

## I. The Story of Thomas and the Importance of Paragraph Marks

Let's go back to John 20:24 and pick up our fourth study in this chapter. I showed you a couple of Thursday nights ago how this chapter, and there are other chapters in the Bible too, not all of them, but you have to be able to see which ones do, that they break themselves down into four or five different stories. One of the key things about your Bible, as I have said many, many times for many, many years, is your paragraph marks. The only Bible that has paragraph marks in it will be a King James 1611 Authorized Version. The rest of them do not think it is important, but paragraph marks are probably one of the key things helping you lay out your Bible. Many times they will separate dispensations, but certainly they separate subject matters when you are going from one story to another. They are invaluable in helping you lay out your Bible.

I have told you before, you will find paragraph marks in your Bible all the way through up to Acts 20. After Acts 20, you will not find any paragraph marks, and there is a reason for that. Today, we want to start in John 20:24 at the paragraph mark and come down to John 20:29. This will be another story.

*John 20:24-29*

*But Thomas, one of the twelve, called Didymus, was not with them when Jesus came.*

*The other disciples therefore said unto him, We have seen the Lord. But he said unto them, Except I shall see in his hands the print of the nails, and put my finger into the print of the nails, and thrust my hand into his side, I will not believe.*

*And after eight days again his disciples were within, and Thomas with them: then came Jesus, the doors being shut, and stood in the midst, and said, Peace be unto you.*

*Then saith he to Thomas, Reach hither thy finger, and behold my hands; and reach hither thy hand, and thrust it into my side: and be not faithless, but believing.*

*And Thomas answered and said unto him, My Lord and my God.*

*Jesus saith unto him, Thomas, because thou hast seen me, thou hast believed: blessed are they that have not seen, and yet have believed.*

Father, help us today to glean from this all the things that we can learn from it. I know that the story takes place actually, Lord, before the church really comes into effect as far as anybody knowing it. I understand what is going on here, but I think there are some great principles that we can learn from this. Help us, Father, in everything that we do to learn and to grow and to be everything You want us to be. Put us under the blood, forgive us where we have failed You, and help us today to glean from this Word what You have for us. In Jesus' name, for His sake we ask it, amen.

## II. Beyond "Doubting Thomas": A New Testament Principle

Our story picks up around eight days after Jesus appears to them privately, like we saw last week. When that happened, one of the disciples was not present, and we now know that that is Thomas. The disciples began to tell him that Jesus is alive. He says he has to see it for himself, as you see in John 20:25. In fact, he says, "Except I put my finger into the print of the nails, and thrust my hand into his side, I will not believe."

For a long time, as I can remember, I have heard this story and how it was a lack of faith on his part. I understand that with where we are at, and so he has been called Doubting Thomas. It is a phrase used to define people today who cannot actually believe what God says. I get that. I understand that. There are some places in the Bible that when you find it, you can look at it as it is historically and see what He is talking about. But then you have to be able to see it in a broader sense as it applies to you and to me and what it means there.

Things changed from when Thomas was in that room and did and said what he said, from what Paul told us when we get into the new church age a little bit later on. I would not argue with anybody who would apply that verse that way. I understand it. I get the point. I get the point you are trying to make. I understand the historical aspect of it. As I said, in Christianity, you will find people like that even today.

I have always taken just a little bit different approach to this story. I understand historically what is going on. I get it. But I think there is a New Testament principle here that really develops itself around situations like this once the church age becomes established.

## III. The Decline of Exactness in Modern Christianity

I understand that I am different than many pastors out there today when it comes to the Bible. I get that. I understand that. I have never been ashamed of the fact that I would classify myself as old school. I am not into all the new fancy, fang-dangled things that guys try to use to entice people to come to church. My feeling is if my preaching is not enticing enough for you to come and find out what God has for you, then you probably need to go to one of those places. It is just that simple.

I look at my ministry and ministries today of guys like me, and there are a bunch of them out there. I look at it much like the military. This is not a cut to our military men in uniform; believe me, I have the utmost respect for them. But it is more a reference to the military itself and the mindset. It is different today than it was back in 20, 30, 40 years ago.

Back in my day in the military, cussing was every other word. Now, I am not saying that is what you should do; I am saying that is the way it was. They cannot talk that way to you today. Back in my day, they hit you. You cannot touch them today. We were running one time, I do not know how far it was, rifles over our heads and running down the road. I did not think anybody was looking. My arms were killing me, and I let my rifle down a little bit. The guy came up behind me, a sergeant or drill instructor or whatever the case may be, and hit me with the butt of that rifle along the back of the head. I rolled over. My gun hit the ground. My helmet rolled all over

the place. I will tell you, it is a thing where he got my attention. You cannot do that today. That is the difference between the old school training men and women in the military than what we have today.

I think that the military does our great soldiers a great injustice. We talked about it Thursday night. I talked about how the military is going left and going completely. I wished I would have had this information. I did not get it until the next day. It came through my little people out there that are always sending me stuff. Do you know that the United States Navy, by the way, enlistments are down all through the military, wants to bolster its recruitings? So on all the naval bases, they are now having drag queen shows. Men dressing up like women and putting on a show that you will want to join the Navy. Anchors away. I mean, I do not know what you do with that. That is not the way it was. Back in that day, if somebody showed up as a drag queen, they would be hung between two posts and bayonet practice would be on.

It has changed today. It is the same thing within Christianity. There is an old school and then there is a new school, just like in the military. I think probably that China and Russia look at us in America and our military and probably laugh. I cannot imagine in the Russian army or the Chinese army, which are two of the most formidable armies in the world today, them looking at us as any threat. That is not a cut to our great soldiers who would give their life for this country, but it is an attack on the military. It is an attack on the leadership that does not train them on the level that they need to be trained to meet a foe that will run over us.

