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# CLEAN HANDS AND A PURE HEART

Text:

Who may ascend into the hill of the Lord? Or who may stand in His holy place? He who has clean hands and a pure heart, who has not lifted up his soul to an idol, nor sworn deceitfully. He shall receive blessing from the Lord, and righteousness from the God of his salvation. (Psalms 24:3-5).

- I. **Introduction**—In his book *The Power of Covenant Prayer*, Francis Frangipane tells a story of how a satanist came to the Lord and revealed to him that thousands of satanists had been trying to put a curse on Frangipane for years. At first he laughed because he didn't even know about it. Then the speaker said, "Oh, don't underestimate the power of these people. They have destroyed many lives. The only reason their curses could not reach you is because you walk so close to the Lord." Interesting phrase, isn't it. Walking close to the Lord implies that even though you are saved, there are varying degrees of closeness with God.
  
- II. "Who may ascend into the hill of the Lord? Or who may stand in His holy place? He who has clean hands and a pure heart, who has not lifted up his soul to an idol, nor sworn deceitfully. He shall receive blessing from the Lord, and righteousness from the God of his salvation" (Psalm 24:3-5).
  - A. There are two questions asked in the passage: Who may ascend to the hill of the Lord? Who may stand in His holy place?
    1. The hill of the Lord is Mount Zion, the place of the Tabernacle, and the hill of worship.
    2. The holy place is the Tabernacle.
  
  - B. Both questions are answered in the next verse: "He who has clean hands and a pure heart."
  
  - C. Let's break down this answer. First, let's look at the phrase, *he who has clean hands*.
    1. The apostle Paul said something similar to this in 1 Timothy 2:8. He used the term *holy hands* and instead of *a clean heart*, he said, "without wrath and doubting."
    2. The Bible mentions the hands of a man 456 times in Scripture. In each description, it is dealing with the work or deeds of man.
    3. God rewards me according to the cleanness of my hands (see 2 Samuel 22:21).
    4. Clean hands has to do with my deeds, my actions and my ways—the external part of me that is seen.
  
  - D. Secondly, he says that you can't ascend or stand without a pure heart.
    1. A pure heart is not something you can always see. It is the part of me that God sees.
    2. How important is it to purify my heart? It is possible that something can get in my heart and keep me from being as close to God as I would like to be.
  
- III. **Unforgiveness**— "And forgive us our debts, as we forgive our debtors. . . . For if you forgive men their trespasses, your heavenly Father will also forgive you. But if you do not for-



give men their trespasses, neither will your Father forgive your trespasses." (Matthew 6:12, 14, 15).

- A. If you make this a daily prayer, you may be amazed at how many things you start digging up.
- B. "Bless the Lord, O my soul; and all that is within me" (Psalm 103:1).
  - 1. I have to bless God with all that is within me.
  - 2. Illustration with a clear glass of water and a pitcher.

#### IV. The Root of Bitterness

- A. "Pursue peace with all people, and holiness, without which no one will see the Lord: looking carefully lest anyone fall short of the grace of God; lest any root of bitterness springing up cause trouble, and by this many become defiled" (Hebrews 12:14, 15).
- B. "Let all bitterness, wrath, anger, clamor, and evil speaking be put away from you, with all malice. And be kind to one another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, even as God in Christ forgave you" (Ephesians 4:31, 32).

# C ONFESSING THE SINS OF THE CHURCH

Text:

If My people who are called by My name will humble themselves, and pray and seek My face, and turn from their wicked ways, then I will hear from heaven, and will forgive their sin and heal their land. Now My eyes will be open and My ears attentive to prayer made in this place (2 Chronicles 7:14, 15).

- I. **Introduction**—There is a new type of terminology surfacing that has to do with the subject of church abuse. It is a type of abuse people receive from their church body, induced by other believers of the same faith. In many situations, it comes from the pastors of these groups.
  - A. It is a mean spirit. Webster defines the word *mean* as “a bad tempered, unmanageable and selfish person who delights in humiliating others.”
    1. There are ministers who have left the ministry because of mean people.
    2. There are thousands who have left churches because of mean people.
    3. I know there are mean people everywhere, but the house of God should be the one exception to that rule.
  - B. What causes good church folks to operate in a mean spirit? You have to go back to the origin of sin to find the answer to this question.
  - C. The “I Will’s” of Lucifer
    1. “How you are fallen from heaven, O Lucifer, son of the morning! How you are cut down to the ground, You who weakened the nations! For you have said in your heart: ‘I will ascend into heaven, I will exalt my throne above the stars of God; I will also sit on the mount of the congregation on the farthest sides of the north; I will ascend above the heights of the clouds, I will be like the Most High.’ Yet you shall be brought down to Sheol, to the lowest depths of the Pit” (Isaiah 14:12-15).
    2. The beginning of humbling ourselves before God is dealing with one of the most subtle and deadly sins of the church: pride.
- II. **Pride**—The stories of King Zedekiah and the Prophet Jeremiah describe pride (Jeremiah 38; 39).
  - A. Give a brief summary of Jeremiah 38 and 39. (Put select passages on the screens.)
  - B. “Then the king of Babylon killed the sons of Zedekiah before his eyes in Riblah; the king of Babylon also killed all the nobles of Judah. Moreover he put out Zedekiah’s eyes, and bound him with bronze fetters to carry him off to Babylon. And the Chaldeans burned the king’s house and the houses of the people with fire, and broke down the walls of Jerusalem” (Jeremiah 39:6-8).
  - C. Proverbs on Pride
    1. “When pride comes, then comes shame; but with the humble is wisdom” (Proverbs 11:2).

2. "By pride comes nothing but strife, but with the well-advised is wisdom" (Proverbs 13:10).
3. "Pride goes before destruction, and a haughty spirit before a fall. Better to be of a humble spirit with the lowly, than to divide the spoil with the proud" (Proverbs 16:18).
4. "A proud and haughty man—*Scoffer* is his name; he acts with arrogant pride" (Proverbs 21:24).
5. "A man's pride will bring him low, but the humble in spirit will retain honor" (Proverbs 29:23).

III. **Conclusion**—"If My people who are called by My name will humble themselves, and pray and seek My face, and turn from their wicked ways, then I will hear from heaven, and will forgive their sin and heal their land. Now My eyes will be open and My ears attentive to prayer made in this place" (2 Chronicles 7:14, 15).

# CHANGING THE ATMOSPHERE WITH YOUR PRAISE

Text:

And being in Bethany at the house of Simon the leper, as He sat at the table, a woman came having an alabaster flask of very costly oil of spikenard. Then she broke the flask and poured it on His head (Mark 14:3).

Then one of the Pharisees asked Him to eat with him. And He went to the Pharisee's house, and sat down to eat. And behold, a woman in the city who was a sinner, when she knew that Jesus sat at the table in the Pharisee's house, brought an alabaster flask of fragrant oil, and stood at His feet behind Him weeping; and she began to wash His feet with her tears, and wiped them with the hair of her head; and she kissed His feet and anointed them with the fragrant oil (Luke 7:36-38).

