have there. It is where the settlers drove their Conestoga wagons over the prairies and the buffalo roamed down through there. It is incredible. I stopped to get gas one time, and I just looked at all these places you could go, and I thought to myself, you could spend a month here just looking at all the stuff here. Okay, so you have Emporia, Kansas. Emporia, Kansas, proof that hell is full and dead men still walk the earth. I do not know what to tell you. There is not much of Emporia, but if you want to stop there, you can always find something to be of interest to you. I do not even know if they had this back in the day when I drove down there. I always wanted to stop and see the world's largest ball of tinfoil. It was on the way down. There it was, big sign. "See the world's largest ball of tinfoil." Never stopped, but you could spend some time there. Then there was the world's largest prairie dog mound. This is what turns people in Kansas out west, they really get excited about. But I am telling you right now, any trip you take in life, you can either get directly there or you can take the side trips and you will never get there. That is what it is like in the Christian life. You have got a course. You are on a course. You need to finish that course. That course started at Calvary's Cross. It needs to end there. It is not how you start, folks. It is how you finish. We need to finish where we started. 97% of God's people, one out of 12, will never make it to the end.

All my ministers, I have seen people, good people, not bad people, good people, get off course and head down a dead end road to life. One side road that I have seen them all take, is not being patient and waiting on God. I had a guy one time years ago, and he was a good guy. He really

was. He probably had some of the greatest potential of any young man that I ever saw. I understand how things go. You grow up, you are 18, 19, 20 years old, other people around you are having girlfriends or boyfriends and having relationships, and you want one. I have learned something. If there is any of you young men and young ladies out there that are feeling that same way, just wait on God. He knows more about what you need than you do. He has got somebody out there for you. Do not get impatient. Well, this kid was a good kid, but he just got impatient. He wanted a girlfriend, and he found one. She did not have the right Bible. She did not have any doctrine. You have got to watch this one. When you go down the road, there are road signs, and you have got to pay attention. Some of them say "construction ahead," so you have got to be careful. You have got to slow down a little bit. The one he saw was "curves ahead." He took that, he took that detour, man. I bumped into him. I do not know. A year and a half, maybe two years ago. I do not remember when. I love this kid, man. He is a good kid. I feel terrible. He had more potential, I thought, than anybody else. But he is in a church now that has no Bible. No doctrine. He is not doing a thing. He went down a dead end street because he was not patient enough to wait for God to bring and do what God wanted for him to have in his life. One of the best kids you will ever meet, gone down the wrong road into a side road excursion, and he missed the sign that said "dead end."

Then I have seen the side road of education. How many guys and gals over my years started out believing in the Bible and then they go to some Bible college someplace and completely lose their faith in the Word of God? Higher education, I do not care if it is Christian or secular, if it is outside the local churches, it has one goal, and that is the side road of taking your Bible from you. Another dead end. You go in believing everything and come out believing nothing.

Then there is the side road of false teaching of the Neo, the new ideas of Christianity. I do not know if you know it right now, but the movie came out, I think it was in February 24th, and it is called "The Jesus Revolution." It is being hailed across the country as a great revolution of Christianity that as one guy wrote in his book, as one guy wrote about it, he says, "It has never happened like this in the history of America." Really? What happened to Billy Sunday? Did he just fall off the planet someplace? What happened about the Seven Great Awakenings that God sent in this country? But you see, there is no history. I have not seen the movie. I would not mind seeing it, but I do not really care. If "Private Ryan" is on, I am going to watch that instead. But I am going to tell you right now, the first thing that makes it suspect to me is the name of it, "The Jesus Revolution." Jesus sent revivals. He sent awakenings, but He never caused a revolution. Man causes revolutions. Jesus sends revivals.

