

John 19

Sunday 4/9/2023

Out of the Book of Mark, we laid out for you every detail of the week before the crucifixion of the Lord Jesus Christ. We started with Palm Sunday, which was last Sunday, by the way, and then accounted for every day. As we got closer, breaking it down into little sections of two or three hours, we found that all of this was found in Mark 11 up to Mark 16.

I told you the importance of separating yourself from the tradition of men in Christianity and from the rudiments of the world. I talked about the importance of staying away from Christianity, the rudiments of the world, understanding our roots, what we believe, and why we most certainly believe it.

When you have the truth, all the religious things that go on today have been added. I showed you how that down through history, starting with Constantine in 313 AD, all the way up through the Roman Catholic domain of churches and everything that goes on, all the non-biblical pagan practices and the holy days that today New Testament Christianity thrives on. Actually, they have nothing to do with the Bible. They have nothing to do with God, Christ, and most certainly don't have to do with His crucifixion, but have everything to do with the rudiments of the world.

I've told you many, many times how I think this is key to every believer: the facts of history. History and the facts of history are indisputable. You may not like them. You may not agree with them, but facts are stubborn things.

I showed you how that in the book of Colossians, for us as New Testament believers, it is the book that really pictures for us the Laodicean church. Five times in that little book, you find a reference to Laodicea. In that, as we saw last week in Colossians 2:8, are the four warnings to the church. The warnings not to be beguiled. That word "beguiled" is one of the greatest studies that you'll ever undertake in the Bible. There's a New Testament definition of being beguiled, and then there's an Old Testament definition of being beguiled. You're going to find that that's one of the key words in the Bible to really put it into a biblical perspective.

In Colossians 2:8, we are told that in the church age today, no man is to beguile us.

Colossians 2:8

Beware lest any man spoil you through philosophy and vain deceit, after the tradition of men, after the rudiments of the world, and not after Christ.

Philosophy has taken the place of the Word of God, and yet it has. Vain deceit has taken the place of the clear teachings of the Word of God, yet it has. The tradition of men over the years has crept in and taken the place of the Bible, yet it has. And then lastly, he says, "and the rudiments of the world and not after Christ." These are the four things that fundamentally have destroyed Bible-believing Christianity today.

Then I gave you in Colossians 2:14-17 the blockbuster verse that for the New Testament child of God, there are no holy days. There are no holy days for the church. There are no holy days in Christianity. And yet we find, because of these four things creeping in, that New Testament

Christianity has reverted back to the mindset that now we have to have as Christians some kind of holy days. I'll come back to that in a moment.

I. Understanding Gentiles

One of the most astounding things that I ever found in the Bible was found in the book of Romans. I'm a Gentile. I would say that all of you are probably Gentiles, probably most of you, if not all of you. For me, if I want to understand the way I am, if I want to understand the way Gentiles are—now keep in mind, this is a Gentile church. We're reaching Gentiles. The neighbors around here probably for the most part are Gentiles. We are, we're not a Jewish synagogue. We don't pretend to be. We'll reach Jews for Christ. But the bottom line is this is the Gentile New Testament local church.

When I began to realize that I was going to try to reach Gentiles, I needed to understand Gentiles. For me, the greatest chapter in the Bible that really defines Gentiles is Romans 1. If I'm going to want to study Jews, then I'll go to Romans 2. If I want to find out what the Gentiles do that doesn't work and what the Jews do that doesn't work, then I'll go to Romans 3. If I want to find the answer to both cases, Jews and Gentiles, to solve their problems, I'll go to Romans 4. See how it works.

When I got into Romans 1, this chapter defines us as Gentiles. It gives so much sense to what we see today. He says in Romans 1:21 and 23, here's what Gentiles do.

Romans 1:21

Because that, when they knew God, they glorified him not as God, neither were thankful; but became vain in their imaginations, and their foolish heart was darkened.

That's Gentiles. Once we see the Gentiles in the mess, the next verse is certainly for Gentiles.

Romans 1:22

Professing themselves to be wise, they became fools.

That's Gentiles. If you're here this morning and you're out of fellowship with God, or maybe you're lost and you never trusted Christ as your own personal Savior, that's your problem as a Gentile. That's exactly what your problem is. You are professing yourself to be wise when in actuality, the book of Proverbs says, "You're a fool." The fool has said in his heart that there is no God. That's Gentiles. That's Gentiles.

Now that's what we're up against. When you start to work with people, that's one of the things that you're up against. Now look at this, Romans 1:23.

Romans 1:23

And changed the glory of the uncorruptible God into an image made like to corruptible man, and to birds, and fourfooted beasts, and creeping things.

The Bible says that Gentiles have this desire to take and change the glory of God into something that has nothing to do with God. He says here that they change the glory of the uncorruptible God in four ways. I want to tell you today, we as Gentiles in the Christian church here today, unless you get some understanding of what the Bible's dealing with and why it lays all this stuff out, and you don't get caught up in those four things, this is what you see in America.

American Gentile Christians have changed the glory of God to corruptible man. So on December 25th, we celebrate Santa Claus, the eternal man from the north (Psalms 75 is where heaven is at), who has the ability to travel all night long and bring gifts. The Bible says in Matthew 7, "If you then, being evil, know how to give good gifts unto your children, how much more shall your Father which is in heaven give good things to them that ask him?" And the good gift He gives us is the Holy Spirit of God. But, oh no, no, no, we change that and bring it down to a man.

Then he says, "and to birds." So come along here in November, we'll celebrate Thanksgiving. That special day is about a turkey, a bird. That's Gentile. Jews don't do that. That's Gentiles that do that. Then he says, "to four-footed beasts." We had her here yesterday, there's your Easter bunny. There's your Easter. And then lastly, "the creeping things." There's your Halloween. That's what Gentiles do. Gentiles take the image of God and then try to repackage it and put it out as something other than something in the Bible. It's what we do. That's what you're up against if you're going to minister and try to reach Gentiles: the four great holy days, holidays in America.

But the Bible says that we are the body of Christ. Colossians 2:17. We are to be smarter than the problem. Again, it goes back into this core theme of the Bible: the kingdom of God versus the kingdom of heaven. The kingdom of heaven was a physical kingdom in the Old Testament, so they had all the holy days. The kingdom of God in the New Testament is a spiritual kingdom inside you. It does not require any holy days because the body is of Christ.

I showed you as the church how we deal with these days. We use them to reach people. Yesterday was a great example. Yesterday was an example of how we take something that has nothing to do with the Bible, that is a pagan holiday, and I showed you how it was brought in. We could abstain from that and just say, "Well, we're so godly, we don't do those kinds of things." But we're trying to reach Gentiles. So we take that and we use that. We take that and we use that as Paul says to become all things to all men. I'm in this world, but I'm not of this world.