- I. **Introduction**—When the disciples first met Jesus, they left their jobs and their families and followed Him. They saw miracles and, after a while, it was no big deal. They had spent normal days with Jesus. The disciples were so busy being busy that they didn't notice that they had gotten used to being in the presence of Jesus. At first, they served Him and ministered to His every need, but on this day, when they came into the house at Bethany, Jesus was with them, but it was no big deal.
- II. "And being in Bethany at the house of Simon the leper, as He sat at the table, a woman came having an alabaster flask of very costly oil of spikenard. Then she broke the flask and poured it on His head" (Mark 14:3).

"Then one of the Pharisees asked Him to eat with him. And He went to the Pharisee's house, and sat down to eat. And behold, a woman in the city who was a sinner, when she knew that Jesus sat at the table in the Pharisee's house, brought an alabaster flask of fragrant oil, and stood at His feet behind Him weeping; and she began to wash His feet with her tears, and wiped them with the hair of her head; and she kissed His feet and anointed them with the fragrant oil" (Luke 7:36-38).

- A. In the beginning, one of the disciples would have washed the feet of Jesus. But now they were used to Him. On this day, no one washed His feet. They just rushed to get a good seat around the table. Simon has two titles—the Pharisee and the leper (a healed leper).
- B. They sat there to eat, just Jesus and the boys, when all of a sudden a woman came in the door, uninvited.
  1. She had no title, no position, no clout. When she opened the door, they started murmuring, "She's a sinner woman."
  2. She walked in the room and into an atmosphere that was not receptive to her.
    - a. I don't know how she knew where He was, but she had been seeking Him for a while. She was ready. She had her oil with her; she was looking for Jesus.
    - b. They murmured about her, but she didn't come to see them anyway—"Excuse me! I've come to see Jesus!" They talked about her, but she didn't even respond. She simply said, "Excuse me, I have come to see Jesus."

- C. She came into the room with one intention: To get to Jesus.
    - 1. But in order to get to Jesus, she had to walk through an atmosphere of indignation. Whenever you get ready to come into the presence of God, there is always a flesh. There is always a veil that must be torn, a wall of carnality that must be broken.
    - 2. When she walked into the room, the Gospel writers began taking notes. She did so many things out of the ordinary that it was blowing everybody's mind in the room—except Jesus. He understood her praise.
      - a. The Gospel writers all wrote about something different. One said she anointed His head; another said His feet; another recorded that she cried; another recorded that she let down her hair.
      - b. When you really get in the presence of God and you are desperate to worship Him, you don't have any hesitations. You can do it all.
      - c. Anyway you bless me Lord, I will be satisfied.
  - D. She reached into the pocket of her old dress and pulled out an alabaster box full of spikenard. The spikenard was transported from Northern India. The contents of this box was like an oil concentrate used to make perfume. It was like looking at a red oil. The concentrate would stain if you applied it without diluting it. It wasn't a perfume because it was too strong—it was the oil ingredients to make perfume. It represented her savings. With the contents of this box, she could have started a business. It could have secured her future.
    - 1. She broke the box. I didn't say she opened it. No, that's what we do sometimes. Anything you open, you can close back again.
      - a. We turn Him on and off at will.
      - b. You can tell she wasn't a church woman because she didn't worship right. She came in the door and immediately made her way to Jesus.
    - 2. If you open it, you can control the contents and measure it out. But when you break it, you can't control how it comes out!
      - a. You can always tell who has been opened and who has been broken.
      - b. When you have been broken, your oil starts coming out through your brokenness.
- III. "But there were some who were indignant among themselves, and said, 'Why was this fragrant oil wasted? For it might have been sold for more than three hundred denarii and given to the poor.' And they criticized her sharply" (Mark 14:4, 5).
- A. You can't really worship Him without it costing you something.
  - B. One denarii was the value of a day's wage. Five denarii would buy 10 mules, but her offering was worth 300 denarii.
  - C. They criticized her sharply because they thought she was wasting the oil by blessing Jesus. Some people think that helping the poor is a good substitute for worship.
  - D. True worshipers press in regardless of the criticism. "Excuse me! I have to get to Him."
- IV. "But Jesus said, 'Let her alone. Why do you trouble her? She has done a good work for Me'" (v. 6).
- A. They wanted her to stop, but Jesus said, "Let her alone!" Then they asked, "But, Jesus don't you know what that oil really cost?"



1. It took her a long time to get to the place where she could worship like this.
  2. Let her alone! She'll praise Me if she has to all by herself.
  3. You may not understand my praise but . . . understand, I didn't come to see you.
- B. Mark and Luke only identify her as a sinner woman. But John later reveals her identity to us.
- V. "Now a certain man was sick, Lazarus of Bethany, the town of Mary and her sister Martha. It was that Mary who anointed the Lord with fragrant oil and wiped His feet with her hair, whose brother Lazarus was sick. . . . Then Mary took a pound of very costly oil of spike-nard, anointed the feet of Jesus, and wiped His feet with her hair" (John 11:1, 2; 12:3).
- "It was that Mary". . . every church has one of them. That Mary . . .
- A. When you see someone's praise, you have no idea how far that moment will carry them.
  - B. We have a visible image in this text. But while the visible image is so alive and profound, it isn't the part that affected them the most. It is what you could not see that made the biggest difference.
  - C. You can walk into the pages of this text. See the room, the table, the boys with Jesus in the small house.
  - D. Her worship became a fragrance, an aroma in the nostrils of Jesus. In the days of Moses, God instituted aroma worship.
  - E. When she left the room, it smelled like worship. It was on her hands, her dress, the floor and the hair of Jesus.
- VI. "Assuredly, I say to you, wherever this gospel is preached in the whole world, what this woman has done will also be told as a memorial to her" (Mark 14:9).
- VII. **Conclusion**—You can't have the whole gospel without understanding that you can change your atmosphere with your praise. Go to your places of opposition and start praising Him. Go to work early, just to praise Him. Go home and praise Him.

# FOUR GATES OF DELIVERANCE

Text:

And when Peter had come to himself, he said, "Now I know for certain that the Lord has sent His angel, and has delivered me from the hand of Herod and from all the expectation of the Jewish people." So, when he had considered this, he came to the house of Mary, the mother of John whose surname was Mark, where many were gathered together praying. And as Peter knocked at the door of the gate, a girl named Rhoda came to answer. When she recognized Peter's voice, because of her gladness she did not open the gate, but ran in and announced that Peter stood before the gate. But they said to her, "You are beside yourself!" Yet she kept insisting that it was so. So they said, "It is his angel." Now Peter continued knocking; and when they opened the door and saw him, they were astonished (Acts 12:11-16).

- I. **Introduction**—In this text, there are four sets of four soldiers. There are four gates that Peter had to walk through in order to be set free. Interesting enough, Ephesians 6:12 says, "For we do not wrestle against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this age, against spiritual hosts of wickedness in the heavenly places."
- II. **The First Gate—The Inner Prison:** "So when he had arrested him, he put him in prison, and delivered him to four squads of soldiers to keep him, intending to bring him before the people after Passover. Peter was therefore kept in prison, but constant prayer was offered to God for him by the church. And when Herod was about to bring him out, that night Peter was sleeping, bound with two chains between two soldiers; and the guards before the door were keeping the prison" (vv. 4-6).
  - A. God is more interested in who you are than what you do.
  - B. Before you do anything for God, you have to get anointed on the inside.
  - C. You have to overcome the prison of your inner self.
  - D. If you don't walk through this first gate, you will never get out of the other ones.
- II. **The Second Gate—The Expectation of the People:** "When they were past the first and the second guard posts . . . And when Peter had come to himself, he said, 'Now I know for certain that the Lord has sent His angel, and has delivered me from the hand of Herod and from all the expectation of the Jewish people'" (vv. 10, 11).
  - A. You have to be free from the expectations of other people.
    1. You can spend a lifetime trying to please people and never get anywhere.
    2. Before you please . . . make sure God is pleased.
  - B. In the Spirit realm, the most important thing I can do is spend time with God.