I am not going to get into the whole movie and the history of it. I lived during that time when this movie was about. I know the truth about it. I do not need somebody to tell me. I lived it. I was there. I was like John, I saw it firsthand. It is not going to kid me what was going on back then. Maybe one of these days, I will lay it out for you in the Thursday night Bible study. We talked about it last Thursday night when somebody asked a question on 2 Timothy 3:16-17, defining doctrine and how important it is to keep us on course. That is the only thing that will keep us on course. Our course in life is building a doctrine handed down through the early church to us

today. Nothing changing. The baseline of New Testament Christianity is built on the doctrines of the Bible that as Paul said in 2 Timothy 2:2:

*2 Timothy 2:2*

*And the things that thou hast heard of me among many witnesses, the same commit thou to faithful men, who shall be able to teach others also.*

That is the process. This Neo, new Christianity, new Bible, new evangelism. Are you kidding me? The people think that the new Neo evangelical world in churches are great, but they do not see that back in what was it, 1976, the Catholic church and the Neo evangelicals got together with the Catholic evangelism accord, and those two groups decided to merge together for evangelism in the 21st century. Are you kidding me? You want to be part of that? That is the new, that is the Neo, see? I have seen the side trips of you aligning your spirit to the spirit of this world, of the indifference of no truth. As I said, many times, the Bible in our lives will divide you from the world, but if you do not take the Bible seriously, then the world will divide you from the Bible. It is true. It is those five areas that John kept in his life. When you and I keep them, we will never get off course. We will end up where he did. We will start our lives at the cross, and we will end our lives at the cross.

This is very important what I am about to say: side trips are not good. Yes, they get you off course, but they do something even worse than that. Side trips will change you. It will not only take and get you off the established course very subtly, but that is what the devil does, Genesis 3:1. It does not look bad at all. But side trips will change your attitude about the Bible. Side trips will change your attitude about His truth. Side trips will change your attitude about churches, about ministry, about people, about your own family. You may start your new life at the cross with established truth, but you will never make it to the end because the side trips will get you off track, off base, and off course.

When people get off course, I always hear the same thing. I have heard it all in my ministry. It shows you how far off they really are. How many times over the years, my 51 years, when it was not this church, it was another church, but this is your church. I hear it all the time. "Old Pastor thinks that they are the only true church." "Bob thinks he is right and everybody else is wrong." Well, it is a nasty job, but somebody has got to do it. To me, and I totally understand why people say that, and I am going to let you in on a little secret here in a minute. But those are two of the most disingenuous statements that can be made, really. I mean, I understand why a man or a woman wants to make the issue "old Pastor." But the issue is not about old Pastor. The issue is not about me. We just simply believe the Bible, cover to cover, including the cover. I guess it is a right-handed compliment when you look at the church or you see me and you equate us with the Bible. But the bottom line is, it is not about Bob Alexander. It is not about old Pastor. It is about the Bible we believe and teach. That Bible has not changed in 2000 years.

I have been in the ministry over 50 years. You can find my tapes back in the 70s. Hopefully, they are a little better than... You can find my tapes way back in the day. I have not changed one thing I believe. I have not changed one thing I talk. I may understand a little bit better now, but I never said, "Okay, this is new now. I am going to do this. We are not going to do this anymore." Hey,

the course has been established for 2000 years. That is not about me. It is not about this church. It is about the Bible this church and I believe and preach and teach. It never changes. You have changed. Me, I preach what Jonathan Edwards preached, 1700. George Whitfield, 1700. I preach with Mordecai Ham, Bob Jones Sr., Sam Jones, Roy Thompson, Dr. Ruckman, J. Frank Norris, Billy Sunday, R.A. Torrey, Spurgeon, D.L. Moody. It is every pastor out there who has a Bible-believing, Bible-teaching church, and they are everywhere out there. They are sparse, but there are some good, solid men who have good, solid churches. I talk to them all the time. You know what I hear? Their people say the same thing about their church that they say about this one. You know why? Because they are standing for the truth. It is not about me. It is not about this church. But I understand why you have to make it that. I really do. Because, you see, if you can justify your getting off course and fainting in your mind and make it all about somebody or something, then you are okay. But when it is really about the Word of God that you have an issue with, then it does not work for you anymore. The book never changes. A good Bible-believing, Bible-preaching church. There are some incredibly solid guys out there who preach the book every Sunday. But when the individual of the church thinks that it is simply, they do not hold the truth anymore. They do not hold to when they got saved and they got the Bible. They believed everything that we believed. We have not changed. You got off course. You are not a terrible person. You are not a bad person. You just took a side trip. You changed. We have not changed. These churches across the country have not changed. Somebody got you off course.

