

I. Introduction and Welcome

We have a great week planned for you. It was probably 40 years ago that I met Mark and his wife. At least 40 years, wasn't it, buddy? For about 15 or 16 years, I preached along with many great preachers, Dr. Ruckman, Mel Sabaka, and some of the great preachers at the Bible Baptist Blowout in Rochester, New York. That's where I met Mark, and it's been a real blessing in my life. You know, when God puts something together, it doesn't matter how much time passes. It's like you were just together yesterday. That's how it was with Mel Sabaka and myself. We weren't big on calling and talking; it might be two or three years, but whenever we hooked back up again, it was just like we were together the day before.

I hadn't seen you for 35 or 40 years and talked. We had a group that went up to New York and Staten Island for the 50th anniversary of Mel Sabaka starting that church. Mike Veach is pastoring it now. Some of my people connected with them, and the first thing I did when I found out was get his phone number and wanted to reconnect and ask him if he'd come to our Bible conference. When he got off the plane, he and his wife were just like I saw them yesterday. Nothing had changed. I'm really excited for him to be here. He and his wife have a ministry. They have their board up here I want you to look at. They have a ministry down in the Dominican Republic, and he's going to tell you all about it.

My goal this week, and I've made this no secret, has been to bring in men whose families are ministering together, and they're really working actively in the ministry, in the mission field, and in churches. He takes teams down to the Dominican Republic and other places where they actually have a sports ministry that they go in and work through a church and really has an outreach, much like what we do here with our volleyball and our softball and the things that we do here. It's an incredible thing. My prayer in exposing you to all this is that now that we are actively in our own missions program, we can send some teams down to work with him. We have a host of you young men and young ladies who are good at soccer, pickleball, and all that stuff that they do could go down there and really be a help to him.

So it's my prayer that God will put on your heart this coming Friday, this coming Friday night before our regular service, it's on your schedule there, we'll have a question and answer for him and his wife, his missions program up there in the Timothy room, where you can come and put that on your calendar, ask him all the questions you want. He'll lay out everything. It's my prayer that we'll get some of you to want to be part of that and go down there, use the athletic ability that God has given you to really reach out and help him and win some people to Christ. So I am thrilled that they're here today. They'll be with us all week long. They'll be out there doing everything that we do. He was playing pickleball last night with you guys out there. It was a little hard for him to get in a car this morning, but we got him in it. I just love you guys to death. So Mark, come on up here and God bless you, brother.

II. Mark's Opening Remarks and Ministry Overview

Thank you. I don't do any of that anymore. What I do is I bring a young guy with me, and I'll talk, and you do all that stuff. But God has used that. Not only that, but He's used all of sports. Patty and I have taught swimming all over, somewhere in the world, every year for the last 50 years. Every time we go in the water, before we go in the water, we give them something from God's Word, just in case they don't come out of the water. I'll know I've done my thing, and done what I needed to do.

I want to tell you that this is a joy and a privilege to be here. I want to thank you, Brother Bob, and your wife, Barbara. You've been a wonderful host. And Jamie and Dan, unbelievable, just great. Thank you so much. This is what I imagined it would be, but I was still a little bit nervous when I saw it because we don't see this very often. We go to a good church in South Carolina now. We have a great church in the Dominican Republic. It's all in Spanish. That's okay. We struggle with the Spanish, but we're learning. I went to high school in Brooklyn, New York, and I took Spanish. I remember, uncannily, everything I learned in those two years of Spanish that I had. Don't ask me about math. Don't ask me about geometry and all the other stuff. But God has used that, and we're learning the language as we go.

By the way, turn in your Bible to Psalm 24. We're going to be there. As Pastor Bob mentioned, we met each other years ago. He'd come to First Bible to preach, and it was a joy and a privilege and a pleasure and a wonderful thing to be part of that. We learned the Bible from the pulpit ministry of First Bible Baptist Church and Brother Mel's church in Staten Island. My sister lives in Staten Island with her family. My mom and dad lived there before they passed on. So we would visit every year, and we would go to church in Staten Island. I remember Brother Mel was in the book of Colossians, Chapter 1. This was one Christmas year. On Sunday we went to church. He preached out of Colossians 1. We left, came back a year later, and went to church. He was in Colossians, Chapter 1. He knew how to exhaust the Bible and use it and get everything out of it there is. It is inexhaustible, isn't it?

We have the book. Not everybody has the Word of God, as you've been told, in different languages. But we have the King James, the Authorized Version. I've never swayed from that. It's been the book that has saved us and kept us, and we try to honor it wherever we might go.

What else could I tell you? I could tell you this: our ministry in the Dominican Republic, we spent five years in country. Our oldest son, Michael, his wife, had developed a brain tumor, and in time, God took her home. The family expected us to be there for their oldest brother. So we had to leave the mission field and tend to the needs of our family. But our son Michael is doing okay. I talked to him on the phone the other day. He's a pickleball player, by the way. By the way, welcome to Old Path's Baptist Church pickleball. Where are all the New Yorkers, all the guys and gals that came to Staten Island? Come on, raise your hand. Stand up if you would, please. You went on a mission trip together, now you're sitting all over the place. What happened? Why don't you all sit together? I want you to know that God used you to bring us here. That was the connection. God can do those kinds of things. We're here because of you. Thank you. And thank you, Brother Bob, for allowing us to come.