I see the same thing in the new generation of preachers in the last 20 or 30, maybe even 40 years. I have tried to point this out to you over and over again that as Christianity progressed through the years, and I have tried to use all the different angles to show you how it all came together, that an erosion took place. Things changed. Things changed that in Christianity should have never been changed. Isaiah 5:20 talks about Israel who was right where we are. What they had done is they took everything that was evil and then made it good, and took what was good and then made it evil. In Hosea's time, Hosea 8:12, they took the great things of God, the great things that God had done. Now the people looked at those same great things that once they all looked at and marveled at and talked about the greatness of God. Now the Bible says they look at those same things and they are strange things. Things changed. Christianity lost some things.

To me, it is like having a house and living in this house for 40 or 50 years and fixing nothing. I used my own house. We have been in it probably 40 years, somewhere around there, maybe not quite, but around that time, maybe more, I do not know. It is like having a house and living in it for the next 40 or 50 years and fixing nothing. Now I know in our house, over the long we have been there, we put on three roofs, two water heaters, two furnaces, painted it too many times, and it is always something. You get water that leaks through the ceiling. Everything goes wrong. The sewers back up. It is something. To me, people live in a house called Christianity where everything is falling down around them and nobody has fixed anything. You know what? If you lived in a house like that, you would not put up with that. You would fix things. You would have an upkeep going on it. But we are okay with being in a church where things are falling down around our ears and nobody wants to pay the price of upkeep. Nobody wants to look at it and say, "Oh, we need to do this," or "We need to fix that," or "We need to do this better."

In the world, that is called, in the scientific world, the first and second law of thermodynamics or the law of entropy. The law of entropy states that things left to themselves do not run up, they run down. When you buy a brand new car and drive it off the lot, it goes down about \$1,000 in value. Whatever you buy, whatever you get, it does not get better with time. It gets worse with time unless you keep it up. In the world, that is called the first and second law of thermodynamics. In the Bible, that is called the law of human collapse. You know it is true in your own life. You do not just get saved and then go through life. If you do not have a meaningful upkeep in your life to make sure you fix things, you will be at a church in two or three years. We are okay with fixing everything around us. Somebody backs into your car and puts a dent in the fender. You cannot wait to get it fixed, but you have a problem in your life and you will just let it go on and on and on.

For me, and again, I am not speaking for anybody this morning, I am talking about me. For me, one key word in the Bible of our New Testament Christianity, one of them anyhow, that I think for my life has been a real necessity, is the word exactness. Never getting off the exactness of the Bible. If you have to cut something out and paste it up and make a little poster, you can do it one or two ways. You could just get a table knife out of the drawer, start cutting that thing around, and pretty soon you cut it out. You could get your favorite pocket knife. It may not be as sharp, but you can work that thing out of there. Or you can get an X-Acto cutter. You know what an X-Acto cutter is? Do not put it in your pocket and try to go outside. It is a razor blade little knife that will cut exactly what you are trying to cut out without any error and as clean a cut as you can have. I have found that for me the key is to never lose the exactness of the Bible in everything in faith and practice. Practice is what I believe and practice is what I do with it.

Christianity today reminds me of a story or an event that I was part of back in the 80s, and this is one of my fun stories of life. I used to be a member years ago, not anymore, I used to be a member of a Pioneer Gun Club. It is back there on Brickyard Road at the end of Raytown, and back in the day it was the premier place. Jack Tuttle, who owned a gun shop in Kansas, this is 40 or 40 some years ago, sponsored me, and I went there. They had to shut it down because the golf course is right behind it and too many golfers were having .30-06s whiz past their heads, so they had to move way out and shut it down.

I will never forget this day, right before deer season, as a public expression of who we are, "We want to help you," they had a common sight your rifle in for deer season, and the place was packed. They asked me if I would be a range officer, and I said, "Sure." Range officer meant that I would get a person, meet them at the booth there and set them down, get them set up, set their target up down there, watch it through binoculars, and watch where they explained a little bit what you wanted them to do and see where they are at and get their rifle zeroed in. We are shooting at 25 yards, and we got these targets that are like this with a circle, a big black circle about that big. This guy comes in there, and I could tell he just probably came from Walmart with that rifle, and he is all excited about it, going to get him a deer. I said, "Okay, let's see what you got here." So he, I had him sandbag it down there, and I told him what to do: breathe slowly, pull the trigger, put the crosshairs right in the middle of the black, and just squeeze the trigger. The first round went about six inches below here, still on the paper, but six inches low. I said,

"Do it again, hold the same spot." The second one, right around next to it, was not a bad group. The third one, just a little bit of a flyer out, but it is still down below. I am getting ready then to, "Okay, here is what we are going to do," and I asked somebody else for something, and next thing I turn around, he is loading up his rifle, he is done. I said, "Where are you going?" He says, "Oh, that is good enough to get a deer."

I do not know whatever happened to him. I think he probably shot himself somewhere out in the woods. But let me tell you this: at 25 yards, if you are six inches off the bull's eye, at 100 yards, you are going to be 15 inches off the bull's eye. At 200 yards, you are going to be farther than that, and at 300 yards, that bullet is going to come around and kill you. I thought to myself, "Boy, if that is not a great analogy of what we need to be with the Bible." If you are off just six inches with your Bible at 25 yards, when you get down life, you are going to be way off target. Exactness. The Bible has an exactness to it. The Bible is not negotiable. You cannot decide, "Well, I am going to just take this part and do this," like that guy said, "Well, that is enough to get me a deer." When it comes to the Bible, when it comes to Christianity and the Christian life, you cannot be 25 yards off at any point in time of your life because the farther you go in Christianity, the farther you are going to get off. There is an exactness that the Bible demands that is missing today.

#### IV. The Importance of History and the Old Guard

I have never in anything accepted the status quo of Christianity or anything in life. I never believed what anybody just said. I always searched out the truth. I have told you many, many times that that is the way you need to do it. Do not take what I say; search it out and find out if I am telling you the truth. I have always wanted to know why things are the way they are. I have always been that way. I realized after I got saved that things do follow a pattern. The universe is built on an order system that falls into patterns. Nothing is random in this universe. There is nothing random in life. I was never told anything about the Bible or history or anything that I just settled for and said, "Oh, okay, so that is just the way it is." No, no, I never did that. I want to see and understand what really happens for myself.