The key to penetrating our culture is never one of isolation, going into hiding, fearing the world around you. We are to occupy till He comes. We as the body of Christ are to use every resource around us, everything that the world throws at us. We are to turn it around and use it for the honor and glory of the Lord Jesus Christ. The key to building a church, the key to a successful ministry, the key to reaching people is to what Paul said in 1 Corinthians 9:22, as I've said, "become all things to all men."

I showed you Thursday night in the book of Acts, four or five ways that Paul did that. I showed you how that he never gave up his Roman citizenship and he used that when he needed it. How that he never lost his love for the nation of Israel and how he would go in with the Jews and he would go so far to do everything that they did. But as I showed you, he knew where the line was. I'm telling you, for ministry down the line for you folks Thursday night, giving you that little

exposé is one of the greatest keys you'll ever have. It shows you that Paul had what we need to have in reaching people. He saw his culture. He had a background of a Jewish religion. He was a Pharisee, but he's a Roman citizen. And yet at the same time, he's a New Testament Christian. He's a Jew, but he's establishing Gentile churches. Wow. Watch how he uses his perception to get the job done, becoming one with them.

It's nothing different than what I do with volleyball. Volleyball is not a Christian sport. Softball is not a Christian sport. Kickball is not a Christian sport. The Ironman competition, when we've had them in the past, is not a Christian sport. Memorial Day is not a Christian day. Fourth of July is not a Christian day, but you use them. You use them to get into people's lives. You allow people to come into your life by you getting into theirs.

Of course, the example was Paul, but I'll tell you another one. The greatest example is the Lord Jesus Christ Himself. When He came down to earth, He just didn't stay in a religious synagogue someplace. He didn't isolate Himself from the common people. In fact, He hung out with the sinners so much that they were accusing Him of being a drunkard and a glutton because of the folks that He hung out with. He was tempted at all points like we are, yet without sin. He came down to reach a culture, and He knew to reach that culture, He had to become part of that culture. I mean, He was the most spiritual being in the history of the universe, but yet He became man. He wore their clothes. He went to where they went. He didn't say, "Oh, I don't know." He partook in everything that they did, yet He had the answers that they needed. It's incredible.

Matthew 11:19 says that He was a friend to sinners. The Pharisees had isolated themselves from the people. Even some of His disciples did that. They want to get caught up in the mentality of ministry. When the little kids came to Jesus and they had all their white starched robes, they had on their clean and they're walking around in their pious attitude, and the little dirty kids with little dirty fingers, they didn't want them to mess them up. You know what Jesus said? He says, "Except you come to me as a little child, you have no part of me."

The reason why legalistic churches today never really grow or reach people is they have so isolated themselves from what normal people live and where normal people go. The isolationist mindset will always keep you from doing whatever God has called you to do. We get the idea that we just isolate ourselves from the world, put out the word that we're a church, and people will come to us. No, that's not what Jesus did. He could have gone into some Jewish establishment. He could have built some New Testament mega church and put a sign out front, "Come and see me and get the truth." Uh-uh. He went to where the sinners were, so much that they accused Him of being one of them.

I know we ought to be separated from the world. I get that, but not so much that you live in an underground bunker someplace. You have to educate yourself, guys, young ladies. One of the things that I saw years ago in my life, we used to go to staff retreats at the church I was with up in Lawrence, Kansas, where we'd take four or five days and get away and just talk, get into a hotel and have conferences and talk about ministry and what we want to do. They would have a lot of free time, and all the guys would go to a movie. They'd go here, they'd go eat, they'd go do this and all that was great. You know where I went? I went over to the bookstore at the library,

the bookstore of Kansas University. I bought every book I could get on philosophy. I bought every book I could get on history. I bought every book I could get on any subject that I thought I needed to know about. I wanted to educate myself. I wanted to be some kind of reasonable, intelligent individual that when I met somebody and I sat down with somebody, that I could carry on some kind of reasonable conversation with them so I could get into their world. I wanted to know. I wanted to be able to ask them. I wanted them to be able to ask me. I wanted to let God use that Holy Spirit of God. Let Him ask me a question and bring us up, or let me ask them a question. And then just like a mousetrap, they're stuck.

But oh no, no, no, no, we don't want any part of that. We don't want to get out there where they're at. We don't want to get out there and mix with them. I talk to people and I watch you guys do it. All those people out there yesterday, just like Halloween, just like at Christmas time, you talk with them, you talk with their kids, you make an investment in them. I know it doesn't seem like much, but watch how the Holy Spirit of God just may use that someday.

Balance. We live in a world that wants to save the planet. Every time you turn on the news, it's the gas in the atmosphere, it's global warming, it's killing all the ice age, the ice age that's coming, and the polar caps are melting. Everybody is on it. Even Christians are on this kick now to save the planet. I don't give a flip about the planet. I know where it's going. I'm interested in saving the people on the planet. But how do you do that? Do you just open up the doors and put a sign out front and say, "Come on in. We have a King James Bible. Come on in. I'm Bob Alexander. I know the Bible really well. You can ask me any question you want to ask me," and you'll be talking to yourself. You've got to go where they're at, folks. You can't hide yourself out someplace. You can't isolate yourself from the people that are out there. Jesus didn't do it. Paul didn't do it. But we think that's what we should do today. Balance. Balance. Balance.

So today now, happy Easter. Let's get that over with. As Danny said, hopefully a day you'll get to spend with your friends, your family, your loved ones, and just have some good quality time. I'm sure this afternoon, being Easter, you could fill your afternoon with the old religious movies that are back in the fifties and sixties. I encourage you to watch them. They made movies back then. When they made Ben Hur back in 1952 with Charlton Heston, they had over 20,000 extras. When you look out there and you see a crowd, a crowd of 10, 15,000 people, they're real people. When they made the remake, they're all computer generated. You've got to go back to the fifties and the sixties to really see these things. There's one coming up probably today on Barabbas played by Anthony Quinn. There's one probably on today called The Robe. All of these were made by Hollywood years ago. They're great to watch if you have any kind of perception to see how the Catholic church worked its way right into those things. I'm sure pretty soon they'll have one for the transgender crowd called Ben Gay.

John 19 has been a really good chapter. I hope you've enjoyed it. I've enjoyed just digging all the things out and seeing many things that I had never seen before, but it's been a really good study. We had some good character studies. We studied John, we studied Peter, Pilate, Simon of Cyrene. It's been a good history study. It showed us how that Constantine, all the way back in 300 AD, changed the course of what would become New Testament Christianity. We saw, and I defined for you, the true biblical line, not only of Christians, but of the Bible itself. We have

taken the time to define all the pagan days, given where we're at: Lent, Ash Wednesday, and looked at their roots going back to what, 900 to 1,000 to 1,500 years after Christ was resurrected. They put these things into effect. I showed you the complete timeline from Palm Sunday to resurrection morning. It's been completely laid out.