In the Dominican Republic, we started sports ministries. Please avail yourself of what we have here. I won't go into all of this, but we're looking for young people. We're looking for someone that will go, a team that will go, but we're looking for an individual. We're here with us as we ask God to find us someone that will take our place in the Dominican Republic. We communicate by phone and by Zoom and all the other things that they have. I'm very techy. I'm on the phone, and then we write, we keep in touch, and the ministry is still going on.

You know what we like to do? We like to take teams over there, short-term missions trips. I'm looking out there and I see some possibilities. You don't only have to know a sport. It'll help. But we have other ministries there. There's a ministry to women, women that we have rescued off the streets. We have a ministry to teen girls. We have an institute. We have a Christian school there of nearly 500 kids. It's called Las Palmas Christian School. I told them they didn't have to name it after us, but they insisted. No, I'm only kidding. But it's Las Palmas Christian School. The whole ministry there, plus our sports ministry. So there's lots to do and see. We can also go into bateys, small villages where we can share Christ.

We've used sport all of our Christian lives to reach people with the Gospel. We had the joy and privilege to work at First Bible Baptist Church in Rochester, New York. Pastor George Grace, who is my best friend, and I worked for him as a sports ministry director. God gave us 17 different sports that we used to reach our community for Christ. We didn't have to go out and get them. They came because we had something that people wanted. So I had the privilege, we had the privilege of working there. Patty was our swim director. We had swimming as well, as I said. That was part of our ministry. Taekwondo, wrestling, soccer, all of those things we could use to reach others for Christ. You have a skill. You have a talent that God wants to use. Let Him use you that way. Please make sure you stop by and take a look, take our prayer cards.

III. The Earth is the Lord's

Let's turn to the Bible. Let's go to Psalm 24. Let me read that for you out of your King James Bible.

Psalms 24:1-10

- 1. The earth is the Lord's, and the fulness thereof; the world, and they that dwell therein.*
- 2. For he hath founded it upon the seas, and established it upon the floods.*
- 3. Who shall ascend into the hill of the Lord? or who shall stand in his holy place?*
- 4. He that hath clean hands, and a pure heart; who hath not lifted up his soul unto vanity, nor sworn deceitfully.*
- 5. He shall receive the blessing from the Lord, and righteousness from the God of his salvation.*
- 6. This is the generation of them that seek him, that seek thy face, O Jacob. Selah.*
- 7. Lift up your heads, O ye gates; and be ye lift up, ye everlasting doors; and the King of glory shall come in.*

8. *Who is this King of glory? The Lord strong and mighty, the Lord mighty in battle.*

9. *Lift up your heads, O ye gates; even lift them up, ye everlasting doors; and the King of glory shall come in.*

10. *Who is this King of glory? The Lord of hosts, he is the King of glory. Selah.*

When the prophet Malachi finished speaking, heaven did not answer. The echo of his voice faded, and then nothing, 400 years of silence, no open vision, no burning word, no prophet rising with the fire in his bones. No, "Thus saith the Lord," breaking the darkness. 400 years of waiting, of longing, of groaning, of hearts lifted toward heaven that seemed sealed shut. Generation after generation was born into the quiet. They lived, they died, and still no voice until one night on a dirt floor in a forgotten place in a stable, in the shadows of obscurity and insignificance, a sound was released. After 400 years, heaven spoke again, not with thunder, not with fire, not from a mountain, but from the lungs of a newborn. A cry pierced the silence. There's a new kid in town. A cry that split history in two. It became His story, a cry that carried eternity with it. In that moment, the King of glory stepped down into the dust of His own creation. The Eternal wrapped Himself as a man, in a man.

John 1:14

14. *And the Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us, (and we beheld his glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father,) full of grace and truth.*

That's the name of our ministry: Grace and Truth. Gracia y Verdad, Ministerio de Deportes. Grace and Truth. Jesus Christ was all grace and all truth. This wasn't a 50-50 proposition. It's like a marriage. I give not 50 percent, you give 50 percent. No, I give 100 percent. You give 100 percent. Jesus Christ, grace and truth. He was all grace and all truth. It's a good example. When we minister to others, He always ministered the truth of God's Word, but He did it with grace. He was always in grace that He would minister to others, but always the truth, never compromising the truth. So we adopted that grace and truth as a ministry of our church, and I've taken that as we have to the Dominican Republic.

Heaven's highest treasure. He came low, meek and breakable, wrapped in swaddling clothes, born beneath the looming shadow of a cross, a lamb born to be slain, the hope of a hopeless world, born of a virgin. The great I AM made Himself vulnerable. Heaven could not remain quiet. The skies erupted with angelic voices like we heard this morning. Boy, you guys can sing. What a joy. What a pleasure. Man, that was cool to get up and sing the way you did today. That was a blessing to us. We go to a church, they sing, have a big choir, you know, and every week there's a new song, it's wonderful, it's good, it's vital, and we love it. It's worship, but to hear the old songs of the faith, man, that just gripped our hearts.