- C. If you stand before God long enough, you can stand before any man.
- III. The Third Gate—The Gate that Leads to the City: “When they were past the first and the second guard posts, they came to the iron gate that leads to the city, which opened to them of its own accord; and they went out and went down one street, and immediately the angel departed from him” (v. 10).
- A. There is a gate that leads to the city.
  - B. In every city there is a ruling power of darkness.
    - 1. Satan wants you to stay oppressed by this spirit.
    - 2. In order to win the city, you have got to get out of this prison.
  - C. It opened of its own accord. Look at this revelation: When you are free from the first and second guards, the city gates can't hold you back. They have no choice but to open.
- IV. The Fourth Gate—The Religious System of the Church: “So, when he had considered this, he came to the house of Mary, the mother of John whose surname was Mark, where many were gathered together praying. And as Peter knocked at the door of the gate, a girl named Rhoda came to answer. When she recognized Peter's voice, because of her gladness she did not open the gate, but ran in and announced that Peter stood before the gate. But they said to her, ‘You are beside yourself!’ (you are mad! in KJV). Yet she kept insisting that it was so. So they said, ‘It is his angel.’ Now Peter continued knocking; and when they opened the door and saw him, they were astonished (vv. 12-16).
- A. The people were praying, but the gates were locked. Too many churches have hidden behind their stained-glass windows.
  - B. Rhoda said, “It's a miracle,” but the church said, “You're mad.”
  - C. The hardest gate to get through was the one at the church. When they saw that Peter was set free, they said, “It's madness!” At every other gate, they just opened. But the one at the church, he had to knock and keep knocking and keep knocking.
  - D. Prayer must ignite expectancy in our midst.
  - E. Faith is released when we take God as His Word and believe and expect to receive.



# FIVE FOLD MINISTRY

Text:

And He Himself gave some to be apostles, some prophets, some evangelists, and some pastors and teachers, for the equipping of the saints for the work of ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ, till we all come to the unity of the faith and of the knowledge of the Son of God, to a perfect man, to the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ; that we should no longer be children, tossed to and fro and carried about with every wind of doctrine, by the trickery of men, in the cunning craftiness of deceitful plotting, but, speaking the truth in love, may grow up in all things into Him who is the head—Christ—from whom the whole body, joined and knit together by what every joint supplies, according to the effective working by which every part does its share, causes growth of the body for the edifying of itself in love (Ephesians 4:11-16).

- I. **Introduction**—God wants the church to be a mature body of believers that is equipped and unified in their faith. He set up an order in the church to ensure that this would happen. I want you to look at your hand for a moment.

Your thumb is the APOSTLE .....who governs!  
 Your index finger is the PROPHET.....who guides!  
 Your middle finger is the EVANGELIST.....who gathers!  
 Your ring finger is the PASTOR.....who guards!  
 Your pinky finger is the TEACHER.....who grounds!

Together they form a fist to fight—they can hold a brush and paint; they can build a house; they can play a musical instrument—they can do just about anything the mind tells them to do. “And He Himself gave some to be apostles, some prophets, some evangelists, and some pastors and teachers” (v. 11).

## II. The role of the APOSTLE

- A. Your thumb grips. The apostle governs.
- B. First there is government.
- C. Everything must be set in order before it can work in harmony.
- D. This is the role of administration.

## III. The role of the PROPHET

- A. The index finger points. The prophet guides.
- B. Beware of false prophets. How can you discern a false prophet?

## IV. The role of the EVANGELIST

- A. This is the longest finger on your hand—it gathers. Evangelists gather souls.
- B. We commonly refer to a preacher who doesn't pastor as an evangelist. He may be in that role, but that does not mean he has the gift of evangelism.

V. The role of the PASTOR

- A. The ring finger is the one that symbolizes the guardian of marriage and commitment.
- B. The pastor guards the flock.
- C. Everyone who pastors a church is not a pastor.
- D. God calls a “set man” to a house of worship and the head of that house. But that does not mean he is a pastor.
- E. There are many churches who have an evangelist as a pastor and want a change, even though more souls were being saved than ever before. But just because the set man did not have great pastoral care skills, they want a change.

VI. The role of the TEACHER

The little finger closes the grip. It grounds. The teacher also grounds.

VII. With this understanding of the various roles, let's look more closely at the passage and see how we can better understand the role of the five-fold ministry of the church.

- A. Verse 12: “. . . for the equipping of the saints for the work of ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ,”
- B. Verse 13: “. . . till we all come to the unity of the faith and of the knowledge of the Son of God, to a perfect man, to the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ;”
- C. Verse 14: “. . . that we should no longer be children, tossed to and fro and carried about with every wind of doctrine, by the trickery of men, in the cunning craftiness of deceitful plotting,”
- D. Verse 15: “. . . but, speaking the truth in love, may grow up in all things into Him who is the head—Christ. . . .”
- E. Verse 16: “. . . from whom the whole body, joined and knit together by what every joint supplies, according to the effective working by which every part does its share, causes growth of the body for the edifying of itself in love.”

# THE INCENSE OF HEAVEN

Text:

For a tabernacle was prepared: the first part, in which was the lamp-stand, the table, and the showbread, which is called the sanctuary; and behind the second veil, the part of the tabernacle which is called the Holiest of All (Hebrews 9:2, 3).

- I. **Introduction**—In order for us to understand the significance of this sermon, we need take a quick journey through the Tabernacle of Moses. Notice the three compartments of the Tabernacle and also the position of the furniture. Let's take a walk through the Tabernacle together.
- II. **The Furniture of the Tabernacle**—The position of the furniture forms a cross.
  - A. Outer Court—brazen altar, laver
  - B. The Holy Place—candlestick, table of shewbread, altar of incense
  - C. Holy of Holies—Ark of the Covenant
- III. **The Use of Incense in the Tabernacle**
  - A. Altar of incense (Exodus 30:1, 7, 8)
  - B. The censer, or incense, was necessary to enter the Holy of Holies (Leviticus 16:12, 13).
- IV. **The Three Compartments of the Tabernacle**
  - A. The outer court is the place of forgiveness and cleansing.
  - B. The inner court is the place of ministry (worship in Spirit, Word and prayer).
    1. The Holy of Holies is the place where God meets with us.
    2. We have to go through the steps to get into God's presence.
  - C. In the middle compartment are three pieces of furniture.
    1. The table—our body
    2. The candlestick—our soul
    3. The altar of incense—our spirit
      - a. It is not until we move beyond the body and soul and get into the spirit that we get near God.
      - b. Personal purity still must precede personal worship.
      - c. Worship is not a spiritual calisthenic. It is a holy man approaching a holy God.

#### V. The Two Altars

- A. The first altar is a bloody altar, filled with gallons of blood from sacrifices.
- B. The second altar is a sweet smelling altar. It is the altar of intercession—the last entry point before you get into the presence of a Holy God. The High Priest, surrounded by smoke, goes before God. There is fire from the brazen altar and incense from the altar of incense (see Psalm 141:2).