Now today we come to the crucifixion itself. I don't know if you've ever noticed this. I'm a stickler on facts. I don't let my emotions override the principles or the facts. To me, facts are the bottom line. I know today, being Easter, all across the Christian world, there are people that actually believe that Easter is the Christian holiday and all. But did you ever stop and think that for this time today, you know that there's no Christian name for it? Easter wasn't, I showed you in Acts 12, Easter wasn't a Christian name. It's Ishtar, the goddess of fertility. It was the Roman pagan holiday. Somebody says, "Well, we're celebrating the Passover." What are you talking about? Passover is in Exodus 12, given to the Old Testament nation of Israel, not to the New Testament church. What are you doing celebrating the Passover as a Christian? When it comes to today, you don't have a Christian name for it. So you know what we do? We tag the pagan Roman name to it. Because you don't have a name for the day in the Bible. You know why? Because you were never given in the Bible to have this day as a holy day.

You know where you and I as a New Testament Christian should really have a close relationship with Christ's death on the cross? It's the Lord's Supper. It's when you take a part and you sit there and look at yourself and examine, and you go through what He did in the upper room. We have to make it up.

Today, I want to begin to deal with His crucifixion just a little differently. I've laid it out for you now, the last couple of weeks. We know now it wasn't Good Friday He was crucified on. It was Bad Wednesday, the day of His crucifixion. We saw how the very day that He is crucified started at six o'clock in the morning and went to six p.m. in the evening. Then He's put into the tomb. We know that on that day at six o'clock in the morning, He goes before Pilate. At nine a.m., the third hour, that's when they crucify Him on the cross. For the sixth to the ninth hour, that's 12 to three, that's when God turns His back on Him. Then sometime between then and around six o'clock, He gives up the ghost, and then He's taken down off the cross, put into a tomb. I laid it out for you completely: the three days and the three nights so you have all the information.

Today, I want you to understand, and I want to look at five different viewpoints of Christ's death on a cross. Because if you're going to begin to work with people, you're going to have to understand why Gentiles are the way they are. You're going to have to understand the things that they get into that have nothing to do with God, nothing to do with Christ, nothing to do with His death. There are no holy days, and so now here we are at our holy day. Many of God's people across this world have made their pilgrimage to church and won't be back till Christmas for the second pilgrimage. You need to understand why Gentiles are the way they are. You don't really know why they think the way they think because you're going to have to try to reach them. Someday if you're going to pastor a church, someday if you're going to really get into ministry, whether it's here or wherever, you will fall on your face if you don't get this. If you don't get this.

Now this will be our perspective. I showed you how Paul had his perspective, how he did it, when he perceived the situation he was in and then used what he had to nullify that situation. Oh, what a great study that is in the Bible. You will learn in time, not everybody looks at things the same way. This is the problem that parents have with their kids by the time the kids get 15, 16, 17—excuse me, 8, 9, 10, 11, used to be 14, 15, and 16. You don't look at things the same. If a parent doesn't instill in that child the way to look at things right by the time they get to be 10, 12, 13, you're going to have opposing views on everything in life. That's where the fundamental problem starts. That is especially true when it comes to the Bible.

I'll never forget. God taught me some great lessons. I came to Kansas City in 1976. At the end of '76, I was hired as a youth pastor. I came out of a church that believed the King James Bible. I mean, it was taught me, trained me in everything I knew. I went through everything that I'm giving you guys. Well, I was going into a church that was a really good church, a big church. The pastor of it was a very notable pastor and was known throughout the Christian fellowship, Baptist fellowship, and was a really good preacher and a really good guy. I have no criticism whatsoever. But I remember my first Bible study. I got the high school kids together. We had about 20 or 30 kids. All the workers, the high school workers were there, who I really didn't know yet, but they came. I'm the new guy on the block. This is my first Bible study. Little did I know that half of my workers were being trained out at Calvary Bible College, which if you got a choice between drinking out of a toilet or Calvary Bible College, take the toilet. If that sounds off color and off base to you, well, then see me afterwards and I'll give you another couple options. It's a mess. Today, it's a joke. It was a joke back then. They certainly didn't believe the Bible. This was where some of the Sunday school teachers, remember? They trained at Calvary and they thought they knew everything they knew about the Bible. No, all I knew was what my local church had taught me.

After about a couple of years, maybe two or three years, I had a Sunday school class that was running 200, 300 people. The guys from Calvary were having Sunday school classes that were running eight or nine. Remember old, you know, eight or nine people, but they were the great Greek guys. One of them one day pulled me aside. They didn't like me. I can't imagine why, but they didn't like me. Pulled me aside, put his arm around me and he says, "Bob, can I give you some suggestions?" And I said, "Sure." Now I'm running a Sunday school class of 200, 250. He's got eight, maybe. Put his arms around me, he says, "Have you ever considered picking up some classes at Calvary?" I said, "No, I really ever had." And he says, "I would really think that for your ongoing ministry and education, getting some higher learning into your life would really benefit you." And I said, "You don't know how much I appreciate that." He says, "Well, I just want to help." And I said, "Man, I'll tell you what, that's really been a help." I said, "Well, let me ask you that just so I'm clear on this. If I go to Calvary and I learn Greek and Hebrew and get all this greater learning, then in my Sunday school class, I can run eight too." He didn't appreciate that.

But oh, that was a Bible study. I was so defeated afterwards. I thought everybody in wherever you went in Christianity, believed the King James Bible was the Word of God. I got blindsided. I mean, it was my first Bible study. It was turned into World War III. I got so despondent, I drove

over to the pastor's house afterwards, told him, was ready to quit and go back to Canton, you know, because I felt like I've ruined it here. And he just laughed at me. You know what he said to me? Some of the greatest advice I ever got. He said, "Bob, you're going to learn that not everybody looks at it like they do back in Canton." And he said, "You know what? I don't care what you believe." He says, "You just give those kids and love those kids, minister to those kids, be there for them, and it'll be okay." Greatest advice I ever got. And you know what? From that point on, I was smarter than the problem. I had perception a little bit too. Then I began to see how I could steer those Bible studies the way I wanted them to go. I'll tell you what, that was the greatest thing I ever learned, that when it comes to the Bible and life, not everybody looks at it the same way. The quicker you learn that, the better off you're going to be, because what happens when you get in that isolationist mode, or you get into that legalistic mode, you get so inflexible. You can't bend left or right. You never reach anybody.

Back in the Old Testament, Bruce Bell was a missionary to Mexico for many, many years. I don't know if he's still alive or not. Bruce Bell was in Wichita, Kansas, by the way. That's where his church was. Bruce Bell was one of the best preachers I've ever heard in my life. I heard him preach one time a message out of 2 Kings 4 that I have never forgotten. I would say that it's probably one of the key sermons in my life that I heard that shaped my pathway in reaching people. If you don't let that happen in your life, you'll never reach anybody. You'll get into a legalistic mindset or an isolationist mindset where you just keep yourself away from everybody, and you've got these rules that you've got to keep. If they don't keep them like you keep them in your spiritual, and you go around in a spiritual Pharisee mode, and you never build a church, you never reach people, you just never do anything. But you're so spiritual.