By the way, my wife Patty is here. Patty, say hello to everybody. By the way, it was her birthday last week. She turned... I ain't going to tell you. And the skies erupted with angelic voices declaring, "Glory to God in the highest." Who is this King of Glory? Let's pray, shall we?

Heavenly Father, we do thank You for the Lord Jesus and thank You for what we have in Christ our Lord. What a joy and a privilege it is to be here, Father, and to enjoy what we've had even so far, to hear the missionary and his family present their field and the desire in his heart to go. Father, that's what we need. We need people to go. We have senders, we have receivers, and we have goers, and we're thankful for the missionary that's going. Father, God bless the time we have now. Lord, I take this message and use it to encourage and challenge God's people. Father, we're going to go through the Bible today. I hope that's not a problem for anybody, Lord. We're going to spend time in God's Word. God bless, Father. God, I pray in Jesus' name. Everybody said, amen.

There are five different things that I see in this Psalm:

1. The earth is the Lord's.
2. Who shall ascend into the hill of the Lord?
3. Who shall stand in His holy place?
4. He shall receive the blessing from the Lord.
5. Lift up your head for your redemption, Jorath Nye. Lift up your head.

Who is this King of Glory? David rightly knew that the Lord Yahweh, the covenant God of Israel, was God of all the earth. The fullness of the earth, its harvest, its wealth, its life, its worship, and in all these senses, the Most High God is possessor of all. The earth is full of God. He made it full. He keeps it full. Spurgeon.

1 Corinthians 10:26

26. For the earth is the Lord's, and the fulness thereof.

The world and those who dwell therein, God's ownership of the earth extends to the people who live upon it. Through the rights of creation and continuing provision, God has a claim upon every person who has ever lived. Whether one accepts this or not, you are a visitor on this celestial ball. David looks back to the creation account of Genesis 1:9 and remembers the creation of the land in the midst of the earth waters on the third day of creation. His declaration, the whole world belongs to the Lord God. The earth is the Lord's.

David was a noble, successful king, but of a relatively small and insignificant kingdom. One might easily think that the gods of the Egyptians or the Syrians were greater because those kingdoms were greater. Yet David rightly knew that the Lord Yahweh, the covenant Lord, God of Israel, was God of the whole earth. The earth is the Lord's. The fullness of the earth may mean its harvest, its wealth, its life, its worship. All of these senses, the Most High God, is possessor of all. The earth is full of God. He made it full. He keeps it full.

There is a sense in which the world belongs to Satan. Satan is called the god of this age.

2 Corinthians 4:4

4. In whom the god of this world hath blinded the minds of them which believe not, lest the light of the glorious gospel of Christ, who is the image of God, should shine unto them.

When he tempted Jesus with the promise of giving him the kingdoms of the world, Jesus did not question the devil's ability to do so. Yet Satan can only do anything at God's allowance. So God's ultimate ownership is true. The world and those who dwell therein, God's ownership of the earth extends to the people who live in it. Do you believe this? The difference between us and others is we believe in God and we are a God-centered people. This is not man-centered. We're a God-centered people. David recognized that. If you're here today, I'm sure that's where you're at.

Although we live in a world, brother, I'm aware that's not the case. As was pointed out on the screen, there's a whole lot of people that don't believe the way we believe. That's why there's such a great need for God's people to get out. This is a great thing that you have here. You get re-energized when you come here. Then you're expected to go out and do something about it. So find a way. There should be somebody on your heart that you're ministering to or you're trying to seek to come to Christ. It's never too young to get started. Now's the time.

I look around this room. Yeah, there's old gray hairs here. That's wonderful. And bald heads too. But there's also a lot of young people here. So praise the Lord for that. Young people, get going. Get moving. Don't wait. This is a wonderful thing. I'd love to see you come and join us in the Dominican Republic. We have a program there. It's a six-week internship. So you can come there and spend six weeks with our ministry. You don't have to give your life forever. But you can come for six weeks and be part of the ministry there. You can see all the things that God is doing there. It's a good way to see if this is what you're looking to do someday. Score International. Baseball is there. Baseball is king in the Dominican Republic.

Any baseball players here? Don't be afraid. Raise your hand. I'm not going to come to where you're sitting and demand that you come to the Dominican Republic. By the way, we're going to save you for the linebacker position. If you play baseball, that's good too. More baseball players come out of the Dominican Republic than any other place in the world. You don't see all of them in the major leagues. But they're all scattered throughout the minor leagues. San Pedro de Macorís, where we live, where we minister primarily, has put out more baseball players than any other place in the Dominican Republic. We have the Major League Baseball has a facility. Every team in the Major Leagues has a facility in our country. Even the Yankees are there. So any Yankee fans here? Man, what's wrong with this place? I was a Yankee fan before I was born. I remember going to Yankee Stadium and watching Mickey Mantle hit home runs from both sides of the plate. Fifteen cents I could get on the subway and travel up there to the Bronx and watch the Yankees play. I'd get in for about 75 cents and sit in the cheap seats. Sometimes I'd sneak down in the middle of the game.