One of the reasons I have the classic book section in the library that I put out this year is because I want you to be able to develop that. I want you to be able to find out why things are the way they are. I do not want you either to be satisfied with just, "Oh, that is just the way it has always been done." No, no, no, there is a pattern to everything. One of my things that I try to do for you, and I do it to the best of my ability whenever I see an opportunity, I try to keep history alive for you because there is a great missing element in this generation out here of understanding your own history. I understand where it comes from. I see people all the time, graduation time. They will come across there, a guy who has got a 4.9 average and everything. He is brilliant. I mean, this gal, honor roll, all that stuff. Please, I am not against it because I never made the honor roll. But I am telling you this: I see a lot of people in their academics, they get high grades, but they do not even know who anybody in history is. I think the way you lose your exactness is you lose where you came from. You lose why you were here in the situation you are in and how did that situation develop itself.

I will quiz my grandkids, especially little Macy. I see her working out there, and I will pull her homework on Thursday nights and I will start asking her history questions. I want to see, she has got it pretty good, much better than Jamie did when I used to ask her. I want to keep history alive. Once we finish the last two books we are in action now, we are going to do Matthew on an institute that I am going to do on a Saturday morning, and we will work it out on the time frame. But I am going to do the most insane study in depth on world history and church history you have ever seen in your life. I am going to give you 50 plus years of what I have learned and put into an understandable format of why everything is the way it is, everything to the best of my ability.

I have said this before, so this is nothing new. I hate the time period that I was born in. I know it would be better for me to be in 1600, 1700, 1800. I know we did not have all the luxuries, people did not live as long. You did not have cable TV. You did not have Internet. You did not have cell phones. You just had the Bible. I cannot stand lukewarm Christianity. I am sorry, I cannot. I tolerate and love lukewarm Christians, but lukewarm Christianity, I just have a tough time with. It is a thing where God hates it too because in Revelation 3, it says He spews that angel out of His mouth, makes Him sick too.

In spite of that, if God would have, if God pulled me aside before I was born and said, "Okay, where would you like to land in time?" I would have taken my pick. I did not get that choice, but I do thank God that when He did stick me in this cesspool, that He put me down in 1950. He knew what He wanted me to do, and He knew what I needed to have to do what He wanted me to do. So He put me down on June 14, 1950. I was born the cutest baby you ever saw in your life. For 73 years almost, I have walked this old earth, and I have tried to the best of my ability to understand why things are the way they are. He gave me, by having born, He gave me a 50-50. He gave me right in the middle of two centuries. He gave me the middle of a hundred years that I could look back and see this while it was still fairly fresh, but then could see where it was going and live up through it.

I actually had a very good story, and I know I tell you a lot of things and bring up a lot of stuff. It is not stuff that I read in a book for the most part of it. I actually witnessed what took place. I watched the death of Bible Christianity and Bible doctrine within New Testament Christianity. I was born two years after Israel became a nation. I got to witness to the transformation from when that happened Thursday night as it moved up through the 50s and the 60s and the 70s and the 80s and the 90s and watched that thing change. I bridged the gap between the old breed who went off the scene and then the new group coming on the scene that lost their way. Now, as Hosea 2:3 says, much like Israel, they had no comparison. Israel was messed up in everything, and Hosea tells them, "Your problem is you have no comparison of what the real deal really was."

Revival, are you kidding me? America has not seen a real revival since Billy Sunday, but we think revival now is we are going to put a marquee out front that says, "Next week, Monday through Friday, revival at our church." That is the way modern Christianity does. You think you can schedule your revival with God. Revival does not come because you put it on a billboard out there. Revival comes because God's people want revival in their hearts, not a church. Old school. God put me in this mess and then gave me the last of the old guard. I saw them. I met some of

them. I heard them. The old breed who God's people today have no clue even who they are. These names to you will be anonymous.

Men like:

- R.G. Lee
- Harold Seitler
- B.R. Lakin
- Bob Jones Jr.
- Howard Sears
- Victor Sears
- Tommy Thomas

And yet, Hosea 2:3 said that God gave Israel some great leaders with some great miracles. By the time they are ready to go into captivity, the great things that God did are now, what is that, strange things? They have no comparison of what the real nation of Israel should be to God, just like God's people today have no reality of what New Testament Christianity should be.

It was 1972, long before most of you were born. I had just gotten right with God about a year and a half later, and on Sunday night we had the old-time preacher, Pastor Howard Sears, preached that Sunday night. I sat there as a new Christian and I listened to every word he said. You know what his message was that night? "The Unchanging Church Within a Changing World." 1972 he preached that. He preached in 1972 that the world changes, but the church should never change.

It was about 1973 on a Sunday night I heard Harold Seitler. Harold Seitler preached that night, and he preached in 1973, before any of you were born, he preached, "The death of the Baptist church is coming." I heard him preach again, and he preached on Baptist distinctives. These guys saw what was coming. This was the old guard who knew where it was going, who tried to warn everybody, but nobody listened. When I preach it today, you look at me like I am radical. You look at me like there is something wrong with me, like I got an anger problem, like this or that. You know what? Me and Howard Sears would have got along just fine. Me and Harold Seitler could have been just like that. I preach nothing today but what those guys preached back in the day as the old guard going off the scene, but God's people today know nothing about it. You should have heard these guys. When they preached, brother, there was not any paint left on the walls when they were done. They nailed it to the cross. There was no nicety-nicety. Most of these guys had preached for 60-70 years and ruined their voices, and when they began to speak, it sounded like two gears grinding. They put it out.

R.G. Lee, I heard him preach twice. He was about 75-76 years old, maybe older. The last years of his life, wherever he went, with all the strength and the power that he had left, and he had it, he preached one message to get across to God's people, and it is a message that if I would preach it today, you would not like it. It is a message that you will never hear in an evangelical church or you will hear in all the big mega churches. He spent the rest of his life because he saw and knew what was coming, and he wanted to warn God's people, and the name of the message is "Payday Someday." You should have heard it. You would have thought this guy was following you around. No, but the Holy Spirit of God was. I heard him, man. "Payday Someday. Payday

Someday." And today it is "Payday, Go Far Away." That is not in my sermon. I just thought of that a minute ago. That sounds pretty good.