Bruce Bell was a great preacher. The message I heard, I have stolen from him and preached at least a hundred times, never as good as he did. But boy, he told a message one night that I heard and I thought to myself, "That's it, man." He told the story out of 2 Kings 4 about the Shunammite woman, that she wanted a son and she waited for that son. Finally she got a son. Then the son grew up and the Bible says there was a day when this son just dropped over dead. You can imagine the heartbreak of her heart. Now, Elisha, not Elijah, Elisha was now the prophet. She knew that Elisha was the man of God that had the ability to bring life back to her dead child. She sent her servants to Elisha. They said to him, "The Shunammite woman's son is dead. She requires you to come and bring him back to life." The Bible says that Elisha sends his servants to go do it. When they got there, the boy was certainly dead, but the servants could not bring life into him.

Now that looks just like a simple story. But when you begin to understand that that boy that is dead is a picture of an unsaved person. And Elisha as the man of God had the power to bring him back to life, give him life, a picture of life to a dead person in sin. He tries to say, he does what we all do. And this is the first great lesson I learned out of that. He tried to send somebody else to do what God had called him to do. The Bible says the day you got saved, you got ordained to bring forth fruit and your fruit should remain. Thinking that you can go through your Christian life, supporting a church, giving your tithes, your offering and a sacrificial giving so other people can do the job that God has called you to do.

So finally Elisha shows up. There's the dead boy. Strangest story in the Bible. Elisha crawls on top of this kid. Read it for yourself. He puts his mouth up to his mouth. He puts his eyes to his eyes and he puts his hands to his hands. Now that doesn't appeal to me. And then I saw it. The moment he did that, life came back to this dead kid. And old Bruce Bell took that boy and boy he laid it out. He says, "You know how that is a picture, that boy is a picture of a person dead in trespasses of sin. And his crawling on top of him and putting his mouth on his mouth and his eyes on his eyes and his hands in his hands is a picture how you reach people."

Mouth to mouth. You have to understand why unsaved people say the things that they say.

Eyes to eye. You have to understand why unsaved people look at things the way they do.

Hands to hand. You have to understand why unsaved people do the things that they do.

Until you get that down in your life and you open up your life to them and allow them to come in, know where the line is, but the bottom line it's all about giving life to dead people. How do you do that? You've got to have perception. You understand why they say the things that they say. They're going to say some terrible things. Most Christians, if they hear a four-letter word coming out of a string of words out of somebody's mouth, "Oh, I've got to stay away from that." Understand why they talk that way. We've been in places at softball and at places where somebody's out there at a ball, sitting in the stand, smoking a cigarette. Saw one guy drinking a beer one time. Now, what's the Christian thing to do? Unworked Christian soldiers break his bottle of beer. You know what I do? Nothing. You know why? I understand why he does what he does. I understand why they look at things the way they look at. And when it comes to the crucifixion of Christ, you better know why the world in five ways looks at what we hold so dear. Perception.

If you're ever going to build a church, if you're ever going to reach people, if you're ever going to have a ministry, you've got to go get them. I had a dog run away one time. Loved that dog. Wasn't as good as Charles and Laura's Brown Lab, but it was a good dog. So I said, "I'm going to get my dog back." So I went down to Home Depot, and I bought the biggest, nicest, fanciest dog house I could find. I set it there in the backyard and fixed it all up. I put a big old soft thing to lay in there. Had one of those food things that you hit with your nose and food falls out. It was set. Then I just waited for him to come back. Day one, didn't come back. Day two, didn't come back. Day three, the raccoon started eating the food. Now I finally found my dog. I finally got out and walked up and down the streets through the backyard, yelling his name, looking for him, calling for him. And I went out to find him. You know what? I found him. You think that because you're smart with the Bible, because you're going to build a building, people are just... You've got to go where they're at. Just like Jesus did. It's all been amazing to me how much we want to pretend we're like Jesus, but we don't ever do anything that He did.

II. How the World Views the Crucifixion

Now, the first thing I want to talk to you about is how the world viewed the crucifixion. The world saw and sees the death of Christ a number of different ways. You need to be acquainted with all of them. Many times they see Him as just another religious leader. Some said that He

was a good teacher. Some said that He was a martyr. Some said that He was a zealot. Some say that He was a revolutionary. In fact, back in the 60s, when the Roman Catholic Church wanted to bring about what we now call this liberation theology, liberation theology is the teaching or the doctrine that if you're a Christian and your country goes against any of your principles, that you have an obligation as a Christian to rise up in revolt and overthrow that government. It's a communist mindset, comes out of Central America with Archbishop Romero and the Roman Catholic Church. But, liberation theology is rampant today. It teaches that Christ was a revolutionary. That He used sedition to try to overthrow the Roman government.

Others think that He was just another religious leader like Muhammad, or Confucius, like Buddha. There are some that say that He never really existed. That He's just a fable that came into history. That people brought up this fable like Santa Claus. The world looks at what you and I have and thinks that for us, our relationship with Christ is just a crutch.

A guy told me one time, he says, "Well, you know what you really believe, is it really true?" And he says, "I hate to tell you this, but when you get to the end of your life and you die, you're going to find out there's no heaven, there's no hell, there's no anything. And all you believed has just been a bunch of pack of lies and not true." And I said, "Is that so?" He says, "Yes." And I said, "Well, you know what? I got something for you. Even if that would be true, which it's not, but even if it was true, my life has been happier, more peaceful, more fulfilling. My family's all together. Everything I have is just wonderful. And so if I get to the end and it's not true, my life's still been better than your wreck." But it's true.

But they don't look at it that way. They think we have to have a crutch to hold us up. They think that Christians are a people who cannot deal with life on their own. That it's too horrifying. And that the idea of religion, Christ, is a crutch that just gives us a false hope and has no real meaning other than we deceive ourselves from the reality of life. They'll tell you and me that the real answers in life come from man. Man-made philosophy, which has been debunked out of the book of Ecclesiastes, every one of them. They'll tell you that the real answer is science. They'll tell you that the real evidence is man's ability to create medicine that is going to keep you from dying and live a long life and solve every problem that you have. They'll tell you that the real key is science in multiple ways. That man is evolving.

I've always thought that was interesting because I know enough how the devil works that he'll always take a truth that's absolute and where an unsaved man and a devil will work it forward. It'll always be a truth that he's reversed because the real truth works backwards. See, the world tells you through evolution that you started out as a wiggly little worm someplace and then you grew up and evolved into the point where, you know, I went for the monkey with a PhD. Now I'm a professor with a PhD. And that's how they look at it. But the truth of the matter is man didn't start out as a worm and get to be perfect and build his utopia. Man started out in a garden in a perfect world and he rejected God and now he's on an evolution in reverse. Isaiah 66:24 says he's going to wind up as a worm in a lake of fire. Perception. Perception. Perception.