Listen. As I already said, there are many guys and churches out there all across this country doing exactly what we are doing. I talk to them. They send me questions. I walk with them. I talk with them. They have people just like we do. Their people get off course just like all people get off. They say the same things about them. Have you ever noticed how we make a model for everything? I love when there is a tornado or a hurricane off the coast of Florida someplace. They will show you on weather. They will show it here. Big old swirly thing. Then they will show you actually before it gets there the course that it is going to take and where it is going to go up the course or is it going to cross land here? What time? Everything. You know how they do that? They have models for all that stuff. Somebody in the meteorologist weather department, someplace else, some think tank has made all these models that when you find one of these things, you play the model, and the model forecasts for you where this hurricane is going to go. They do the same thing when they have tornadoes. Tornadoes are land based, and cyclones are offshore and hurricanes. But they do the same thing. They will project a model. They can forecast where it is going to go.

When you get into government and business, you get into economics. We have guys out there, and our economy is in a pretty sorry state right now. Inflation is high, and they are arguing back and forth whether we are going to go through a recession or we are going to go through a depression. Nobody has ever given a good definition of those things. My Mel Sabaka's definition was the best. He says, "You want to know the difference between a recession and a depression? A recession is when you are out of work, a depression is when I am out of work." There is black truth to that. But you know how they do the economic world? They have models. Somebody in a think tank someplace said you take these values and you churn them out, and it will show you a model of where a financial situation is going to go. Models. They use them all the time. They

have them in politics. That is how they can predict when, on election night, you have some guy on there, and he will call a state before the state is even in, and they will say this is going to so and so. How does he do that? Models. They have models in politics. It forecasts things. It shows you what is coming based on the model that has been presented.

According to the word of God, God gave us a model. You may not like the model. I may not like the model, but it is the model. The model is out of the 12 apostles, only one made it to the cross. That is 97% of the 12 men that He chose to change the world did not wind up at the cross. Now, like it or not, there is your model. You are the only one who can decide where you are at in that. It is incredible. When I see John going through this terrible, confusing time of the first coming of Christ, what a confusion must have set in. Here they are for three and a half years. They are seeing all the miracles. They are hearing all the sermons. They are hearing about the coming kingdom. They all believe the Old Testament, and they knew He was the Messiah. Suddenly it all went away, just like that.

I cannot help but think that right now, in all of our lives, for the most part, we are all happy. We are all satisfied. Nobody is starving to death. You have got gas for your car even though it is high. You have got everything going for you. Just like it was with them. Then one day, it all was gone. Do not you kid for a moment that one day you may wake up, and it will all be gone. Christianity is about as confusing today as you could ever hope it to be. We live in some of the most confusing times in the history of America, terrible times. If anybody cannot see it, I do not know when the Lord is coming. I do not know how it can go on much longer, but I guess it could. We in this country, God's people, every one of you, every one of us, if God carries His coming, this country is headed for a complete total collapse and breakdown.