IV. Who is this King of Glory?

Who is this King of Glory? Looking for that blessed hope and the glorious appearing of the great God and our Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ. See the work of the triune God in your salvation. Please turn with me to the book of Titus.

Titus 2:13

13. Looking for that blessed hope, and the glorious appearing of the great God and our Saviour Jesus Christ;

Titus 3:4-5

4. But after that the kindness and love of God our Saviour toward man appeared,

5. Not by works of righteousness which we have done, but according to his mercy he saved us, by the washing of regeneration, and renewing of the Holy Ghost;

So all the entire Trinity was involved in your salvation. You've been returned unto the Shepherd and Bishop of your souls. My thought was, let me take a chapter out of God's Word where I can jump off into many places in God's Word because this is a Bible-believing church. So, I got sidetracked for a little bit. So I thought it might be a good place for us to start for a missions conference where we honor God and the titles and the names of God. Back home I have a booklet, just some pages, that someone took the time to pull out from God's Word, your King James Bible. Six hundred titles and names, names and titles of the Lord Jesus Christ. Six hundred, that may be even more, I've added a few myself that I come across.

So this is what we want to do now. Bear with me. Let's go through this.

He is the Bright and Morning Star, the First and the Last, the Beginning and the End. He is, was, and is to come, always will be, the Alpha and Omega.

Revelation 22:13

13. I am Alpha and Omega, the beginning and the end, the first and the last.

He is the Root and Offspring of David.

Matthew 1:1

1. The book of the generation of Jesus Christ, the son of David, the son of Abraham.

Revelation 22:16

16. I Jesus have sent mine angel to testify unto you these things in the churches. I am the root and the offspring of David, and the bright and morning star.

He is the only wise God and our Savior.

1 Timothy 1:17

17. Now unto the King eternal, immortal, invisible, the only wise God, be honour and glory for ever and ever. Amen.

Jude 1:25

25. To the only wise God our Saviour, be glory and majesty, dominion and power, both now and ever. Amen.

By the way, He is able.

2 Timothy 1:8

8. Be not thou therefore ashamed of the testimony of our Lord, nor of me his prisoner: but be thou partaker of the afflictions of the gospel according to the power of God;

What is His testimony? What is Jesus Christ's testimony? Well, it's the Gospel. The good news.

1 Corinthians 15:3-4

3. For I delivered unto you first of all that which I also received, how that Christ died for our sins according to the scriptures;

4. And that he was buried, and that he rose again the third day according to the scriptures:

Do you know Him? Have you won Christ? We played pickleball yesterday and we played to win. How many of you play sports to win? Everybody, you know what I'm talking about? Of course. We don't play to lose, we play to win. The Bible talks about winning Christ. That's where we are to spend our time, winning Christ, getting to know Him, getting Him on your side, being one with Him so that when you leave this place, you go in the grace and knowledge of the Lord Jesus Christ. You learn the Bible here. It's in your heart and in your mind. You can go to it any time. If there's a need in your life and there's something that you need taken care of, you've got it, you've got the Word of God. By the Holy Spirit, He can take care of the things that we deal with. The only wise God. That King, eternal, immortal, invisible. For I delivered unto you first of all the Gospel.

2 Timothy 1:12

12. For the which cause I also suffer these things: nevertheless I am not ashamed: for I know whom I have believed, and am persuaded that he is able to keep that which I have committed unto him against that day.

V. Personal Testimony

I grew up on the Lower East Side of Manhattan. Anybody ever been there? It's a tough neighborhood. At one time, it was considered one of the toughest neighborhoods in America. I lived in a 14-story building surrounded by hundreds of other 14-story buildings. There were eight families on my floor. There was a time when you could keep your doors open, and I'd go from one place to another. It all depended on what was cooking that day. Then things changed. You couldn't put enough locks on the door. It was a tough place to grow up. That's why I left Manhattan to go to high school. I went to high school in Brooklyn, New York. I traveled every day on the subway an hour and a half each way so I wouldn't have to go to school in Manhattan. If I did, I'd probably still be there.

It was a great time in my life. I played football in high school, and that's why I went there to get away from New York City. But that's the kind of life I had. I lived in a four-room apartment with six people. The language that I heard in that apartment couldn't surpass the language that I heard in the streets. It was not a good place growing up. I needed something. Sport was my way out. I belonged to a boys club. I have to tell you, the Boys Brotherhood Republic Club was run by a

New York City policeman, Ralph Hittman. Ralph was a World War II veteran. He'd seen thousands of young boys come through that club. That was my salvation at that time. I'd always go to the club.