Not only did I have the old guard, the old breed that was going off the scene, but I will never forget the men who helped me. Men like Mel Sabaka, who was my father in the Lord, who him and Jean adopted me after my mom and my mom remarried and my dad had died, and made such an impact in my life with the Word of God. Herb Kuntz. Herb Kuntz taught me how to love people. He taught me how to care about people. We had a guy in the church, his name was Glenn Mays. Glenn Mays had a burden for Jehovah Witnesses, and every Tuesday night I would go out with Glenn Mays calling on Jehovah Witnesses or any cults. He taught me everything that I would know about reaching cults. Back at the Canton Baptist Temple back then, you had Bob Johnson. I have talked about him a few times. He was the music director, and it was him and Mel that really showed me the difference, began to see the difference in the mentality from the old guard, Mel, and from the new guard, Bob. The two worlds of Christianity, one that was stabilized in the Word of God and the other was moving out without the Word of God.

I was fortunate to have Harold Henniger as my pastor. Harold Henniger was one of the most compassionate people you will ever meet in your life. He loved people. He built a great church, and he was good to me and did a lot for me, but I began to see in his life the effect of higher education as Harold, who was one of J. Frank Norris's boys, by the way, started out with the King James Bible, but by the time we are into the 70s and the 80s, he is completely lost that book now. It was men like Dr. Ruckman who really gave me the book in depth. For 10 or 12 years I worked with a man here, his name was Truman Dollar. Truman Dollar taught me so many things about Christianity, the Baptist Bible Fellowship, the inside things and all that it was all about, which I never would have understood on my own.

In all of that, looking at the old guard, and I am looking at the guys that God put in my life, who many of them were still with the old guard or they were moving out of that old guard into the new guard, I found a balance. I found a balance of it all based on the exactness of the Word of God. Not everything I learned from them was positive, but every bit of it was invaluable. One of the things that you young guys and gals need to learn is that there are really never any negative things that happen in your life as long as you learn from them. Not everything in life is going to go the way you want it to go. You are not always going to get to do everything that you think you need to do, but your life is not about that. Your life is to recognize that God's hand is in your life, and He puts you where He wants you to be in this church or ministry or whatever, and you learn from it. You grow from it.

Somebody says, "I made some messes in life." Messes in life we all make, but I am going to give you a little clue. Messes in life are not the worst messes in life as long as you learn from them. They really become messes when you do not learn from them. God will use everything and everybody He puts in your life to teach you some good, some bad. Some will teach you what to do, some will teach you what not to do. But these guys, they trained me. They grounded me in the Word of God. They taught me the very key areas that I try to ground you in, and some people do not like it today. I get that. Some complain it is too hard or this or that. It is the difference

between the old breed and the new breed. If they trained the military the way they trained us, nobody would get in it.

When I was in the military and you crawled under the infiltration thing, I will never forget being down in that trench, and the guy says, "We are going to crawl out." Nobody told me they were going to shoot live machine gun bullets 15 inches over my head. I will tell you what, I was in the first line of these 9-10 guys, and he said, "All right, first line over." About that time, I looked up and heard those M60s going off and watched them tracers. I mean, you can put your hand up and catch a round. You crawl out under that, crawl on your belly, crawl on your back, go through barbed wire entanglements, and those bullets are zinging over you about 15 inches over the top of your head. If you stand up, you are dead. There were guys who stood up, not with my group, but there were guys who stood up and they got killed. Back then, they accepted a three or four percent casualty rate in training. Today, none of that. Today, we are going to teach you how to be dialogue with transgenders. We are going to teach you to be acceptance of everybody. God, I hate for you to have to go to war with that kind of training.

So when I look at the story of Thomas, I get it historically what is happening, but I think there is a greater New Testament principle in it for me because to me, he is one of the great examples of what I was taught all my life to do. Yet I understand the context that it is happening in, but I was ingrained in me the principles of 1 Thessalonians 5:21, where I am told to "Prove all things; hold fast that which is good." Paul told that to the church in the book of Thessalonians, and there was a lot of phony stuff that was going on during that time. In the Bible, we see how Christians not doing what Thomas did get into real trouble. Yet I understand the difference between the historical; I am making a practical application to it here.

I look in the book of 1 Corinthians. Chapter by chapter, somebody has gotten off course. They are off just about six inches in chapter one, but by the time you get to the end of the book, they are 300 yards off. It has always been an amazement to me that in 2 Corinthians 2, Paul was trying to help this church. He started this church on one of his missionary trips. He trained the people who are now leaders in this church. How in the world did they get so far off? In chapter 2, there are some people in this church that he trained that are now against Paul. Here is the Apostle Paul, the Apostle to the Gentile church. He is starting churches all over the world. He is the only one that has got it, and now there are people in this church who are saying, "Could you provide us with why you have the authority? Could you show us some kind of authorization of who you are when you are telling us what you are telling?" You know what Paul said? I am paraphrasing now. He says, "Yeah, I got, I can, I can, I can show you that. Go look in the mirror. You would not even be here if it was not for me. I started this church. I went so and so and so and so to Christ. How did you get so screwed up and so far off now that you do not, you want proof of my credentials to be the man of God? Just look in the mirror. You would not have one thing you got if God had not put me in your life." Well, he nailed them.

I look at the book of Galatians. A false gospel has entered into New Testament Christianity. Galatians 1:8. They bring in another Jesus with another gospel. They want to now bring the Old Testament law back in with the New Testament grace and pervert the gospel of Christ, and now they got a new gospel. Paul deals with them to get them right and get their perspective back and

get the bad doctrine out of their life. Somebody is giving them bad advice. Somebody said, "What was their problem?" They failed to prove all things.

In 2 Corinthians 11:4, we see the corruption of the church in the New Testament.