#### VI. The Relocation of the Altar of Incense

- A. Hebrews 9:2, 3  
It appears as though the writer of Hebrews has mistakenly placed the altar of incense in the wrong room. In the Old Testament, we know where it was placed. But now, he has it in the Holy of Holies. Is this a contradiction?
- B. Revelation 5:8  
Vials of odors, which are the prayers of the saints.
- C. Revelation 8:2-5  
Golden censer, filled with the prayers of the saints. The altar of incense is now before the throne and the incense is the prayers of the saints.
- D. Matthew 27:50, 51  
The veil of the Temple was rent in two.

# THE BATTLES OF THE CHAMPION

Text:

Again the children of Israel did evil in the sight of the Lord, and the Lord delivered them into the hand of the Philistines for forty years. Now there was a certain man from Zorah, of the family of the Danites, whose name was Manoah; and his wife was barren and had no children. And the Angel of the Lord appeared to the woman and said to her, "Indeed now, you are barren and have borne no children, but you shall conceive and bear a son. Now therefore, please be careful not to drink wine or similar drink, and not to eat anything unclean. For behold, you shall conceive and bear a son. And no razor shall come upon his head, for the child shall be a Nazirite to God from the womb; and he shall begin to deliver Israel out of the hand of the Philistines" (Judges 13:1-5).

I. **Introduction**—God has raised up many champions who were forged as a weapon in God's hands to bring down the Enemy. Yet many of those people followed a path that led them from being a priest to a performer.

II. The Call of a Champion—Parallel of Samson and Jesus

A. Mother barren	<i>Mary a virgin</i>	13:2
B. Angelic announcement		13:3
C. Nazarite	<i>Nazarene</i>	13:5
D. Deliverer of Israel	<i>Came to the lost house of Israel</i>	13:5
E. Angel visited mother first, then father		13:9-11
F. Angel's name "Wonderful" ( <i>secret</i> in KJV)	<i>Christophany</i>	13:18
G. Sacrifice on a rock	<i>Jesus sacrificed on a rock</i>	13:19
H. Samson means "Sunlight"	<i>Light of the World</i>	13:24
I. Takes a gentile bride	<i>Church, Bride of Christ</i>	14:2

III. The Public Battles of the Champion

A. Battle against a lion	14:5, 6
1. Surprised by the lion	
2. Spirit came upon him	
3. Tore him without the weapons of men (nothing in his hands).	
4. Private victory, not a public one (did not tell anyone).	
B. The riddle of Samson is also prophetic (picture of Calvary).	14:14

C. Bride stolen by his best man. The best man stood at the side of the groom. Lucifer was the anointed cherub in heaven. He was one of two angels who stood wing-to-wing over the throne of God. Satan's number one goal is to steal the bride.	14:20
IV. The Private Battles of the Champion	
A. Little Foxes	15:4, 5
1. "Little foxes spoil the vine" (Song of Solomon 2:15)	
2. Burned up three things (grain, olive trees and vines)	
3. Foxes will kill your anointing (oil, wine and harvest).	
B. Family affairs—he will burn you through your family.	15:6
C. Throw away what's been working for you.	15:17-19
1. Don't lay down your war. There's water in it also.	
2. Praise and prayer not only fight your battles, but also feed your soul.	
D. Secret Sins	16:1
1. God will give you the power to tear down the gates that have you bound.	
2. You can commit a sin and stay anointed, but you cannot live in sin and stay anointed.	16:3
E. Spirit of Seduction	16:4, 5
1. Three forms of seduction: lust of flesh, lust of eyes, pride of life	
2. 1 John 2:16: "All that is in the world is . . ."	
3. Lust of the eyes (seven fresh bowstrings—weapons of men)	16:7
4. Pride of life (new ropes—15:30, he did this one before)	16:11
5. Lust of the eyes (his head in a web with a pin—seven locks)	16:13, 14
6. Lulled him to sleep	16:19
V. The Champion's Performance	
A. He shook himself but did not know the power was gone.	16:20
B. Blind grinder in a prison	16:21
C. Performer for the Enemy	16:25
VI. Conclusion—God of second chances	16:28



# FAITH WALKERS

Text:

And you shall write Aaron's name on the rod of Levi. For there shall be one rod for the head of each father's house. Then you shall place them in the tabernacle of meeting before the Testimony, where I meet with you. And it shall be that the rod of the man whom I choose will blossom; thus I will rid Myself of the complaints of the children of Israel, which they make against you." So Moses spoke to the children of Israel, and each of their leaders gave him a rod apiece, for each leader according to their fathers' houses, twelve rods; and the rod of Aaron was among their rods. And Moses placed the rods before the Lord in the tabernacle of witness. Now it came to pass on the next day that Moses went into the tabernacle of witness, and behold, the rod of Aaron, of the house of Levi, had sprouted and put forth buds, had produced blossoms and yielded ripe almonds (Numbers 17:3-8).

I. **Introduction**—The children of Israel were in the wilderness living each day by faith. Every day they have to believe God for their food, their water, their protection. God wanted to be more to them than a provider. He wanted to fellowship with them. God told Moses that He was going to choose one of the tribes to be His priests.

## II. Numbers 17:1-3

- A. There is a blessing with your name on it.
- B. Aaron was a poor choice to be the spiritual leader of Israel.
  - 1. Moses went up on the mountain to talk to God. He left Aaron in charge. When he came down, the whole congregation was naked and dancing before a calf. He has only been gone 40 days.
  - 2. Aaron had created an idol and sent the whole group into idolatry.
  - 3. Moses confronted Aaron and he lied. He said the calf jumped out on its own.
  - 4. He wouldn't assume any responsibility for the problem.
- C. Nevertheless, God still chose him.
  - 1. When God chooses to bless you, it doesn't have to make sense to anybody else.
  - 2. God is sovereign
  - 3. I know you shouldn't be here, you know you shouldn't be here, but you are here!

## III. Numbers 17:4, 5

- A. The rod whom I choose
- B. God uses imperfect people for His perfect plan.
  - 1. Look at Matthew 1. Abraham was a liar, Isaac was liar, Jacob was a deceiver, Judah was sleeping with prostitutes. Tamar committed incest. Rahab, was a harlot. David was a murderer and adulterer. Bathsheba was an adulterous woman. Ruth was an idol worshiper. Then you get to the list of kings. Solomon was an idolater.

Rehoboam split the kingdom because of his greed and pride and almost destroyed Israel by taking them back into idolatry. The first record of King Ahaz is that he made his sons pass through the fire of Molech. The first record of King Manasseh is that he rebuilt the high places his father Hezekiah had destroyed. The only record of King Amon was that he forsook God and served idols.

2. But if you can get over all of that, and you keep reading, Matthew 1:16 will tell you that Jacob begat Joseph, the husband of Mary, of whom was born Jesus who is called the Christ.
- C. God doesn't choose you based on who you are now, but rather what you are going to become after He puts His deposit into you.
- D. Get rid of the complaints.
  1. When God got ready to choose Aaron, the men of Korah had a fit.
  2. There is always going to be someone who thought it should have been them.
- E. God can bless you when you are in a mess.