They'll tell you that the real answer is government. That's why the government wants to take over everything that you have. The government thinks that they know more how to raise your children

than you do. And of course, they shouldn't. But in most cases, parents don't know how to raise their kids either. So it's a toss-up. But they don't have any right to come into your world and tell your kids when they're four or five years old to question whether they're a male or a female. But they're doing it. They think the answer to man's problem is all the technological advancements. Now we're right on the verge of artificial intelligence. Someday you won't have to go to the grocery store. You're just pushing a button and some robot will fly over and drop your grocery down your chimney. You won't go to work someday and you'll be replaced by artificial intelligence. It's going to run everything.

Have you noticed yet? Maybe this is just me. Have you noticed that every science fiction movie we saw in the 50s and the 60s and the 70s is now coming to life? I mean, when Arnold Schwarzenegger was back there trying to kill that kid in Terminator, you know what was taking over the world? Artificial intelligence. Skynet. We're right there. Then all the UFOs are now showing up. We're right there. I'm telling you. And artificial intelligence probably is not too bad because it's better than what we have in America, which is no intelligence. Man's evolution rising to higher levels that through time all the advancement of man will reach a perfect world without God. And then we'll finally get to my favorite movie, Soylent Green. When the earth is so overpopulated they don't have enough food so they let you live till you're 60, 70 years old and then they grind you up into food so they can feed the world's population. You're laughing at that, but over in Europe they're already kicking around in the think tanks that it's okay to eat human beings. That's how the world looks at it.

III. How the Devil Views the Crucifixion

Then we have how the devil looked at it. When he stepped back, they looked at the cross. How did he see it? When the devil looked at Christ's death on the cross, he sees to him, the devil, the final act of his plan. The Bible tells us in Hebrews 2:14 that in the Old Testament, up to the time of Christ, that the devil has the keys to death and hell. He has the power of death and he knows that Christ is the heir to the kingdoms of this world. Revelation 11:15, that were once his. He sees Christ's coming to this earth not for man's salvation, but rather the threat to his kingdom on earth. This is why in Matthew 4, he would have put all the pieces together when he takes Jesus up on a mountain. The last thing he says, "All the kingdoms of the world I will give them to you if you will bow down and worship me." Now read between the lines on that because when you go back to the book of Revelation, the one that gives Christ all those kingdoms is God Himself, the Father. So what the devil is saying is, "If you'll recognize me as God, then I'll let you have these kingdoms, but I get to be God."

All down through the Bible in the Old Testament for 4,000 years, he ran the earth through Babylon, Egypt, Assyria, Persia, Greece. It's a thing where in every case, every case in the Old Testament, when somebody got the kingdom of heaven, he took it from them. The thing he hates about Christ now in the resurrection, because now the spiritual is the kingdom of God and he can't take that one, and he loses. He tried to get rid of the Lord Jesus Christ long before they crucified Him. He set it up so Mary, being with child, would have to travel 80 miles on the back of a mule over very rough terrain to pay their taxes in Luke 2, hoping that she would miscarry to

lose that baby. When that didn't work and Christ is finally born, Luke, you're going to find that he then kills all the babies two years and down, Matthew 2:16, to try to get rid of Christ. Then you'll find when that didn't work, he pits the scribes, the Pharisees, and the Sadducees against Christ to stop Him and ultimately use them to take His life through crucifixion.

Now He's on the cross, and then He dies. On that cross, before He dies, from the sixth to the ninth hour, He literally brings hell to Him on the cross. This is where you find that Christ cries out, "My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?" That's a picture of a man in hell. That's where He cries out, "I thirst." That's a picture of a man in hell. Then at six o'clock, sometime around there, Christ dies, gives up the ghost. Death takes hold of Him, and He goes into paradise. Now the Lord Jesus Christ is in the hands of death, and the devil has the power over death.

Now we see the greatest battle on earth begin to play out. No one saw it, no one recorded it except the Holy Spirit of God in some of the Old Testament books. In Isaiah 50:7-8, we get a real glimpse of that day and the battle that was going on.

Isaiah 50:7 For the Lord GOD will help me; therefore shall I not be confounded: therefore have I set my face like a flint, and I know that I shall not be ashamed.

Isaiah 50:8 He is near that justifieth me; who will contend with me? let us stand together: who is mine adversary? let him come near to me.

Boy, the devil did. There in the early morning light on the cross of Calvary, amidst the spitting and the blows and the slapping and all the scourging, the sinless Son of God looked into the spirit world, into the eyes of the devil himself in that spiritual world. While everybody was screaming and yelling and going crazy because their Christ was crucified, while the Sadducees and the Pharisees were high-fiving, and while everybody thought they finally got rid of Him, in the midst of that day, the real battle played out when He looked into that spirit world and He said, "Who is mine adversary? Let him come near to me." Boy, he did. He did. He did.

The showdown of the ages, and all the world hung in the balance, and yes, your soul and my soul hung in the balance too. Christ now is in the hands of death, and the devil has the keys of death, he has the power over death. I'm telling you, in his mind, he thinks now he has won. He did what no one else was able to do. He killed God. He took God manifested in the flesh, put Him on the cross, put a spear in the side, and now He's gotten the tomb and he's got the keys.

What do we care, really, what do we care? I had a guy that I won to Christ back at the Hoover Company, his name was John Tony, back in the 70s. John was a black guy. We were fork truck drivers together and I'd be passing out tracks and witnessing and John, he wanted nothing to do with it and I tried to witness to him and he just blow me off, you know. I don't know what God did in his life but I'll never forget, I'm back in a big old storage area back here where they're getting parts for all the washing machines and old John pulls his truck back there, it's very secluded, gets off that truck and runs over to me and he's crying and I got off my truck and he says, "Bob," he says, "I'm a sinner, I need to be saved because I'm sorry for everything I said. God's been tearing my heart out," he says, "I know what you've got is the truth," he says, "Please show me how I can be saved." And I took him back there among those old boxes back in that

storage area and that old boy got on his knees and he trusted Jesus Christ as his personal Savior. God called him to preach and boy I'll tell you what, he was a good preacher.

I'd lost track of John for some 30 years. Then when Mel Sabaka died and we went back to the funeral, John showed up and we had a great, great time of revival. God really used that man. I remember one time, I loved to hear him preach. I remember one time we were down there in a black church and he said, "I'm going to preach my first message, will you go with me?" And I said, "Absolutely, let's go, man." I was having a time of my life. Old John was preaching on the crucifixion. I'll never forget that message. You know, black churches are great places to preach, man. I mean, they're people love the Lord. I've had a privilege of preaching in them many, many, many times. I took my mom one time when I was preaching years ago to one and she wanted to wait in the car. She thought they were going to kill her. They were having a ball, man.