*2 Corinthians 11:4*

*For if he that cometh preacheth another Jesus, whom we have not preached, or if ye receive another spirit, which ye have not received, or another gospel, which ye have not accepted, ye might well bear with him.*

Another Jesus, really? Now this is the Church of Corinth. Hey, Church of Corinth, 57 AD. What? 23 years after the resurrection? 23 years after the resurrection, and there is already another Jesus and another gospel moving into Christianity? How in the world did that happen? I mean, come on, man. Think, ask yourself. 23 years after you come out of that tomb, Paul starts the churches. How did they get to another Jesus and another gospel in less than 25 years? I will tell you how. Somebody brought something in. Somebody says, "Oh, I got a better idea than Paul. Oh, Paul is okay, but boy, I really have the answer." You know what they did not do? They did not prove all things either. So that is what I see him doing in John 20. I understand. Historically, I get it, but for me, I would never believe what somebody told me. I am going to prove all things, and I am going to hold fast to that which is good.

You know why a person stays a Roman Catholic? All their life they stay in Roman Catholicism. You know why people believe and become Jehovah Witnesses? You know why people become Mormons? Seventh-day Adventists? Lutherans? Methodists? Presbyterians? You know why people stay and become Greek Orthodox or Episcopalian? Church of Christ? Charismatics? Yesterday, I do not probably think anybody here got up at five o'clock in the morning, but over there in old Mary England, they had the coronation of King Charles. What a thing that was. They are seven hours ahead or six hours ahead or whatever it is depending on the time zone. But you had to get up at five o'clock in the morning to see this thing that was going on seven hours later. You look at that thing and you think to myself, "Wow, it is all about crowning a king." The Church of England plays a major role, and you know how many people over there, that place was packed. Everybody in England was just beside themselves with a coronation of a new king coordinated by the Church of England. Now, why do people fall for that stuff?

Now you are a Baptist. You got to be a Baptist because somebody hated you because of the doctrine that you believed and you stayed with, and so they called you a Baptist because you were against baptizing babies. The Church of England came into effect because Henry VIII wanted to get a divorce from his wife, and the Catholic Church would not give him one, so he quit the Catholic Church and started his own church, the Church of England, and then gave himself a divorce. Prove all things. That is why people stay with what they are. That is why people stay to be with the neo-evangelicals. They think it is wonderful. They think it is great. Prove all things.

Let me ask you a question. I gave you Harold Seitler. I gave you a list of guys. Who in the neo-evangelical world do you have like that? Who was your leader? You do not have any because it is

not a movement of God. It is not a movement that God put into place. It is a movement that man put into place. You see, I can prove all things. I can go back to Harold Seitler. I can go back to R.G. Lee. I can go back to those guys, and they are preaching in the 70s exactly what I am trying to preach to you today. Try to find out with your old neo-evangelical mega church crowd. You know why you stick with that? You never proved all things. You know why Jehovah Witnesses and Catholics and all these people stay that way? They never proved all things.

## V. Five Things Christians Must Prove

From the Bible, concerning the Christian life, you will find five things that the Christian, you and I, need to prove. This is going to be rough today. I am not off my meds. Just close your eyes and pretend it is 1972 and I am Harold Seitler. Five things. When the Bible says "prove all things," in your Bible there are five things that you and I as a New Testament Christian are to prove out. I have learned a long time ago, I have heard it all. Whatever we say about our love for God is as empty as our basket will be at the judgment seat of Christ in most cases. I mean, come on. Can we just for a moment, can we get real? Can we just take off the mask that we are all wearing today? I know you do not like this, many of you. They would have loved it in the 1700s. Why, me and R.G. Lee could have prayed for "Payday Someday," and we could have just been as happy as two bugs in a rug. You see, we live and pretend we are okay with Christ without one single shred of proof. We think the proof is because what comes out of your mouth. "Oh, I love Him. I love Him. Oh, I love God. Oh, I love God so much." What does that prove? The only thing we prove today for most of us as God's people is how phony we really are. The world says, "Put up or shut up." I am going to borrow that term for just a little while. Do not take my word for it. Let us just do what we always should do to prove all things. Let us just go to the Bible. Let us find the five places in the Bible that you and I are told to prove something, and then let us see if you prove it. We will take my word for it.

Now, let me say this. Whenever you preach a message like this, here is what happens. There are a lot of good young Christians here today, midline Christians, new Christians, that when you hear a message like this, you have a tendency to beat yourself up. Please, I am not talking to you. You are right on target. You are doing just fine. I am not speaking to you other than just learn from this, grow through this, but I am not targeting you. You are doing everything you can do. You are doing everything by the book. You are really doing it well. But here is what happens all the time. You young people who are really trying to do what is right always take it to heart, and the older Christians who are not doing anything never take it anywhere. That is just the way it works. I know that. I get that. So I do not want you beating yourself up. You older folks, I am not worried about you. You will not do anything with it anyhow. So why am I preaching this? It is hard for me to find good preachers to listen to.

### 1. The Proof of God's Blessings in Our Lives

The first thing is in Malachi 3:10. Malachi 3:10  
Bring ye all the tithes into the storehouse, that there may be meat in mine house, and prove me now herewith, saith the Lord of hosts, if I will not open you the windows of heaven, and pour you out a blessing, that there shall not be room enough to receive it. You see, the first thing I want to talk to you about is the proof of God really in our lives. Do not