I used to travel on the train every day, subway train, with big Vinny LaRosa. Vinny was a fullback. He lived in Brooklyn but he lived further from this high school as well. We both would live out of the neighborhood. We'd get on the train. He'd look and see. I'd look and see. "Oh, Vinny, come on, get on the train and let's go." Man, we'd have a time of it on that train. We'd do all kinds of things. The best part was coming home because a couple of tackles and a couple of guards would come with us, football players. Vinny and I, Vinny mostly, he wouldn't let them get off the train. He'd take them back to Manhattan with us. I don't know why they kept coming with us. They're only going to get held on. One day, Vinny had John Faranella, a tackle. He became a policeman in New York. Vinny's got them wrapped around his waist, and he's sitting on Vinny's lap, and he's going back and forth like this, and he's wearing, Vinny's wearing his Parker. Vinny goes like this and his elbow goes through the plate glass window of the train. I shouldn't tell you these things, you know. Patty's shaking her head. I'm telling them this kind of stuff. Because it was a lot of fun in those days. We had a time of it. That's why we needed to get saved.

I was getting to that, Patty. When I came to Christ, when my friend Ray got saved, Black Belt in Taekwondo, we fought together and did all those things. He was a helicopter pilot in Vietnam, flew a thousand hours over Vietnam, well decorated for his service. He had a fellow come to his school for Taekwondo lessons. His name was George Grace. George wanted to learn Taekwondo, maybe take care of that waist that was developing. Ray was teaching him Taekwondo. All that time, George was telling him about Jesus. They spent more time talking about Jesus. One day at a restaurant, Ray jumped out of his seat and said, "I got it. I want it. I see what you've been saying to me. I want to get saved." Ray got saved. His life changed like nobody's business. He scared some people. He would minister, he would tell everybody about Jesus.

Another person he told about Jesus was this fellow right here. I needed somebody. I needed to know what was going on in his life, "What in the world happened to you?" He got Jesus in his heart, and he changed. I said, "Ray, would you come over to my apartment there, and I'd like to talk to you. I want to know what happened to you." No sooner did I hang up the phone, and this time gets shorter and shorter every time I tell the story, there was a knock on the door. Ray was there with his Bible under his arm. I went, "Oh no, what did I get into here?" Ray showed me in the matter of two hours that Jesus loved me and gave His life for me. If I would accept Him, He would save me and take me home to heaven when I died. I said, "Lord, I want it. I want what Ray has." I accepted Jesus Christ that day. Made one phone call. You never guessed who I called. George Grace. I told George, "George, I just got saved." He was shouting and he was excited.

A month later, God took Ray home. He was gone. It was a Memorial Day weekend, and Lake Ontario was probably 50 degrees, the water was. He had a boat and he said, "Mark, call me up. Why don't you come out with me? We're going to go and spend the weekend on Lake Ontario. We'll read our Bibles and study." By the way, he was saved two months. He had two or three more books to read of his Bible. When he wasn't reading his Bible, he was telling others about Jesus. I said, "Ray, I'm too busy. I got some things to do. I'll see you Sunday at church." I said,

"Okay." Well, Sunday came. Patty and I just got saved. We were not married at the time. We were just seeing each other. We had made a wreck of each other. We were killing each other before we came to Christ. When I came to Christ, I said to Patty, "I got saved. Give me a chance, one more chance." And she did. It's not been easy. A year later, we got married. That was 47 years ago now.

But Ray was gone. He must have jumped in the water to cool off. The water took him. He was a WSI like Patty and I are, a water safety instructor. He could swim. He was the captain in the Army. He was nobody's fool. He was gone. I got a chance to live in his apartment until they found Ray, until he appeared or whatever. Three months later, his body washed ashore on Lake Ontario. The United States Army did a helicopter flyby. I took over George's training, and George took over our discipleship. It was pretty good. George was our best man at our wedding. That was a good thing. But Ray was gone. But he left us a legacy that we have tried to follow and live up to.

Taking Taekwondo, they came to me some months later and asked me to take over his school. So I did. For a year, I taught Taekwondo and told everybody that came in the door about Jesus Christ. One day, George and I were talking, and I said, "George, what do you think if we brought Taekwondo into the church?" "Oh, Mark, that's an excellent idea. Why don't we do that?" And we did. That became one of our first sports ministries. George embraced sport as ministry. I'm glad he did because he gave me a place to minister. We had a twofold purpose. We were going to get people out of the seats, and we were going to have the chance to tell others about Jesus. We've been doing it ever since. We got saved in our softball ministry. He's now pastoring a church. His son is now the director of sports ministry at First Bible Baptist Church. That's the way that thing works. We're so excited to be part of having been part of that. That's our sending board, our church, First Bible Baptist Church. George Grace, by the way, he's the Institute director. Man never quits. He set a good example for us. There's no getting out of this army. What was that phrase he used? No discharge out of this army. So get ready, young people. You've got a long way ahead of you. Make it count. And older people, this is the future. Make sure you pour into them. Encourage them. Challenge them every time you have a chance.