There are so many powder kegs in this world that are ready to explode. If they all went off at the same time, Nagasaki and Hiroshima would look like firecrackers on a Sunday afternoon. Not only just in America, but worldwide. You have got Russia. Russia in a war with Ukraine. There is no question about it. Putin is a madman. Putin wants to restore the old Russian empire that was under Stalin. He wants the world dominance again, and he will never get it, but he wants it. He is a desperate man. I am not saying it will. I am just showing you where we are at here. He could flip any second. He already does not like America because we are helping Ukraine, and I think we should. But Russia is right there in our face. Then we have China. China probably right now, if you know anything about history and anything about the Chinese, is our biggest threat and our biggest fear, or it should be, up to America. Most people do not know that China already owns most of America because when we were in such debt that they were buying out our debt, and they own just about half of America today. We do not, they send balloons over. We do not do anything. Russia knocks down one of our drones, and we do not do anything. America is no longer feared by those nations out there because they know we are soft. They know that our leadership is soft. Just for sprinkling on the cookie, how about North Korea? These are three powder kegs that are just ready to explode right now, and you think it will not spill over into America?

Let me tell you something. The Chinese are just waiting to invade Taiwan. When they invade Taiwan, what are we going to do? Nobody is afraid of us anymore. Nobody is afraid of us

anymore. Our allies do not trust us, and our enemies do not fear us. We are in trouble. How about the Muslims? They are almost forgotten at this point with everything else we have going on. How about domestic terrorism? How about the shootings in schools? The killing of police officers? How about the corruption in the government? How about inflation? Now we are seeing the banks begin to close. We are vertically on a recession or depression. We have got the stock market dropping like a plane out of control. I forgot to even mention the border crisis. "Come on in, as long as you are both Democrat." It is a mess, folks. I will tell you what, sticking your head in the sand and pretending it is not there is not going to handle it. How about the drugs? They got enough fentanyl in one bus last week that would kill every American man, woman, and child in America. We do nothing about it. The drug cartels have waged war on us through the drugs of bringing it up and killing 100,000 Americans every year. You know where the fentanyl is coming from? China. What do we do? "Boy, that is a big balloon over there."

The progressive movement in government. They want to defund the police. They want to take away your protection of police. But they also want to take away your guns, and you cannot protect yourself. They also want to make sure that if you do a crime, that you get out on bail because there is no bail, and you can keep murdering people. Out there in some of the places in California, when they went to those places and shoplifted, you had to shoplift \$900 before you could be arrested and prosecuted. Boy, that ran a... I bet they were out of little hand computers for that one to figure out. "Do not steal any more. We are at 900. We have got to get out of here." Crazy.

God's people are scared to death of what is coming. What to do? Everybody sees it. Everybody feels it. I get it. Everybody has got to do what they have got to do. I cannot speak for you and certainly do not try to speak for me. Some people are storing up food. Some people are getting as much ammunition as they can, buying as many guns as they can, storing up food and water. Their basement looks like an arsenal. Little do they know that if everything hits the fan and your city goes collapsing, you and your wife with a couple of peashooters are not going to stop 400 guys taking everything they want. Build a compound. I have friends back in Ohio that, they have built little compounds in their church that when it all comes, they are going to all run to the compound. Isolation yourself is never going to be the answer. So they tell you to buy gold. That is probably the best advice that I could give you, but I am not talking about the gold on TV. I am talking about the gold of 1 Corinthians chapter 3 that you build on your foundation, gold, silver, and precious stone. That needs to be the investment. We will get there in a minute. What to do.

I am not afraid of what is coming. I do not know the future, but that is okay. I mean, I know in particular what is happening, but I cannot put a timeline to it, but I do not have to. I do not know what the future, but I walk with the one who holds the future. I know the rapture is coming. Somebody says, "Well, how long will it be?" I have no idea. I get it. Somebody says, "It cannot go much longer." I agree. But then it could go much longer. I have people ask me all the time, "Well, what are you going to do? What should I do? Should we buy food? Should we buy guns? Should we buy ammo? Should we buy this? Should we buy that? Down the line, someplace we can barter and trade those kinds of things." Is that what we should be doing? Well, I cannot speak

for you, but I will just tell you what I am going to do. What I was already told to do in Luke 19:13. You know what that is?