tell me that He is. I am not interested in that. Where is the proof? The proof in our lives will be the blessings of God in our lives. It is the difference between us and the world. The world does not have any blessings. We look at the little piddly things and we think, "Oh God," no, no, no. He says God will open the windows of heaven, not breadcrumbs. A lot of the blessings that we say that was a blessing of God, that is just God taking care of me because I am stupid. The blessings, it says the room cannot hold them all. Simply the hand of God in my life. God taking us out of the world and then proving a life that the world could never understand. But they see the difference in our lives. They see the blessings of God. They see how nothing upsets you. Everything is just the way you just seem to move through life. You are happy. You are content. You have everything going for you. They say, "I do not know what they got, but I want that." Building a dynasty in your life and the life of your family for Him that goes on and lives generation after generation. A guy asked me one time, he said, "Can you prove there is a God to me?" He says, "I would never believe it. If there is a God, you need to prove it to me." I said, "Well, that is easy. I mean, to prove the existence of God is probably the easiest question anybody could ever ask anybody who knows anything about God or the Bible. I mean, the evidence of God is absolute to a scientific certainty if you are honest." But what is really tough is proving God in our lives. I have a problem proving there is a God. The real issue is us proving that there is a God at work in our lives. What? Because you say He is? What is the evidence? What is the proof? Our Christian life should read like a Tarzan thriller. A life of unexplainable events that the only answer that you can say is, "It is the hand of God in my life," a supernatural life built on a supernatural relationship which comes from a supernatural book. But unfortunately, today, Christian lives, they are no different from the world. Can we speak honestly today? Broken lives, broken families, broken marriages, broken kids, unhappiness, depression, confusion, anxiety, honestly. Who in that same world would want that? We are supposed to live above the circumstances.

2. The Proof of God's Will in Our Lives The second one. Romans 12:1-2. The need for us to prove the will of God in our lives. Romans 12:1-2

I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that ye present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God, which is your reasonable service.

And be not conformed to this world: but be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind, that ye may prove what is that good, and acceptable, and perfect, will of God. The need for us to prove the will of God. Now, we know that the will of God is not something that we do for God. We already know that. We have covered that many, many times, but rather something that you are for God. To do that, to prove that, you have to have found in Romans 12:2 three things going for you in your life. It is the proof text of New Testament Christianity, not what we say. By these three things, you only then prove the will of God in your life. The first one is, he says, "your body a living sacrifice." Simply, He died for you. Now you live for Him. Now I know, I can hear it now. "Oh Bob, I am a living sacrifice." Yeah, beer in one hand, cigarette in the other. "I am a living sacrifice." Yeah, yeah, yeah. Okay, okay, forget that. Let us go back to a minute, and I hate to keep doing this, but it is called the Bible. Exodus 12:5. You cannot take a sheep that has blemishes and use it for sacrifice. Too many blemishes in our lives, guys. Not talking about things we did wrong and got right. I am talking about we got the world in one hand and the Bible in the other, and we

think we could be a living sacrifice. What planet do you live on? The second one, a transformed life. Most of God's people, when they go to their churches or get into their Bible, they will conform to the rules of Christianity. They will let Christianity reform them to a certain degree. Christianity will inform them about things in the Bible, and many times Christianity will misinform them, but very few of God's people ever get transformed. That is not salvation, but a transformation of God's will in your life over your will in your life, and then you becoming a living sacrifice. The third one, the constant renewing of your mind. It leads to our growth in the will of God, these three steps. He says up there, "What is that good, and acceptable, and perfect, will of God?" You see, some of you young Christians right now, you are just getting into this, and the will of God in your life is good. As you grow a little bit farther, you are going to see it is going to move from good to acceptable. You are going to figure more things out. As you get into the Word of God, the Word of God perfects you, it is going to become the perfect will of God. You are going to know exactly what God wants you to do with your life. But it all comes down to understanding your life is a living sacrifice. He tells you in 1 Chronicles 21:24, again, sorry about the Bible reference, but if you are going to be a sacrifice for God, it is going to cost you something. It is going to cost you something. I cannot answer this question for you. I would not even try to. It can only answer it for myself, and it is not a very good answer. What has been the cost? I am not talking to you young Christians now. You will get there. What cost did you pay to become the living sacrifice that you think you are? I am not saying you are not. I am just asking a question.

3. The Proof of Our Sincere Love Third thing, 2 Corinthians 8:8. 2 Corinthians 8:8

I speak not by commandment, but by occasion of the forwardness of others, and to prove the sincerity of your love. Now, the key word there is sincerity. How do you prove your love? By going around yapping your mouth, saying, "I love God." By singing, "Oh, how I love Jesus," louder than anybody else. Really? You see, the simple key to all we have to prove in loving Him will be the willingness we have to give all to Him. His life He gave for us. True love is giving back to God based on Him giving to us. I mean, hey, 2 Corinthians 8:9. 2 Corinthians 8:9

For ye know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that, though he was rich, yet for your sakes he became poor, that ye through his poverty might be rich. Okay, what have I given up that put me into poverty in the world's eyes that I might be rich with Him? Then look at 2 Corinthians 8:10-12. 2 Corinthians 8:10-12

And herein I give my advice: for this is expedient for you, who have begun before, not only to do, but also to be forward a year ago.

Now therefore perform the doing of it; that as there was a readiness to will, so there may be a performance also out of that which ye have.

For if there be first a willing mind, it is accepted according to that a man hath, and not according to that he hath not. He is saying, "I am going to give you my advice on how you can keep on growing and you can be better than you were a year ago." Look at 2 Corinthians 8:11, "Now therefore perform the doing of it, that as there was a readiness to will, so there may be a performance also out of that which you have." For there be first a willing mind, it is accepted according to what a man has and not according to what a man has

not. You know what He is saying? He says you have got to have a willing mind. You have got to have a readiness to will. You get that out of the one we looked at before here, when you get transformed and get the will of God in your life, our will now becomes a readiness to will, whatever God wants, whatever He puts me, whatever He wants me to do, I am ready. Out of our readiness to will, look at it, then comes our performance, a willing heart and a willing mind, all based on our understanding of His willingness to give everything for us. If you really love somebody, you will give them things. You will make sure your kids' birthdays are special, their Christmases are special, and you give them over and above because you love them. You do your wife on her birthday or husband on his birthday or anniversaries or whatever, you give to somebody that you really love. Yet when it comes to God, He gets the proverbial sharp stick in the eye, the scraps off the table that we do not really want. True love will always identify itself with the object in question. The question in proving your love, out of your life, what do you give God? I mean, it says prove all things, hold fast to that which is good. You have to answer that. I cannot, I got to answer for me. It has to be a sincere love based on my understanding of all He gave up for me. He saved me. He put me here to be confused, to get angry, to misappropriate all the things that He has given me. Now He put all of us here that we would understand all that He gave for us and then we would become that living sacrifice, but it takes a readiness to will. How are we doing so far? You have to answer for yourself.