But old John is preaching and he's down there. He's saying, "Yes, and they took my Savior and they put Him down in a tomb." And he said, "The devil knew that as long as He would stay dead, that he had Him." And he, the great hordes of hell are screaming and yelling the victory that Christ is dead. And he said, "He's in that tomb and death had Him." And he said, "On the first day, the devil came by and he said, 'Death, do you still have Him?'" Death said, "I got Him. He ain't going nowhere. In 4,000 years, I've never lost a one of them." He says, "Well, you make sure you got Him." The second day he came by, he says, "Death, is He still in there?" He says, "He's here, stone cold dead and He ain't going nowhere." The devil says, "You make sure He stays there. I got Him." Old John said, "The devil came by the third day and he said, 'Death. Death. Death. Hey, Death. This is John, you still got Him?'" Death said, "There's something really went wrong down here." You know what happened? He got out, walked out of that tomb, resurrected Himself, and now He's got the keys to death and hell. Because of it, you and I never have to worry about going to hell. He's got the keys. We have to worry about dying in the sense that spiritual death, while even in physical death, God said it's sleep. But at this point in the Bible and history, the devil is defeated.

I showed you before that all history, all history points to that day. Before the cross, it's BC, before Christ. After the death of Christ, it's AD, in the year of our Lord. But every day, every year of this planet points to the great day when He said, "Who is mine adversary? Let us stand together."

IV. How God Views the Crucifixion

Then the third viewpoint, and this is how God viewed the death of His Son. When Adam and Eve fell into the garden, Genesis 3, you already know that it broke any relationship of fellowship that man could ever have with God. Romans 8:7 tells us that as an unsaved fallen man, we are enmity against God. That means we're God's enemy. We're separated by our sin from God in this life, but more importantly, separated by our sin from God eternally in the next life. As we all know, the great verse in Romans 6:23, "the wages of sin is death." As we all know, the Bible says that all have sinned and come short of the glory of God, and that all of our righteousness is filthy rags in the sight of God.

But God desired a fellowship with His creation. That was His original plan. The devil interrupted that. But God had to have something perfect. God could not accept anything that I could bring as a sinner. God could not accept anything that you could bring as a sinner. God had to have something innocent, perfect, something that was sinless, die in my place to pay the price to restore that fallen image of Adam. Oh, in the Old Testament, the bulls and the goats, Hebrews 8 and 9, but they could only temporarily cover it. We needed the Lamb of God which taketh away the sin of the world.

The Bible tells us in 1 John 2:2 the great doctrine of propitiation. It says that He is the propitiation for our sins and not for ours only, but also for the sins of the whole world. Propitiation means advocate. It means the go-between. It means the mediator. God saw Christ's death on the cross as the bringing back and the reconciling of two opposing parties: me and God. He was my advocate. He was my propitiation, and the reconstruction and the bringing me back to God. The reconciling me to God in a fallen state through Christ's death on the cross. And now I can have fellowship with Him. He paid my payment for my sin. He was my propitiation, and now I have fellowship with Him. This is why, because of what God did with us, this is why in any church the key is reconciliation. Fixing things.

When it comes to God's view in Christ's death on the cross, He views it through 12 great doctrines. That Christ was accomplishing by His death the satisfied God's demand to restore Adam's fallen image. The joke today is even Easter. The joke today is across this country and across this world. The joke today is the people that claim to be saved and probably are, that are all excited enough about the fact that here it is Easter Sunday, Resurrection Day. Yet the tragedy of it is they couldn't give you three of those 12 doctrines that their salvation is built on if you put a gun to their head. They couldn't explain those 12 if their own salvation depended on it. Maybe it does. But we got Easter down. The 12 greatest doctrines in the Bible that define how God looked at what Christ did for you and for me.

V. How Christ Views His Dying

Then the fourth thing: How Christ saw His dying on the cross. Him dying for the one that He loved. No child of God in my estimation will ever understand in any depth the love that God had that motivated Christ to go to the cross without an understanding of the book of Song of Solomon. It's the greatest love story in the Bible. It's a story about Adam and Eve. Adam being a type of Christ, Eve being a type of the church. God uses the story of Adam and Eve in so many places in the Bible. I'm telling you, remember that Eve was not a direct creation. She came forth out of Adam's side. The Bible says that Genesis 2:21 that a great sleep fell upon Adam and God opened up his side and brought forth Eve. Adam being a type of Christ, Eve being a type of the church. As Adam died to bring forth Eve, so Christ died on that cross to bring forth the church, Eve, out of His side. Brother, when that Roman soldier put that spear in His side that took His life and water and blood came out, out came the church. You and me.

You can see the connection between Adam and Eve and the church all through the Bible in Ephesians 5:22-33. You can see it in 2 Corinthians 11:1-3 where the church is told not to be

beguiled like Eve was beguiled. The church is the bride of Christ, Israel God's wife. I understand that God loves Israel. Christ loves His bride. Ephesians 5:25 says:

Ephesians 5:25

Husbands, love your wives, even as Christ also loved the church, and gave himself for it;

I always try to take verses like that and turn them back around in my face. It says Christ loved the church and gave Himself for it. How could I ever turn around and say, "Bob loved Christ and gave himself for Him"? Well, you start doing that with some key verses and you hit the ground, buddy. Christ simply died for the ones He loves. He died for you. And then He asked you and me to live for Him. And we return the favor by saying, "No thanks. I'm too busy. I'm too tired. I've got too much going on. I'm really enjoying my life right now. Don't bother me with this."

VI. How the Believer Should View the Cross

Then the fifth thing. Lastly, how as a New Testament child of God, I should see the cross. For most Christians, all they ever see and hear of the crucifixion is what is basically found in those four gospels, or at Easter, or at Christmas. Today, so many of God's people across this country, city, wherever, they have made their Christian pilgrimage. They're at Easter service today because that's the Christian holiday. They won't be back next week. They'll go back to their old lifestyle. You won't see them again until Christmas or some tragedy befalls in their life. But they've made their annual. We get on the Jews with a wailing wall. We get on to the Muslims for Mecca. But you know what? God's people are just as bad.

But the real depth of His death, His suffering, His agony in a terrible time, that sixth to the ninth hour, is not found in the gospels. A couple of weeks ago, I gave you a powerful three verses out of Hebrews 12:1-3.

Hebrews 12:1 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,

Hebrews 12:2 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.

Hebrews 12:3 For consider him that endured such contradiction of sinners against himself, lest ye be wearied and faint in your minds.

He says, "Looking unto Jesus the author and the finisher of our faith." And then He says for us to consider what He endured, consider Him and what He became, consider Him and the price that He paid, "lest you faint in your minds." As I look down through history of the New Testament Christianity and see common men, ordinary people just like you and me, who God saved just like you and me, and I read the accounts of their lives and how they gave all of their life to the cause of the Lord Jesus Christ. How they too endured the cross like Simon of Cyrene, how they too suffered. They, like Moses, considered Him and came to the conclusion, Hebrews 11:25, that

Moses was choosing rather to suffer the affliction with the people of God than to enjoy the pleasures of sin for a season. These people never quit. The list is endless. They never gave up. They never considered not finishing the course because they considered Him.