I'm so excited for the family. You're going to be a missionary. You're going to be a missionary. Not just Mommy and Daddy. You're going to be a missionary. You're going to have an opportunity to have some effect on other people where you're going. Wherever we go, we want to be a missionary. What's been good here in America, where we live, we live in an old people's place, a 55 and over community. I'll never forget the first time we saw somebody with a baby carriage. I'm going, "Oh yeah, yeah, look at this. They got to be 70 years old. They got a baby in the carriage." Sure enough, it was a little doggy. I said, "Come on." But anyways, they go back and forth around the town, and we go places, and I always ask, "Come on." We always ask, no, don't go. Don't get up. I'll get it. I'm sorry. Please forgive me.

Where was I? So I would always ask everybody I meet, "Where are you from?" because all the people down in South Carolina are from someplace else. "I'm from New York." "I'm from Michigan." "I'm from Iowa." "Where's Iowa?" "I'm from Nebraska." "I'm from Minnesota." "I'm from," you know, all these different places. "I'm from South Carolina." "I'm from all these

different places." Eventually they ask me, "Where are you from?" If they don't ask me, I tell them anyway. I said, "We just got back from the Dominican Republic." "What were you doing there?" "We were missionaries. We were telling people about Jesus." "Really?" You know. Many of them give us a nice positive response. They think it's pretty cool. "Thank you for your service." Some stay and chat, and some keep walking by. But I always have a chance that God's opened that door to tell them a little bit about the Lord Jesus Christ. I use that to open a conversation. "Do you know Him? Do you really know Him?" If you go to this church, I believe you probably all know Him. Really know Him.

I'll keep you on my Bible here. You know that portion of Scripture? Who is, you know that new song that's out? "Who is worthy to break the seals and open the scroll?" Are you all familiar with that? I mean, it's not something we might sing here, but it's, you know, it's a decent song. I love it because it's usually, when I hear it, it's a group of young people, maybe 40, 50 people, and they're singing, "Who is worthy? He is." I love it.

Revelation 5:9-12

9. And they sung a new song, saying, Thou art worthy to take the book, and to open the seals thereof: for thou wast slain, and hast redeemed us to God by thy blood out of every kindred, and tongue, and people, and nation;

10. And hast made us unto our God kings and priests: and we shall reign on the earth.

11. And I beheld, and I heard the voice of many angels round about the throne and the beasts and the elders: and the number of them was ten thousand times ten thousand, and thousands of thousands;

12. Saying with a loud voice, Worthy is the Lamb that was slain to receive power, and riches, and wisdom, and strength, and honour, and glory, and blessing.

Worthy is the Lamb. The Lion of the tribe of Judah, He is able. The Lord strong and mighty, the Lord mighty in battle. I will go before you. He will fight for you. Satan will accuse you. Our Lord Jesus, God the Son, the Holy One, and just One, the Mediator between God and man, He will go before you. He is your Advocate with the Father. Isn't it great to know that we have somebody? The Lord of Hosts, He is the King of Glory.

Like a mighty army moves the church of God, onward Christian soldiers. By the way, did we speak and sing that today? Tomorrow, thank you. There was another song, the first song you sang, what was that again? Do you remember? Who remembers? What is it? "Standing on the Promises." Do you remember, Jenny? "Standing on the Promises." Okay. All right. Tomorrow, "Onward Christian Soldiers." Not tomorrow, Friday. Friday, okay. Got to get this settled here. Like a mighty army moves the church of God, onward Christian soldiers. Faithful brethren endure hardness as a good soldier of Jesus Christ. Don't entangle yourselves with the affairs of this life. It's a challenge for us as Christians not to do so.

As Moses was encouraged to go from the burning bush, the angel of the Lord charged Moses, "I will go before you. I will give you the words to say, your brother Aaron will go with you." By the

way, we always go by twos. It's good to have a wife. It's good to have somebody. Guys, you ought to find somebody that thinks like you, loves the Lord Jesus like you do. Ladies, find somebody who loves God. You too can stand together and live your lives and serve God and raise up a family. We need that here in America. They need that where they're going. Think about it. Think of what they're going to face. Millions of people that don't know Jesus. In the DR, it's a Catholic country. Everybody knows Jesus, but not everybody knows Jesus. Sometimes you've got to get those people lost, brother, before you can get them saved. I can do that. For me, it was not an issue. Religion, that is. When I came to Christ, I knew I was a sinner. I knew I needed the love of Christ. I knew I needed what my friend Ray had.

By the way, when Ray told me that Jesus loved me, man, that was big. That was big. We didn't have that kind of thing on the Lower East Side, you know, in my neighborhood, my home, my family. By the way, a lot of my mom and dad are all gone now, but my mom loved to come to the First Bible Baptist Church. They loved George Grace. They loved the music. My mom was into the music, you know, and she thought that was wonderful. They loved to see what God was doing in our family, Patty and I. That was a blessing. My mom was funny. She didn't mean to be funny. I'm a Jewish lady, you know. And yeah, I'm Italian and Jewish. What a combination. I could fall. But my Yiddish mama, she loved what was happening to us. She would call me from time to time and she would say to me, "Mark, this person here is sick. I told them that my born-againer son, he'll pray for you." So I pray for them, and she'd tell me, "You know, Mark, the person is feeling a little better." "Praise the Lord, Mom," you know. My mom knew the Bible. She always used to say to me, "Mark, you have a face only a mother can love." You know, when I got saved, I started reading the Bible, and there's a place in the Bible where it says just that. In the book of Proverbs, there's a place where it says, "tender and only beloved in the sight of your mother." "Hey, Mom, I didn't know you knew the Bible. That's pretty cool." Yeah, no.