#### IV. Numbers 17:8

- A. On the next day . . . blossoms, buds, fruit. Bypassed three seasons overnight; escalated growth rate from a dead stick.
  1. God does his best work at night (Psalm 31:20: God's secret pavilion from the plots of men). Weeping at night, but joy comes in the morning. How? God worked all night while you slept.
  2. Illustration—Hiking Mount Sinai at night.
- B. You can't always see what God is doing. He works the night shift (graveyard shift).

#### V. Numbers 17:10

- A. "And the Lord said to Moses, 'Bring Aaron's rod back before the Testimony, to be kept as a sign . . .'"
- B. "The testimony" was another name for the ark of the covenant. It only had three things in it—the tables of stone (Word), the rod of Aaron and a pot of manna. It was the only form of Bible they had at the time.
- C. What He is telling us is that these three symbols are there to remind us that our faith is not in faith. (Faith in the power of faith is humanism. This means if you think long and hard enough on something, through the power of positive thinking and visualization, you can have what you want if you want it bad enough. This is not faith.)
- D. Faith is not in faith. Faith is in God and His ability to perform His Word.
  1. To execute faith, we must look through the circumstances to the abilities of God.
  2. I can endure anything if I think there is a purpose for it.
- E. It's the Word that unlocks our faith. Don't mess with a Word-carrying believer.
- F. Sometimes, it's just a word. Jesus told Peter, "Come."
- G. Power of the Word



1. The Bible says God watches over His Word to perform it.
  2. The Centurion said, "Just say the word." Psalm 126:6 says, "He who goes to and fro weeping, carrying his bag of seed, shall indeed come again with a shout of joy, bringing his sheaves with him" (*NASB*).
- H. God said, "Heaven and earth will pass away, but my words . . ." (Matthew 24:35).
- I. God said, "[My word] shall not return unto me void, but shall accomplish that which I please" (Isaiah 55:11).

# SWORD AGAINST SWORD

Text:

And again He entered Capernaum after some days, and it was heard that He was in the house. Immediately many gathered together, so that there was no longer room to receive them, not even near the door. And He preached the word to them. Then they came to Him, bringing a paralytic who was carried by four men. And when they could not come near Him because of the crowd, they uncovered the roof where He was. So when they had broken through, they let down the bed on which the paralytic was lying. When Jesus saw their faith, He said to the paralytic, "Son, your sins are forgiven you" (Mark 2:1-5).

- I. **Introduction**—We talk about people walking by faith and not by sight. We know that means they are not being distracted by the things around them, but rather they are holding on to a word from the Lord. However, you can see faith. When a person is walking by faith, there are things they do that they would not ordinarily do, simply because of their faith. Read Mark 1 to get the full scene of this setting. It seems as though Jesus was almost exasperated from the problems of the people. It almost implies that He was trying to escape the crowd. But the disciples went looking for Him and told Him everyone was looking for Him (it was barely daylight and the crowds were already gathering). When the word got out that Jesus was healing, the crowds bombarded Him. But Jesus knew that just because people have a need, you can't always do what they need you to do. When He came to Capernaum, He did not minister in the streets like normal. He went to a house. He was careful not to allow the needs of the people to keep Him from His mission. He was under assignment in Capernaum.
- II. "It was heard that He was in the house" (v. 1). Whenever Jesus preached, He drew the masses. If He preached on a boat, in a graveyard or on the streets, the crowds gathered. It is this kind of impact He brings into the house of this nameless person. Without a flyer, a poster or a publicity team, the word got out that the Healer was in the house—today.
- III. "And He preached the Word to them" (v. 2).
  - A. The Word still works. It has a drawing power that makes you want more.
    1. Sermons are about the Bible. Messages are from the Bible.
    2. Preaching was never intended to be a form of entertainment.
  - B. They had heard of Socrates and Aristotle, but no one ever spoke like Jesus.
- IV. "They brought Him a paralyzed man" (v. 3).
  - A. His body was dysfunctional. His only hope was Jesus.
    1. Cain's question is answered here, "Am I my brother's keeper?"
    2. If you go down, eventually I will go down too. The processes of reciprocity guarantee that.

3. What happens in my community and my church will eventually affect my house.
- B. The uniqueness of this text lies in the fact that it was the faith of his companions that brought his miracle.
    1. When the woman with the issue of blood came to Jesus, it was her own faith.
    2. Blind Bartemaeus, who called out to Jesus, was healed of his own faith.
    3. When the blind man was told to dip into the pool of Siloam, it was his faith.
    4. When the man with the withered hand got his word, "Stretch forth your hand," he was healed by his own faith and obedience.
  - C. But nowhere do I hear that his man has great faith. It was the faith of his friends. I hope you have great faith. I hope you believe God can do anything but fail. I hope you know He is omnipotent and almighty and awesome.
  - D. It makes a difference who you run with. The Bible doesn't say anything about this man's faith. He just happened to have some friends who believed in the power of God. Give me some saved friends, some Holy Ghost-filled friends who can pray for me when all hell is breaking loose in my life.
    1. Give me somebody who believes that God can change my situation.
    2. Give me somebody who wants to see me succeed. You can't pray for me if you don't want to see me win. Give me some friends who can roll up their sleeves in the heat of the battle.
  - E. There are some things that happen to you in life that leave you in a state of paralysis. This man couldn't move, couldn't walk . . . but his friends looked at his situation and said, "I can't just let you die. I've got to get you to Jesus."
    1. Illustrate putting him on the stretcher—carefully.
    2. His weight was on their shoulders.
  - F. If I had time, I would tell you about the prophetic layer here. I would tell you about the Gentiles being carried into the church by the four Gospels. But that is another sermon.
- V. "They could not get near Him" (v. 4).
- A. Life is not always easy. If you plan to succeed, it will not be easy. Not only do you have to decide not to die, you have to find a few other people who believe in you too.
  - B. They knew that if they were going to get their friend healed, they only had a short time to get him in the house. The opportunity is now. God, deliver us from people who always know what to do, but never do it. You are missing the moments. *This is a moment.* You will never get it back again.
  - C. They had to lift him *above the crowd*.
  - D. They had to be creative. They said, "We can't let the crowd stop us; we have come too far to quit now, worked too hard, waited too long. If Jesus is in that house, we have to see Him today. Now hold on to his ankles; tighten the cords; we have to go up.
  - E. Here they are going across the roof; listen for the word. They didn't just want to drop him anywhere. They found where Jesus was. I didn't come here to be in the presence of people. I come to be in the presence of God.

- F. When you are the closest to your goal, that's when things are the hardest. They started tearing off the roof. Jesus is in the house preaching, and they got His attention. (I want to be in a church that get's God's attention with people who are not afraid to tear the roof off if they have to in order to get into His presence.)
- G. These men knew how to pick him up, how to carry him, how to overcome obstacles, but they also knew when to let him go.

VI. "When Jesus saw their faith" (v. 5).

- A. Sometimes you ought to do things for other people, even when there is nothing in it for you.
- B. Jesus saw their faith. This is faith in action. I am tired of people marketing a faith that we can't see.
  - 1. If you believe it is going to rain, where is your umbrella?
  - 2. If you believe God is going to bless you get ready; talk like it, walk like it, plan like it.
  - 3. Don't tell me you love me, and then leave me lying there hungry.
  - 4. Some of you work in places where your coworkers don't even know you are a Christian.
  - 5. If you were accused of being a Christian, would there be enough evidence to prosecute you?
- C. Do your children know you are a man or woman of God? Does your spouse feel the effects of your prayer life?