*Luke 19:13*

*And he called his ten servants, and delivered them ten pounds, and said unto them, Occupy till I come.*

I am going to keep on doing what I am doing. You say, "Well, what if they come away and close the church?" Then I will preach on the street. We will hold it in somebody's home. "What if they put you in prison?" They will start a prison ministry. I am going all the way. I do not care how bleak and black it is out there. None of those things are going to be a side road for me. I am going all the way. I may have to crawl across. I may get chased across. I am going. The key to all that, my friend, is in those five things that John thinks, and the last thing was he rested in the Lord. Can you rest in it today?

## V. Resting in the Lord

To me, hear it again, the greatest definitive passage in the Bible on rest is found in Psalms 37. Look at it. Turn to it for a second. Look at it. Turn to it for a second. Psalms 37:1-7. How this fits into everything that I have been telling you. Psalms 37. Look at verse one. We are going to read seven verses here. Watch this:

*Psalms 37:1-7*

*Fret not thyself because of evildoers, neither be thou envious against the workers of iniquity.*

*For they shall soon be cut down like the grass, and wither as the green herb.*

*Trust in the LORD, and do good; so shalt thou dwell in the land, and verily thou shalt be fed.*

*Delight thyself also in the LORD; and he shall give thee the desires of thine heart.*

*Commit thy way unto the LORD; trust also in him; and he shall bring it to pass.*

*And he shall bring forth thy righteousness as the light, and thy judgment as the noonday.*

*Rest in the LORD, and wait patiently for him: fret not thyself because of him who prospereth in his way, because of the man who bringeth wicked devices to pass.*

That is a promise to me. I believe that. I believe that the evildoers will never stop me from the course that God wants me to do until God is ready for them to stop me. I do not need guns. I do not need ammo. I do not need food. I do not need water stored away. He will give me everything that I need to stay on course. How I know that? Because I am 72 years old. For the last 50 some years, He has given me everything I need to get where I am at now. He will take me home. I promise you, He will get me there.

Here we go. Verse three: "Trust in the Lord and do good. So shalt thou dwell in the land and verily thou shalt be fed." He is going to feed me. Verse four: "Delight thyself also in the Lord and

he shall give thee the desire of thine heart." Verse five: "Commit thy way unto the Lord. Trust also in him and he shall bring it to pass." "And he shall bring forth thy righteousness as the light and thy judgment as noonday." Verse seven: "Rest in the Lord and wait patiently for him. Fret not thyself because of him who prospers in his way." There is everybody else in the world today that you are worried about. "Because of the man who bringeth wicked devices to pass." Okay, here it comes. This is John. Watch.

*Verse 1: Fret not thyself because of the cross. You started there. Make sure you finish there.*

*Verse 3: Trust in the Lord. There is your salvation.*

*Verse 4: Delight thyself. There is your fellowship.*

*Verse 5: Commit thy way. You just picked up the cross.*

*Verse 7: Then you rest in the Lord through His promises. There it is.*

I have told you before, the book of Psalms is the heart of God. It is also the heart of the Bible. If you want to get God's heartbeat, you can get into Psalms. A while back I taught you the book of Proverbs. I told you how the Proverbs was the mind of Christ. If you want the heart of God, then you have got to get into Psalms. If I ever lay out Psalms, it will be laid out from the aspect that this book is the heart of God, just like Proverbs was the mind of God. As I said, I am thinking about once we finish John, maybe we can talk about going through verse by verse through the book of Psalms.

In the book of Psalms, which is the heart of God, you will find one word. It is the word, "Selah." You will find it scattered throughout the book of Psalms. Most people do not know what it means. I have been asked that many, many times. But for your information, Psalms was originally to be sung as songs. The word "Selah" is a musical term that denotes a musical rest between the Psalms you would sing. It means rest. So by the Holy Spirit's design, doctrinally, each place you find Selah, rest will be the doctrinal context of the millennium where Israel gets its rest that was promised in Hebrews 4:9-16. There you go. Incredible. But for us, inspirationally, it will illustrate our rest and the promises of God through the book of Psalms till we are gathered together unto Him. Because the number one problem that we have today is we just cannot rest in what He says in the terrible times that we live in.