But my mom was, she was funny. When we got married, my mom loved Bingo, and she would, she'd say, "Mark, I'm going to play the jackpot this week." I said, "That's cool, Mom. All right. Yeah, no, Mark. It's \$500. And if I win, I'm going to give it to you and Patty for your wedding." "Oh, that's wonderful, Mom." I'm thinking, "Come on. All right." A week later, I get a call. "Mark, what? I won the jackpot." "Oh, wonderful, Mom." Yeah. So, okay. A week or so, I get a letter in the mail. It's a check. It's a check for \$250. I call my mom. I said, "Mom, what happened? Did you leave out a number here?" "I didn't think I was going to win, so I kept half of it." That's my mom.

Hebrews 11:25

25. Choosing rather to suffer affliction with the people of God, than to enjoy the pleasures of sin for a season;

We make that step. We make that step of faith. We step away from the old life into the new life. For us that are older, sometimes some of those things hang on, and we've got to deal with those and put all that stuff under the blood. God will never remember those things. It's just us that bring it back up. I remember a long time ago, it said it's like a dog going back to its vomit. Who is this King of Glory? The Lord of Hosts. He is the King of Glory. He's Jesus. The Author and

Finisher of our faith. Do you know Him? I can still see Brother Mel Sabaka leaning over the pulpit. "Do you know Him?" He's got the tattoos on his arms. He's like, "Do you know Him? Do you really know Him?" A lot of us know about Him, but he wanted to make sure we knew Him and the suffering that He went through. He wanted us to win Christ. Die to self. He must increase. I must decrease. That is tough for an athlete to do, a coach to do.

You know, when you finish the game of pickleball, what do you do? Dylan, what do you do when you finish the game? When the game's over? Go to the net. And we say, "Good game." It's just a game, guys. It always was just a game. Unless you're a pro and you make a living out of this, it's just a game. It's just a tool that God will use to serve Him. It always was and it always will be. I've got to remind myself of that, especially me, because I forget sometimes. Well, we had an incident that the old people playing pickleball, they go nuts, you know. Something happened. I'm not going to tell you what happened. But I said, "I'm done." And I walked off the court. I knew what was coming. It's better for me to leave than to get into it. It's just a game, guys. You ought to play to win and enjoy the fellowship and remember why we do what we do. Try to keep these bodies healthy and strong. You know what I'm talking about, don't you? Brother Bob? We're blessed to have a pastor that is healthy and strong. I saw him up here. I said, "Patty," I said, "Patty, did you see what he just did?" He's the most important. You're the most important person in this room. You're most important, Pastor. It's so good to see your family serving together. What a blessing that was. You know, when we met at the airport and I've seen all of you coming toward us and I'm like, "Wow, look at this, Patty." And they'll grab us, hug us. And I'm like, "No." I gave a hug, too. The last time I saw Bob was at First Bible Baptist Church. He saw me and he gave me a big hug. I hadn't seen him since. The first thing he did when I saw him the other day in the airport was to give me a big hug. Then he says, "I didn't realize it was you, Mark." You know? Gee, thanks.

VI. Clean Hands and a Pure Heart

Okay. Wrap this up. Who is this King of Glory? He's the Lord of Hosts. He is the Author and Finisher of our faith. And who shall ascend into the hill of the Lord or who shall stand in His holy place?

Psalms 24:4

4. He that hath clean hands, and a pure heart; who hath not lifted up his soul unto vanity, nor sworn deceitfully.

Clean hands, a clean heart. It's tough to serve Christ with an unclean heart and unclean hands. You know what I'm talking about, don't you? That's not a problem here, I can tell. Let your step be very careful. Serve God with a clean... That's why we come to church. We've got to get that cleansing of the washing of water, regeneration of the Word of God. We are a living stone and a holy people.

1 Peter 2:5

5. Ye also, as lively stones, are built up a spiritual house, an holy priesthood, to offer up spiritual sacrifices, acceptable to God by Jesus Christ.

I would encourage you to read First Peter chapter two. Then it says, "Lift up your heads, O ye gates. Lift up your everlasting doors and the King of Glory shall come in." Your heart, open up your heart. Let the King of Glory come in.

Revelation 3:20

20. Behold, I stand at the door, and knock: if any man hear my voice, and open the door, I will come in to him, and will sup with him, and he with me.

Psalms 3:1-3

1. Lord, how are they increased that trouble me! many are they that rise up against me.

2. Many there be which say of my soul, There is no help for him in God. Selah.

3. But thou, O Lord, art a shield for me; my glory, and the lifter up of mine head.

Do you ever need a lifter? Lift your head up. Is there ever a time where your head is down and low and you need God? You need the Father. You need Jesus Christ. Be a lifter of your head.