# FEAR FACTOR

Text:

For we do not wrestle against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this age, against spiritual hosts of wickedness in the heavenly places. Therefore take up the whole armor of God, that you may be able to withstand in the evil day, and having done all, to stand. Stand therefore, having girded your waist with truth, having put on the breastplate of righteousness, and having shod your feet with the preparation of the gospel of peace; above all, taking the shield of faith with which you will be able to quench all the fiery darts of the wicked one. And take the helmet of salvation, and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God (Ephesians 6:12-17).

- I. **Introduction**—Sigmund Freud tried to give a psychological explanation for fear. He said that the human personality is made up of three parts. First there is the id, which is primarily basic human instinct. Instinct reacts automatically and has to be satisfied immediately. Second, he said there was the ego, which is the part of the personality that is aware of the external happenings. It can recognize a clear threat to the person. Third, there is the superego. The superego is a moral sense of right and wrong. Freud stated that fear occurs when one of these three entities gets out of balance.
- II. **Fear**
  - A. "And do not fear those who kill the body but cannot kill the soul. But rather fear Him who is able to destroy both soul and body in hell. Are not two sparrows sold for a copper coin? And not one of them falls to the ground apart from your Father's will. But the very hairs of your head are all numbered. Do not fear therefore; you are of more value than many sparrows" (Matthew 10:28-31).
  - B. "And see, now I go bound in the spirit to Jerusalem, not knowing the things that will happen to me there, except that the Holy Spirit testifies in every city, saying that chains and tribulations await me. But none of these things move me; nor do I count my life dear to myself, so that I may finish my race with joy, and the ministry which I received from the Lord Jesus, to testify to the gospel of the grace of God" (Acts 20:22-24).
  - C. "For you did not receive the spirit of bondage again to fear, but you received the Spirit of adoption by whom we cry out, 'Abba, Father.' The Spirit Himself bears witness with our spirit that we are children of God, and if children, then heirs—heirs of God and joint heirs with Christ, if indeed we suffer with Him, that we may also be glorified together" (Romans 8:15-17).
  - D. "Inasmuch then as the children have partaken of flesh and blood, He Himself likewise shared in the same, that through death He might destroy him who had the power of death, that is, the devil, and release those who through fear of death were all their lifetime subject to bondage. For indeed He does not give aid to angels, but He does give aid to the seed of Abraham" (Hebrews 2:14-16).



- E. "So that we may boldly say: 'The Lord is my helper; I will not fear. What can man do unto me?'" (Hebrews 13:6).
- F. "He shall not be afraid of evil tidings; his heart is steadfast, trusting in the Lord" (Psalm 112:7).
- G. "When thou liest down, thou shalt not be afraid: yea, thou shalt lie down, and thy sleep shall be sweet. Be not afraid of sudden fear, neither of the desolation of the wicked, when it cometh. For the Lord shall be thy confidence, and shall keep thy foot from being taken" (Proverbs 3:24-26, KJV).
- H. "There is no fear in love; but perfect love casts out fear, because fear involves torment. But he who fears has not been made perfect in love. We love Him because He first loved us. If someone says, 'I love God,' and hates his brother, he is a liar; for he who does not love his brother whom he has seen, how can he love God whom he has not seen? And this commandment we have from Him: that he who loves God must love his brother also" (1 John 4:18-21).

### III. The Reason for Fear

- A. For someone who didn't believe in God, I would say Sigmund Freud gave a fair explanation of Biblical revelation concerning fear. The problem with psychology is that it leaves out the spirit.
- B. Man is a trinity—body, soul and spirit.
  - 1. Fear in the body (Hebrews 13:6; 1 Peter 3:14 )
  - 2. Fear in the soul (Psalm 112:7; Proverbs 3:24-26)
  - 3. Fear in the spirit (2 Timothy 1:7)

### IV. The Results of Fear

- A. You can become trapped in your fears. "The fear of man bringeth a snare, but whoever trusts in the Lord shall be safe" (Proverbs 29:25).
- B. It can cost you your health. "Men's hearts failing them for fear, and for looking after those things which are coming on the earth: for the powers of heaven shall be shaken" (Luke 21:26, KJV).
- C. It can cost you your future. "The fear of the wicked, it shall come upon him: but the desire of the righteous shall be granted" (Proverbs 10:24, KJV).
- D. It can cost you your talents and cause you to fail. "Then he which had received the one talent came and said, Lord, I knew thee that thou art an hard man, reaping where thou hast not sown, and gathering where thou hast not strowed: And I was afraid, and went and hid thy talent in the earth: lo, there thou hast that is thine. His lord answered and said unto him, Thou wicked and slothful servant, thou knewest that I reap where I sowed not, and gather where I have not strowed: Thou oughtest therefore to have put my money to the exchangers, and then at my coming I should have received mine own with usury. Take therefore the talent from him, and give it unto him which hath ten talents. For unto every one that hath shall be given, and he shall have abundance: but from him that hath not shall be taken away even that which he hath" (Matthew 25:24-29, KJV).

- E. It can cost you your family. "And the men of the place asked him of his wife; and he said, She is my sister: for he feared to say, She is my wife; lest, said he, the men of the place should kill me for Rebekah; because she was fair to look upon" (Genesis 26:7, KJV).
- F. It can cost you your faith. "And he was in the hinder part of the ship, asleep on a pillow: and they awake him, and say unto him, Master, carest thou not that we perish? . . . And he said unto them, Why are ye so fearful? How is it that ye have no faith?" (Mark 4:38, 40, KJV).
- G. It can cost you your testimony. "Now Peter sat without in the palace: and a damsel came unto him, saying, Thou also wast with Jesus of Galilee. But he denied before them all, saying, I know not what thou sayest. And when he was gone out into the porch, another maid saw him, and said unto them that were there, This fellow was also with Jesus of Nazareth. And again he denied with an oath, I do not know the man. And after a while came unto him they that stood by, and said to Peter, Surely thou also art one of them; for thy speech betrayeth thee. Then began he to curse and to swear, saying, I know not the man. And immediately the cock crew. And Peter remembered the word of Jesus, which said unto him, Before the cock crow, thou shalt deny me thrice. And he went out, and wept bitterly" (Matthew 26:69-75, KJV).

V. The Remedy for Fear (1 John 4:16-19) Principle: Love Conquerors Fear

- A. Love and fear are opposed.  
 LOVE says, "What can I do for others?"  
 FEAR says, "What will others do to me?"  
 LOVE thinks no evil.  
 FEAR thinks mostly evil.  
 LOVE focuses on today's acts of kindness.  
 FEAR focuses on tomorrow's worries.  
 LOVE leads to joy and peace.  
 FEAR leads to building walls, loneliness and failure.  
 LOVE moves toward others.  
 FEAR moves away from others.  
 The more *fear* the less *love*. The more *love* the less *fear*.
- B. Illustration: Suppose you were on a battlefield and you had to fight against the whole world. You had to beat abortion, rape, crime, gang violence, prison systems, politics, racism and wars. It was you against the whole world and you could only choose one weapon. What would you choose? Jesus chose love. He was on that battlefield with only one choice. He said it was strong enough if we would use it.
- C. Scripture references: Psalm 27:1; Psalm 34:4; Psalm 46:2-5; 1 Peter 3:13; Proverbs 1:33; Psalm 23:4; Joshua 1:9
- D. A Practical Remedy for Fear  
 F—Faithfulness of the Father  
 E—Ever Interceding Christ  
 A—Armor of God  
 R—Reinforcement of the Angels

# **F**ALSELY **ACCUSED**

Text:

There was a man in the land of Uz, whose name was Job; and that man was blameless and upright, and one who feared God and shunned evil. And seven sons and three daughters were born to him. Also, his possessions were seven thousand sheep, three thousand camels, five hundred yoke of oxen, five hundred female donkeys, and a very large household, so that this man was the greatest of all the people of the East. And his sons would go and feast in their houses, each on his appointed day, and would send and invite their three sisters to eat and drink with them (Job 1:1-4).