Many of God's people, the issue is not that you have quit, it's the very fact that you never started. We give ourselves so many excuses not to be what God wants us to be and we use everything and everybody to justify it: not to do ministry, not to be in church. We're too busy, we're too tired, we're overwhelmed, we have so much work. We blame our indifference on other people, and the fainting of our minds simply comes in and God's people just never consider Him. For me, once you see and understand the real price that was paid, our excuses are as empty as our hands will be at the judgment seat of Christ.

Isaiah saw it in Isaiah 53.

Isaiah 53:1Who hath believed our report? and to whom is the arm of the LORD revealed?

Isaiah 53:2For he shall grow up before him as a tender plant, and as a root out of a dry ground: he hath no form nor comeliness; and when we shall see him, there is no beauty that we should desire him.

Isaiah 53:3He is despised and rejected of men; a man of sorrows, and acquainted with grief: and we hid as it were our faces from him; he was despised, and we esteemed him not.

Isaiah 53:4Surely he hath borne our griefs, and carried our sorrows: yet we did esteem him stricken, smitten of God, and afflicted.

Isaiah 53:5But he was wounded for our transgressions, he was bruised for our iniquities: the chastisement of our peace was upon him; and with his stripes we are healed.

Boy, if you don't ever study anything in life, you better study the chastisement of His peace on you and me and what that means. Incredible.

Isaiah 53:7He was oppressed, and he was afflicted, yet he opened not his mouth: he is brought as a lamb to the slaughter, and as a sheep before her shearers is dumb, so he openeth not his mouth.

Isaiah 53:10Yet it pleased the LORD to bruise him; he hath put him to grief: when thou shalt make his soul an offering for sin, he shall see his seed, he shall prolong his days, and the pleasure of the LORD shall prosper in his hand.

Notice Isaiah 53:10 says that it pleased the Lord to bruise Him. You know why? Because it says down there that someday He'll have a seed that'll carry on for Him. You know who that seed is? It's you today if you're saved. You're the seed that God saw when it pleased Him to bruise His Son because He saw through that death the seed. Now you tell me, you tell me honestly, how you get that and then stay the way we are.

David recorded in Psalms 22.

Psalms 22:1 My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me? why art thou so far from helping me, and from the words of my roaring?

Psalms 22:2 O my God, I cry in the daytime, but thou hearest not; and in the night season, and am not silent.

Psalms 22:3 But thou art holy, O thou that inhabitest the praises of Israel.

Those first three verses are Christ through the sixth and the ninth hour when God turned His back on Him.

Psalms 22:6 But I am a worm, and no man; a reproach of men, and despised of the people.

Isaiah 66:24 says that a man in the lake of fire in his final state is a worm. Christ here on the cross, the devil is bringing hell to Him on the cross, and the sinless Son of God has turned into a worm to take your place.

Psalms 22:12 Many bulls have compassed me: strong bulls of Bashan have beset me round.

There's the scribes and the Pharisees, bulls, Baal worship.

Psalms 22:13 They gaped upon me with their mouths, as a ravening and a roaring lion.

There's the devil, 1 Peter 5:8, going about seeking who he can devour, in this case devouring Christ.

Psalms 22:14 I am poured out like water, and all my bones are out of joint: my heart is like wax; it is melted in the midst of my bowels.

That's from the stress of standing on being on the cross and being crucified and hanging down and slowly as you hang there, as you drop and you droop through a lack of strength, it actually pulls every bone in your body, upper body, out of joint.

Psalms 22:16 For dogs have compassed me: the assembly of the wicked have inclosed me: they pierced my hands and my feet.

There's the unsaved people, 2 Peter 2:22.

Psalms 22:18 They part my garments among them, and cast lots upon my vesture.

Mark 15:24 at the foot of the cross.

Psalms 22:19 But be not thou far from me, O LORD: O my strength, haste thee to help me.

Psalms 22:20 Deliver my soul from the sword; my darling from the power of the dog.

Unsaved people.

Psalms 22:21 Save me from the lion's mouth: for thou hast heard me from the horns of the unicorns.

There's the devil, for thou hast heard me from the horns of the unicorn, there's all the demons and the unclean spirits on that day. Consider Him. Consider Him.

Then Job recorded in Job 30.

Job 30:8 They were children of fools, yea, children of base men: they were viler than the earth.

Job 30:9 And now am I their song, yea, I am their byword.

Making fun of Him.

Job 30:12 Upon my right hand rise the youth; they push away my feet, and they raise up against me the ways of their destruction.

There's them taking Him and laying Him out, putting His hands on those cross and the young men putting their nails through His hands and His feet.

Job 30:18 By the great force of my disease is my garment changed: it bindeth me about as the collar of my coat.

There's the changing of His garments, Mark 15:17. This will all be the sixth and the ninth hour.

Job 30:20 I cry unto thee, and thou dost not hear me: I stand up, and thou regardest me not.

God turning His back on His Son. Consider Him.

Job 30:21 Thou art become cruel to me: with thy strong hand thou opposest thyself against me.

You know, you ought to just go through sometime and mark these. I know you probably won't. You know what He just said there? God became cruel to Him. You know why God became cruel to Him? So He wouldn't be cruel to you. Consider Him.

Job 30:22 Thou liftest me up to the wind; thou causest me to ride upon it, and dissolvest my substance.

You know what you got there? You've already seen they laid Him on that cross, they put the nails in His hands and His feet. Now they got a hole here about four feet, the cross is going to go in. He's nailed to the cross. Now they get back here, somebody puts their foot at the end of the cross right at the hole and these guys start to walk it up and as it hits the end of that hole, Him nailed to it, it drops four or five feet down to that hole with a sickening thud. Consider Him.

Job 30:27 My bowels boiled, and rested not: the days of affliction prevented me.

Job 30:28 I went mourning without the sun: I stood up, and I cried in the congregation.

Job 30:29 I am a brother to dragons, and a companion to owls.

Demons.

Job 30:30 My skin is black upon me, and my bones are burned with heat.

The devil actually brought hell to Him on the cross that boiled His bowels, turned His skin black, and burned His bones with heat.

Job 30:31 My harp also is turned to mourning, and my organ into the voice of them that weep.

You see, the harp in the Old Testament was used to praise God. Not today. Not on this day. Consider Him.