Psalms 3:4

4. I cried unto the Lord with my voice, and he heard me out of his holy hill. Selah.

VII. The Blessing of God

Then there's the blessing. Touch is part of the blessing of God. When the man of God touches you with the Word of God, he's blessing you. We didn't have that in my home. I know my dad ever blessed me. It was a different story. But we have that now in Christ, in God's family. Patty and I got saved. We found a new family. The church became our family and that was a joy. Basic elements of the family, of the blessing is to take something of value and give it to your child or to someone and then commit that thing, whatever it might be.

Years ago before I came to Christ, I went to San Juan, Puerto Rico for the Caribbean National Championships. There were 600 fighters from all over the hemisphere there. We brought a contingent there from western New York. I was one of the fighters that went. The host of the tournament met us at the airport, Young Il-Kung, grand master instructor, came over from Korea with General Choi, the founder of Taekwondo. He said to us, looked us in the eyes, "One of you will be a champion today." He was blessing us. I took that. He's talking to me. "That's going to be me." Went into that tournament, fought six times in the middleweight class, won all those fights and then went to the finals, beat the lightweight champ who happened to be the Dominican Republic champion. I beat the heavyweight champ who was from Pittsburgh and I was named Grand Champion. He made me think that I could do that and I ran with that. We're challenged every day to do the right thing from God's Word and from this pulpit, do the right thing.

Let's pray.

Ephesians 3:14-21

14. For this cause I bow my knees unto the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ,

15. Of whom the whole family in heaven and earth is named,

16. That he would grant you, according to the riches of his glory, to be strengthened with might by his Spirit in the inner man;

17. That Christ may dwell in your hearts by faith; that ye, being rooted and grounded in love,

18. May be able to comprehend with all saints what is the breadth, and length, and depth, and height;

19. And to know the love of Christ, which passeth knowledge, that ye might be filled with all the fulness of God.

20. Now unto him that is able to do exceeding abundantly above all that we ask or think, according to the power that worketh in us,

21. Unto him be glory in the church by Christ Jesus throughout all ages, world without end. Amen.

Amen. Thank you. Amen, buddy.

VIII. Pastor's Closing Remarks and Conference Schedule

Well, I appreciate that. What a great start to our conference. I'll tell you, he accomplished everything in that sermon that I wanted him to accomplish. You know, I told you this even before we started our conference for the last four or five weeks, I want you to learn everything you can from these people. There's no accident that God has orchestrated all the events for this week in our church. We'll talk about that as our week goes on, but there are some tremendous things. We have so many resources here with all of you young folks and the older folks too that can really make a difference. We're at that point. There's no accident that as I said last Sunday, I've trained you the way that I've trained you, disciplined you the way that we have been disciplined and gave you what you need. Now God has brought it together this week, and I want you to glean everything you can from these guys and spend time with them. I know most, some of you work, all of you probably work to some degree during the week, during the day, but you make the daytime things as you can. But I've designed that so you can fellowship with them, spend time with them. I just want you to get as much from it as you can.

Mark on your calendars Friday night at 6:30 before the service, we'll have up in the Timothy room, Mark and Patty will be up there and question and answer about the mission field. You young guys and gals, man, this is an opportunity for you that we can send some people down there that you can use your athletic skills to win people to Christ. Then Saturday at 5 o'clock, Kevin and Kathy Bond and their family will be up in the same room, and we'll be talking about their mission trips to Africa and the medical teams that they're sending down there. You really want to be there for those and then back down for the service.

Now today, again, we're going to be dismissed here, and visitors, if you make your way over to the bookstore, you can have whatever you want, take a break, get some lunch, take a breath. 3 o'clock for those of you who can be back here to help us unload Miles and get him ready to go. Then 5 o'clock, everybody in here will get it organized and go from there. We're dedicating Bibles Tuesday night. Miles has got to get back. So that night, everybody will be here anyhow. They'll be all up here. We'll come up, we'll pray over them, we'll load them up and we'll send Miles on his way. So I'll see you this afternoon at 3. All of everybody else, be here at 5. We'll meet in here and let's go to work and put in the Word of God together. 40,000 Johns and Romans for what an opportunity for families to put the Word of God together and make that sacrifice of joy.

So let's pray. Father, we do thank You today for the great start. We thank You for Mark and his wife to be here. Thank You for the message that he preached. Lord, thank You for his openness and honesty and allowing us to see not only in his ministry but in his heart what he has that God, through Your Spirit, I pray You'll touch the lives of these people in our church, these young men and young ladies, moms and dads, that we can see that, Lord, there's so much that we can do to help. Lord, I just pray, Father, that You'll just continue to work in his life and his ministry. I pray for Chris and his family as they go to Southeast Asia tomorrow, that You'll protect them, bless them, give them what they're looking for and help them. We thank You for their ministry. We look forward as they get established to maybe helping him with some teams. We just look, Lord, at all the open doors. Take this day, begin it in our hearts and let us build upon it, Lord, throughout this week. We'll thank You and praise You. In Jesus' name, for Your sake we ask it. Amen. God bless you. Amen.