- I. **Introduction**—One of the deepest pains that our Lord endured while walking on this earth was the heartache of being misunderstood. Everywhere He went healing and helping there was always someone, usually a Pharisee or Sadducee, who falsely accused Him. This sermon deals with the pain of being falsely accused, as well as the temptation to commit the sin of judgmentalism. Job is the character of our lesson.
- II. **Job's First Judge**—"So they sat down with him on the ground seven days and seven nights, and no one spoke a word to him, for they saw that his grief was very great" (2:13).
  - A. Job's first accusers were those who just stared and said nothing.
  - B. When people are going through a difficult time, it is extremely important to affirm them. Sometimes they literally cling to every kind word.
- III. **Job's Second Judge** was his wife—"Then his wife said to him, 'Do you still hold fast to your integrity? Curse God and die!' But he said to her, 'You speak as one of the foolish women speaks. Shall we indeed accept good from God, and shall we not accept adversity?' In all this Job did not sin with his lips." (2:9, 10).
  - A. The first thing you have to remember is that she was also grieving. She had lost all of their wealth and most of all, their children.
  - B. We have to give hurting people a little space. They say hurtful things because of their own pain.
- IV. **Job's Third Judge**—Eliphaz (a friend)
  - A. Job 4:12-17—Why he judged. Satan brought him a lie. "Now a word was secretly brought to me, and my ear received a whisper of it. In disquieting thoughts from the visions of the night, when deep sleep falls on men, fear came upon me, and trembling, which made all my bones shake. Then a spirit passed before my face; the hair on my body stood up. It stood still, but I could not discern its appearance. A form was before my eyes; there was silence; then I heard a voice saying: 'Can a mortal be more



righteous than God? Can a man be more pure than his Maker?"

- B. Job 5:1—"Call out now; is there anyone who will answer you? And to which of the holy ones will you turn?"
- C. Job 22:5, 6—Accuses him of secretly stealing money (see how judgmentalism grows). "Is not your wickedness great, and your iniquity without end? For you have taken pledges from your brother for no reason, and stripped the naked of their clothing."
- D. The effects this had on Job
  - 1. Job 6:14—Grieving the loss of his friends. Feeling lonely and alienated. "To him who is afflicted, kindness should be shown by his friend."
  - 2. Job 7:4, 13-15—"When I lie down, I say, 'When shall I arise, and the night be ended?' . . . When I say, 'My bed will comfort me, my couch will ease my complaint,' then You scare me with dreams and terrify me with visions, so that my soul chooses strangling and death rather than my body."

V. Job's Fourth Judge—Bildad (another friend)

- A. Job 8:4—Judges his grief. "If your sons have sinned against Him, He has cast them away for their transgression."
- B. Job 8:5—Judges his prayer life. "If you would earnestly seek God and make your supplication to the Almighty . . ."
- C. Job 8:13—Judges his relationship with God. "So are the paths of all who forget God; and the hope of the hypocrite shall perish."
- D. Job 18:5—You got what you deserved. "The light of the wicked indeed goes out, and the flame of his fire does not shine."
- E. Job 9:16—The effects this had on Job. "If I called and He answered me, I would not believe that He was listening to my voice."

VI. Job's Fifth Judge—Zophar (another friend)

- A. Job 11:2—Judging a hurting man's words. "Should not the multitude of words be answered? And should a man full of talk be vindicated?"
- B. Job 11:13, 14—If you would just get the sin out of your life. "If you would prepare your heart, and stretch out your hands toward Him; if iniquity were in your hand, and you put it far away, and would not let wickedness dwell in your tents . . ."
- C. The effects this had on Job.
  - 1. Job 12:2-4—He felt like he spoke for all of the people—the general public's view. "No doubt you are the people, and wisdom will die with you! But I have understanding as well as you; I am not inferior to you. Indeed, who does not know such things as these? I am one mocked by his friends, who called on God, and He answered him, the just and blameless who is ridiculed."
  - 2. Job 13:4, 7-9—Worthless physicians. "But you forgers of lies, you are all worthless physicians. . . .Will you speak wickedly for God, and talk deceitfully for Him? Will

you show partiality for Him? Will you contend for God? Will it be well when He searches you out? Or can you mock Him as one mocks a man?"

3. Job 21:7—Why do the wicked prosper? "Why do the wicked live and become old, yes, become mighty in power?"

VII. Job's True Character—"Oh, that my words were written! Oh, that they were inscribed in a book! That they were engraved on a rock With an iron pen and lead, forever! For I know that my Redeemer lives, and He shall stand at last on the earth; and after my skin is destroyed, this I know, that in my flesh I shall see God, whom I shall see for myself, and my eyes shall behold, and not another. How my heart yearns within me!" (Job 19:23-27).

VIII. Job's End Result—"And so it was, after the Lord had spoken these words to Job, that the Lord said to Eliphaz the Temanite, 'My wrath is aroused against you and your two friends, for you have not spoken of Me what is right, as My servant Job has. Now therefore, take for yourselves seven bulls and seven rams, go to My servant Job, and offer up for yourselves a burnt offering; and My servant Job shall pray for you. For I will accept him, lest I deal with you according to your folly; because you have not spoken of Me what is right, as My servant Job has.' . . . And the Lord restored Job's losses when he prayed for his friends. Indeed the Lord gave Job twice as much as he had before. . . . Now the Lord blessed the latter days of Job more than his beginning; for he had fourteen thousand sheep, six thousand camels, one thousand yoke of oxen, and one thousand female donkeys" (Job 42:7, 8, 10, 12).

# HEARING FROM GOD

Text:

So he departed from there, and found Elisha the son of Shaphat, who was plowing with twelve yoke of oxen before him, and he was with the twelfth. Then Elijah passed by him and threw his mantle on him. And he left the oxen and ran after Elijah, and said, "Please let me kiss my father and my mother, and then I will follow you." And he said to him, "Go back again, for what have I done to you?" So Elisha turned back from him, and took a yoke of oxen and slaughtered them and boiled their flesh, using the oxen's equipment, and gave it to the people, and they ate. Then he arose and followed Elijah, and became his servant (1 Kings 19:19-21).