Now, how do you see and understand all that and not just honestly burn your life out for Him? This is what drove the heroes of my faith. I think of old David Brainerd, died of tuberculosis when he was 29 years of age, body ravaged with that disease. He married the daughter of Jonathan Edwards and was a missionary to the American Indians up in New York, upper New York. We have the diary of David Brainerd in the bookstore and it talks about how that he went through and suffered, how that he would go out. Boy, when I used to preach up there in the Rochester area with those big old tall pine trees, when the snow was on the ground, I used to walk out there and think to myself, maybe this was the spot where he would talk about being on his knees in the snow with a fever melting that snow, praying for the American Indians. You know what? He died at 29 and he never won one Indian to Christ. But he wrote a journal and a little bit later on a guy by the name of William Carey, Robert Moffat, or Robert McCheyne, excuse me, and Henry Martyn read his diary and they all went to the mission field in India and turned the world upside down based on what a man who never won a convert but was willing to burn his life out at 29 years old. He could have said, "I don't feel good. I've got a terrible fever. I'm sick." Something drove him. Something drove him that is missing in our lives today.

I think of David Livingstone, 30 years in Africa. They died, they lost him, couldn't find him. Sent somebody, a news reporter from the New York Times, to find him and actually found him. He was so ravaged with fever after 30 years in the tropical jungle that he died in his tent. He's buried today in Westminster Abbey in England. But before they took him, you know what they did? He loved Africa so much, they actually cut out his heart and buried it in Africa. I've often wondered where if we died today and they cut out our heart, where they'd bury it.

I think of William Carey who read Brainerd's diary, went to India. He buried his son, lost his wife on the mission field, labored seven years without one convert, but then turned India upside down for the Lord. I think of Robert Moffat, 51 years in South Africa. He buried three of his five children on the mission field and the other two that lived became missionaries and carried on his work. I think of John Paton. He went to the New Hebrides islands in the South Pacific. That was an island chain full of cannibals. When he showed up there, he had to fight against the tribes that were killing each other and actually eating each other. He had such a burden to win them to Christ and to bring them to a saving knowledge of Christ. For 30 years, 30 years he labored among the cannibalistic tribes. He lost his wife and his little baby on the mission field. He buried them and at night slept on the graves so the cannibals wouldn't dig them up and eat them. Consider Him.

Oh, how we want to complain, how tired we are, how we want to quit. I see pastors when they hit 60 years old, you know, they've been in the ministry now what, 20, 30 years, and they now they're ready to retire, just take life easy. Really? Oh, the vast difference in how they saw the

crucifixion and what it meant to them and how we see it today and what it means to us. I don't know how we look at ourselves in the mirror in the morning. I don't know how we can justify anything in our lives of just what we want to do for us. We take our whole life and we squeeze every drop out of it what we want to do, what we want to be, where we want to go, and then whatever residual is left, we want to give it to God. And it all is because we get so caught up with the tradition of men that Easter, the death of Christ, is just a holy day, just a little thing we go through: nice little flowers, nice little pageants, nice little this, nice little that, nice little sermon. We are just so busy considering ourselves that we are to consider Him.

Now let me give you some words of encouragement because you all look like somebody just shot you. It'll be okay. 20 minutes after you're out of here, you'll forget all about it. 15 minutes out the door, smell that fresh air, see that sunshine, and you'll be thinking about all those things in your life and you'll never consider Him again till Christmas. Gentiles, why we do the things we do, why we see things the way we see them, why we say the things we say. 2 Kings 4, thank you Bruce Bell.

So on this day the world sets aside to remember the cross, and now you have five ways the cross is viewed. Because when you start to work with people, you're going to realize that nobody looks at it the same way. In our own church, people don't look at things the same way. A lot of it's okay, but you're going to find when you start to work with Gentiles, they're a whole different breed. Four of them only have to worry about one time a year, whether you really believe it or not. But for the Bible-believing Christian, His cross, considering Him, is every day. The reason why Easter means nothing to me, the reason why Christmas means nothing to me, because I'll never forget every day of my life the price He paid for me. That's more important to me than anything else. It's the thing that drives me and should drive every child of God to the point where you know what? You don't quit. You don't bail out. There's no discharge from this war. You work smarter than harder. You have perception to see and understand. But the excuses are all lame compared to this. My greatest fear is the judgment seat of Christ, is to have to stand alongside those great men who paid the price when I wasn't willing to pay anything.

One last thing and I'm done, dear friends. My advice to every one of you, just two things:

1. Consider Him, not just today, but every day of your life.
2. For you to get through what's coming your way—not just the hard times, the easy times, the times that you want to just check out, the times that you want to justify in your mind, "I'm just not going to do this anymore"—the first piece of advice is to consider Him. The second one is to do what Jesus did when He faced the opposition: set your face like a flint. Take every blow they throw at you. Take everything that comes your way and you get through it. You don't quit. You don't stop. You never give up simply because you consider Him. When you consider Him, how do you give up? How do you quit? How do you give in? How do you take the easy road?

We as God's people, we like to pretend we're spiritual. Preachers like to talk about love and Christ. Paul, my favorite, this guy, "I'm like Paul." Hey, you know what? We ain't like any of those. Those guys knew what it meant to pay a price. We don't have an idea what it means to pay

a price. We've got everything we could want: good jobs, money, nice houses, kids, cars, our pet little things we love to do, and sports and all that. There's nothing wrong with any of that, but how easily in the world that we live in that'll help us lose insight into the one thing that we need to be doing: consider Him and set your face like a flint.

Now very quickly here, and I'm not going to belabor this long, but if you're here today and you don't know for sure if you die you go to heaven, if you don't know absolutely beyond any shadow of any doubt that if you passed over in this life right now that you go to heaven to be with the Lord, today you need to consider Him. I did rant and rave today. I preached this with the paint off the walls at some point, not today. I came to you on an even plane to try to get you to consider Him because in those five ways I gave you, you'll find yourself. Now you need to come full circle today and be honest with yourself.

With every head bowed, every eye closed, and I'm not going to prolong this because I know you've got places to go and things to do and people to see. But if you're here right now and you do not know for sure if you die that you'd go to heaven, let me pray for you. No one looking around but me, just raise your hand and let me see it. I'll see it, I'll acknowledge it, you put it back down. Anybody? "Bob, I'm not sure if I died right now I'd go to heaven." Anybody? Not going to wait long. Anybody at all? "Here's my hand, pray for me. I'm not sure." Today's the day to make sure. Anybody?

Father, we thank You and praise You for the Lord Jesus. Thank You for today. Thank You for that book. Thank You, Lord God. Help us not just to make one day where we think about You dying on the cross in such a limited way. Every day we roll out of bed, we open our eyes, we start our day, help us to consider Him, what He endured, the price that He paid, what He became. And help us, Lord, never quit. Help us, Lord, never get to the place where like these guys, the great heroes of the faith, they gave everything. They had reason to quit where we don't, and they never quit. Help us. Help us to be faithful to the end. Help us to be as You were, the author and the finisher of my faith. Help my faith from the beginning when You were the author for me to finish my course, be found faithful. And we'll thank You and praise You in Jesus' name. For His sake, we ask it. Amen.