4. The Proof of Our Own Work The fourth one. Galatians 6:4. Five things we got to prove. Galatians 6:4

But let every man prove his own work, and then shall he have rejoicing in himself alone, and not in another. Now the fourth thing he says is we have to prove our own work. I am going to tell you right now, if you are saved here this morning and you young Christians, you midline guys who are doing it really well, you are growing, we are working together one-on-one, you know who you are, you know what we got going, you are doing just fine. But even at that, you want to learn from this. God has a work for each of us. He saved us for a reason. There is a purpose for our existence after salvation. When I look at the first three areas that we have already talked about where we prove our relationship to God, hand of God in my life, the will of God, and then the love that I should have for Him, if those three things for me do anything, they will provide me with a perspective of God and now my life on planet earth. Once I get those three things down in my life, and hopefully someday I will, perspective now will always give you your purpose. In purpose, God will define His work for you. It is just that simple. It is just that simple. We like to pretend that we are okay with God. We deceive ourselves that my life is really okay with God. I am really happy with my life. It is not a question, "Are you happy with your life?" It is, "Is God happy with your life?" "Well, I have got the right Bible. I go to church. I do things in church. I get involved." But at the end of the day, what is the reality of that? Israel did all those things. Finally, when God talked about them, He says that they had a form of godliness, but it was not the real power of God. You know what? Most of us today. Now, I know you think I am preaching to you, but I am really not. I am preaching to me. I am not saying you, I am saying we, me, us. I do not have a right to say to you because you have to answer this for yourself. I would never dare have a picture of you in my mind when I am saying this. I got the scariest picture in the

world, me, but I am telling you right now. You know what the reality is going to be for all of us? I hear something that you young kids who are really doing well, you young couples who are really doing well, you young singles who are about to get married, who are really going to be a benefit to me and do well. But here is the reality for all of us. Right now, you are young. Right now, you do not think about all the things that are way ahead of you. I get it. But someday, you are going to be 65, you are going to be 75, and you are going to hit 80 and maybe beyond. Then you are going to look back and you are going to realize what was your purpose. You are going to realize that here you are, 75 or 80, and your perspective has been screwed up for so long. You are going to come to reality that you are going to look back in your life and you are going to say, "Okay, I am just around the corner from meeting the Lord in eternity." The reality is going to sink in. What have you built for Him? What have you built for Him? Proving your own work. Larry Lester. He was the man that was so good to us when we started out at the pavilion over on 40 Highway. After being there four or five years, he came to me and he opened up the building where we were at the Apple Center, did so much for us. I could never repay Larry for everything the goodness and the kindness that he had done for us. It does not matter how it ended. I get how it ended. I understand. I have perspective. God was ready to move us to where He gave us this place. So God just used the events. I do not ever look at anything like that as a negative or a bad event as long as I see the hand of God in it and I understand what He is doing. Now here we are. I remember one time Larry is probably, I do not know, 86, Steve, 87. He is up there. I hear he is in a rest home now. Pray for him every day. Catholic guy. We were going over to the Independence Courthouse for something, I do not know, 15 years ago. We were riding together, and I was talking to him, and I said, "Larry, you were a builder, weren't you?" He says, "Yeah." I said, "Did you build?" He said, "No, all my building was pretty much done in Independence." We are driving for 15, 20 minutes. He keeps showing me, "I built this over here. I built this over here. These high-rise apartments, yeah, I built those. This shopping mall here, yeah, we built that. This housing division here with all 40, 50 houses in it, we built that." We are driving along, and he is telling me and showing me, which I really appreciated, all the things that he built. Now when you get to be 50, 60, 70 years old and you take a drive back down through your life, what is there that you built? What have you built? I mean, we took a 20-minute drive, and that guy built more places than I could ever think in my life. I am thinking to myself, when, hey, I am going to be 73 in a little bit. I got more on this side than I got on this side left. I asked myself, looking back, in life, God had a purpose for me. God saved me for that purpose. God had a work for me. But the work was not going to church. He said there in the thing, he says, "You can rejoice on something that you did, not building on somebody else than somebody else did." You cannot build a work on my work. Now you can build a work within my work, but it is taking somebody and you investing your life in them and they become your work. Now when you get to be 70, 80 years old and you look back in your life and, hey, you have been saved 40, 50 years, maybe 30, 40 years, and you look back down the road of life, there is nothing there but empty lots. Nobody you built. My God, you could not even build your own family. I found in the Bible that there are two buildings of the temple. Those two buildings of the temple represent what is here today. The first building of the temple was under Solomon, was not it? Israel was at its best, highest point in its history.