According to MedicalNet, a study was done by Dr. Jacob Pham in 1222. He said, for an older adult, a good rest heartbeat on an average would be around 71 and 72 beats per minute. The resting in Christ will only come as you and I grow and mature into an older Christian. It would be hard to think that young Christians could rest, maybe some could. But you know as well as I do, the longer you are on this course and the more you keep growing, and the more you build those five things into your life that John did, and the more you are on course and you stay on course, no side trips, you are going to develop the ability to rest and trust in what He says, just like John did. John went through the most terrible time, but it was the rest that he had and what God had told him that got him through. You and I are going to go through maybe some terrible times that will only be the rest of God that gets you through. 71 to 72 heartbeats for an older adult like myself. For us and our rest in Psalms, you will find the word Selah 71 times. There is

your rest. The older you get, the more the excitement slows down. Your heart does not get troubled. Your heart does not get afraid. Your heartbeat does not race out of control. You keep the rest of the heartbeat, hearing the heartbeat of God, recognizing that the book of Psalms, Selah, is your rest. It starts with the heartbeat of God.

## VI. Conclusion

In Hebrews 12:2, He said, "looking unto Jesus, the author and finisher of our faith." Author. He started His life, coming to earth. He finished my faith at the cross. Jesus Christ went all the way for me. He set the model for all of us. He went the distance. John saw that, believed what He said, my example. It went all the way for him when 97% did not. He was one out of 12 that started with Jesus and ended at the cross. Paul saw it and went all the way for him, and he finished his course and he kept the faith. You and I too, our life started at the cross. It needs to end at the cross with no side trips. The model, just as sure as a hurricane model, cyclone model, tornado model, political model, the Bible model, one out of 12. Or 97% of God's people will never finish what they started.

I cannot, nor would I ever speak for anybody here. But I told you already, and I will tell you again, that is not going to be me. I will finish what He started by the grace of God. If I have to crawl across the finish line, I will get there. If I have to get there in a wheelchair or on crutches, if I have to limp across, if I have to have the angels drag me across. After what He did for me, and He went all the way for me. How could we do less for Him? Why do the things on the side trips look so inviting? It is because we have never seen and understood the price that He paid. The moment we trusted Christ as our personal Savior, He gave us everything. For a time it was wonderful. Bible studies, the King James Bible, all the doctrinal truths, all laying everything out. At some place along the line, he took a side trip. Side trips for the Christian life are never good. But I guarantee you, in the day and age that we live in, in the urgency of this hour, they are not good at all. We need to stay the course. We need to stay focused. We need to understand that what God has given us is the greatest gift that we have. The word of God and then each other.

When we realize that we have not changed in 20 years and 30 years before that, I never change. We never will change. It is not about me. It is not about this church. It is about the Bible we believe and hold and we preach, and we will never change on it. People change. Side trips change them. This church will never change. It does not mean it does not have its issues. It does not mean we do not have to keep working on things. I am just saying from the Bible standpoint, we believe the Bible is true, and everything and everybody else that is not up to that standard is not good. We will take the stand on the truth, just like these guys do across this country. I know I talk to them almost every week, one way or the other. How could I do less for Him? I cannot speak for you. Maybe you can. I cannot. Because years ago, He gave me the lessons of the cross. Next week, I am going to show you another thing I learned. These are things as I came through it and grew and put things together. God just kept revealing truth to me and showing me through John, through Pilate, through Peter, through Simon, through the four black men that I gave you that the New Testament has built around. These are things that God showed me, and they

changed my life in a direction. I want to make sure that no side trips change my life in another direction. But that is me.

Let us pray. Father, thank you and praise you for the Lord Jesus. Thank you for these good people. Thank you for the word of God. Thank you for the unchanging values of the Lord Jesus.