David had just come off the throne. Solomon comes on the throne. For 40 years, it is the millennium. He builds the temple in a time when everything is really good. That is a picture of so many of you Christians who grew up in good Christian families, who had a mom and dad. You have never went through the dredges of the being of the prodigal son. Your mom and dad wanted you to Christ. You were in this church or another church. You have grown up. You have never really had any problems at issue. Your building of your temple is like the building that Solomon, that everything was good. That is some of you that are here this morning. Now, I understand. I say a lot of things here, and a lot of you have made mistakes in your life. A lot of you have lost some things in your life. Please do not take what I am saying and preaching as a criticism. At least try to learn through it. Nobody loves you more than I do. Nobody cares about you more than I do. If I did not care, I would not preach things like this. I am just telling you right now, there are two buildings of the temple. You know what the second one is? See, some of you represent the first one under Solomon when you come out of something that is really good. The second building of the temple was in Ezra, Nehemiah, when Israel was building out of the rubble of Jerusalem. Some of you have built your temple out of the rubble of the mistakes you have made in life. But thank God for it. You see, God does not care where you have been. He does not care what you have done. He just cares where you are at right now. Some of you had the blessings of a good Christian family, and you build your temple like Solomon. But some of the others, you did not have that. You come out of the world, and you come out of some bad things in the world. I look back there and oh Ezra, Nehemiah, in fact I looked at it this morning, I was not going to mention it, but now that I am here, oh Ezra and Zerubbabel and those guys at nighttime picture the church age, they go down and they surveyed Jerusalem. Everything is in disarray. This temple has been destroyed. Everything is a wreck. I think to myself, that was so many of our lives, was not it? You know what they do? They clean off the foundation. They start to rebuild again. That is where some of you are at. It does not make a difference of mistakes you have made. I do not care what mistakes you have made with your family, with your kid, with your marriage, whatever the case. It does not matter as long as now you are in the second building of the temple. You clear off the trash, you clear off the mess, you clear off everything, and you begin to build. You know what they say about their building? They say the hand of God was with us. Let us build. Right back to the first one. Wherever we drive today, we see homeless people, do not we? They are on every street corner. They are a great reminder to me what I think Christianity is today. You have people there that stand on the street corner. We live in a world now where there is more work available than any other time. There is not any one of them that could not get a job because there is work to be done. But they do not want to work. They want to stand on the corner with a sign hoping that you will give them a handout, put a little money in their hand, and that is the life of their existence. I look at that and I see modern day 20th century Christianity because in this church, as in any church, there is plenty of work to be done. But so many of God's people do not want to work. They just want to show up on Sunday in the morning and get a handout and never do the work. At the end of our life, we need to look back and see what we have built.

5. The Proof of Our Own Selves Then the last one, praise the Lord. 2 Corinthians 13:5.2  
Corinthians 13:5

Examine yourselves, whether ye be in the faith; prove your own selves. Know ye not your own selves, how that Jesus Christ is in you, except ye be reprobates? But I trust you shall know that we are not reprobates. Now the last thing that we are to prove is to prove ourselves. Now it all finally comes down to this. Who are we really? Malachi 3, we are to prove our relationship. Romans 12, the will of God, we are to prove. 2 Corinthians 8, prove our love for Him sincerely. Galatians 6:4, your purpose and your work for Him in life. Then 5 now, how about you and me? Have I proved? Have we proved our own selves? We go to camp for years and years and years. All kinds of camp songs. You help me with this one. We will lighten the mood for just a moment, and then this is a sucker punch. So just enjoy it. "If you are saved and you know it, say amen." Oh, come on now. Come on. "If you are saved and you know it, say amen." "If you are saved and you know it, then your life will really show it. If you are saved and you know it, oh my." See, we like to sing things like that. We can all rout up. Never even bothers that our life does not really show it. See, this is why it does not matter. It is the reality. It is the exactness. A great example of this is in the book of Acts with Paul and Timothy in the Church of Antioch. Acts 13 deals with Paul and Acts 16 deals with Timothy. Acts 20 really deals with the church. The New Testament church will be the proving ground for all of us and all five of these. When a pastor understands this concept and has them in his own life to the best of his ability, he then looks at Proverbs 27:23, where he is told to look to the state of his flocks. He now sees the potential of the people God has given him. He looks out across his congregation, looks at the individual young men and young ladies, the young couples, the moms and dads, the senior citizens, all the new folks, all the mid-level folks, and all the old folks that have been around forever. He sees in them the potential, and now he understands the reason why God gave them to him. He understands all this, and now he understands his job. He then, like Thomas, he starts a process to train them in these five areas. At some point, hopefully they now understand it and will, in everything in life and with everybody in life and everything they are faced with, they now too will prove all things and hold fast to that which is good and true. You know, training young men and young ladies is fairly easy. I enjoy working, and you know who we are and what we have going for ourselves with working with you, helping you every step of the way and really investing in you and showing you. But it will simply be understanding these five areas. These five areas honestly will be the proof text of our New Testament Christianity. It proves what we ought to prove. Seeing then in your lives, in the lives of people, in the most basic way, many times before even you understand it, and then taking them and then developing the areas in their lives to get in time that you can build these five areas that they prove everything. Trying through the preaching and the teaching to give them what they need to overcome the bad choices in life and then tweaking them along the way and making adjustments as you grow and you get into different things and trying to get you to see that no matter what you do, you learn from it because I am telling you right now, you may not like it. Hey, I do not like when I was born, but I learned from it, and what I learned from it was the fact that I have a job to do, and my job I could not do in the 1700s, 1600s because they did not need it, but that is my job, and I understand that now, and I wished I would have been born someplace else, but I was not. God stuck me down. Thank God He made it in 1950, and now I come to the place where, hey, I am okay with it. You know why? Because I understand

what my purpose is. I understand what my job is. I am not confused about anything. I am not in anxiety about anything. I understand clearly, and my job is to try to get you to the point in your life before I go home to be with the Lord. As you can see your job clearly. Some of you will make it, some of you will not. This is like Exodus 16 when God brought the manna down all around the nation of Israel, and they are all starving to death and dying again. So He brings all this manna down, picture the Word of God, and then the Bible says they go out to gather it. You know what He says? He makes the greatest commentary on God's people today. Some gathered more, some gathered less. The final prospect is a man or a woman skilled in the Word of God with the right perspective and purpose to do the work of God that He saved them for, but always proving all things, getting the right balance. Using everything in this church or whatever church you are in as a teaching tool. Whether it be discipleship one, two, working with people, working in different ministries, camp, learning to work where God puts you and look how you learn. It is just not about kids. It is going to be the most invaluable training for you midline people who go to work counselors or whatever you do to staff to help that thing. It is all a building process. The church needs to be a Bledsoe's Tool Rental Company. Having within its walls every tool that you need to do whatever job God has called you to do. My job is to teach you to identify the tools, know how to use the tools, and keep the tools in good shape from a willing heart and a willing mind and getting us to the place where we prove all things. See, I like Thomas. I understand historically exactly what is going on. I get it, but for me, prove all things. That is what we need to do.