- I. **Introduction**—The idea of hearing from God is a principal that many Christians have to learn these days. Society is saturated with a variety of voices. We are called to be mothers, fathers, brothers, sisters and co-workers. In all of these relationships, we are called to listen and hear their voices. If we want to listen, we must not only hear with our ears, but with our hearts. And, we must listen whether we want to hear what God has to say or not. We must remember it is not our will, but His, that must be done.
- II. Verses 1, 2 Elijah gets the word that the devil is after him.
  - A. Why is it we sometimes find it easier to hear what the devil is saying than what God is saying?
  - B. The mouth of Jezebel is a controlling spirit of intimidation.
- III. Verses 3, 4 say he needed to be alone.
  - A. Sometimes you have to get away from the noise of so many words.
  - B. Elijah prayed to die—depressed, overwhelmed and tired.
  - C. Satan's attack will come most likely at two different times in your life: When you are tired and just after a victory, when you let your guard down.
  - D. Look at Elijah's prayer in verse 4. He said, "I have had enough."
- IV. Verses 5-7—God gave him exactly what he needed: proper diet, rest and exercise.
- V. Verses 8, 9—God lovingly led him to a glorious wilderness experience.
  - A. He led him to Horeb, the mountain of God.
    1. The only thing special about Horeb is that there were no distractions.
    2. There must be a place where you can get alone with God.
  - B. When he got in the cave, the Bible says, "The Word came to him."

VI. Verse 10—"I alone am left" or rather, "I am left—I'm alone!"

A. It doesn't matter who you are when everybody's looking, it's who you are when no one is looking that counts.

B. Who are you when you are alone? That's the part of you God wants!

VII. Verses 11-13—Go out and stand on the mountain.

A. The wind, the earthquake and the fire are three profound displays that have portrayed God many times. What is the meaning of these displays? God revealed Himself many times in these forms, but this time, none of these held the answer to Elijah's problem. He needed a word from the Lord.

B. In the voice, God said, "I brought you here to teach you to play it by ear. I don't want you to lean on the wisdom of men. I don't want you to lean on your own understanding. I don't want you to have another experience. I want you to listen."

VIII. **Conclusion**—You know the touch of His hand, but do you know the sound of His voice? God wants you to play it by ear!

# HARPS AND BOWLS

Text:

Now when He had taken the scroll, the four living creatures and the twenty-four elders fell down before the Lamb, each having a harp, and golden bowls full of incense, which are the prayers of the saints. And they sang a new song, saying: "You are worthy to take the scroll, And to open its seals; For You were slain, And have redeemed us to God by Your blood Out of every tribe and tongue and people and nation, And have made us kings and priests to our God; And we shall reign on the earth" (Revelation 5:8-10).

- I. **Introduction**—Song and prayer has always gone hand-in-hand, but usually not together. I remember the first time I ever heard a person sing in the Spirit. It was not in a different language, it was in my own language. I will never forget as the whole church soaked in this song about the coming of the Lord, sung by a lady who had never sung a special. We were not even listening to her voice, but rather her spirit and her words. I have since learned that singing in the Spirit is simply about allowing your spirit to sing—regardless of your prayer language.
- II. "Now when He had taken the scroll, the four living creatures and the twenty-four elders fell down before the Lamb, each having a harp, and golden bowls full of incense, which are the prayers of the saints. And they sang a new song, saying: 'You are worthy to take the scroll, and to open its seals; for You were slain, and have redeemed us to God by Your blood out of every tribe and tongue and people and nation, and have made us kings and priests to our God; and we shall reign on the earth.'" (Revelation 5:8-10).
  - A. I want you to picture this scene (Revelation picture of elders casting crowns). There is a scroll in the right hand of God, the Father. No one is worthy to take it and open it. John begins to weep. But one of the elders got up off of his throne and said to him, do not weep, there is one who is worthy. Jesus steps up and takes the scroll.
  - B. Look again at these four living creatures and the 24 elders. Each has two things: a harp and a bowl. The harp is a symbol of praise and the bowl is a symbol of prayer.
  - C. Then a very unusual phrase in this scripture. It is so unusual, it seems impossible. It says, "They sang a new song." How is this possible? How can 24 different people sing a new song spontaneously? This is where we begin to understand the harps and bowls ministry to the Lord.
  - D. Most of our music is written, edited, rehearsed, arranged and performed. God loves that type of praise, but He is also looking for harps and bowls praise. Harps and bowls praise is a prayer that is sung to the Lord. It is a spontaneous tune that flows from the heart.
- III. "Speaking to one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing and making melody in your heart to the Lord, giving thanks always for all things to God the Father in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ" (Ephesians 5:19, 20).



- A. This verse tells us how to speak to each other, and also how to speak to God.
  - B. This verse implies that there are spiritual songs that come from making melody in our heart to the Lord—nothing rehearsed, nothing written—just a response to God.
- IV. "Praise the Lord with the harp; make melody to Him with an instrument of ten strings. Sing to Him a new song; play skillfully with a shout of joy" (Psalm 33:2, 3).
- A. God wants the melody of your heart.
  - B. "Harps and bowls" praise is not just about worship and praying. It is about singing your prayer to the Lord from your own heart. That is the new song He is talking about. The songs others have written, perfected and arranged are wonderful, but God wants something from your heart.

# THE LORD ON MY SIDE

Text:

"If it had not been the Lord who was on our side," Let Israel now say—"If it had not been the Lord who was on our side, When men rose up against us, Then they would have swallowed us alive, When their wrath was kindled against us; Then the waters would have overwhelmed us, The stream would have gone over our soul; Then the swollen waters Would have gone over our soul." Blessed be the Lord, Who has not given us as prey to their teeth. Our soul has escaped as a bird from the snare of the fowlers; The snare is broken, and we have escaped. Our help is in the name of the Lord, Who made heaven and earth (Psalm 124:1-8).

- I. **Introduction**—Israel sang songs to encourage themselves in the Lord. This is one of the songs of ascent, written by David. Songs of Ascent were sung on their way to the Temple to worship.
- II. "If it had not been the Lord who was on our side," let Israel now say—"If it had not been the Lord who was on our side, when men rose up against us," (vv. 1, 2).
  - A. Let's consider this statement for a moment. If it had not been for the Lord on your side, where would you be?
    1. The Bible is filled with people whom God turned over to themselves (their own lust).
    2. But God, who is on your side, will do more than help you. He will wrestle with you until the breaking of day. He will mold you and whip you into shape. If you let Him, He will build character in you and forge you with trials.
  - B. When men rose up against men . . .
    1. God will show you who your real enemy is.
    2. Story of the bird and the cow. Moral of the story is: Everybody who dumps on you is not your enemy. Everybody who digs you out of the dump is not your friend. And finally, when you are in the dumps, keep your mouth shut.
- III. ". . . then they would have swallowed us alive, when their wrath was kindled against us;" (v. 3).
  - A. They could be anyone from an employer to an enemy.
  - B. If they would have had their way . . . but God frustrated their plans.
- IV. "Then the waters would have overwhelmed us, the stream would have gone over our soul; then the swollen waters would have gone over our soul" (vv. 4, 5).
  - A. The metaphor here is water, but notice the details. It is a stream that keeps getting bigger until it gets out of control. The flood is not hurting my body or spirit, but rather my soul.
  - B. Little things can turn into big things. Bitterness can destroy your life. Unforgiveness can alter your future. Read Isaiah 43:1-6.

- V. "Blessed be the Lord, who has not given us as prey to their teeth" (v. 6).
- A. Can you still praise Him when your enemy is in hot pursuit?
  - B. "I would have lost heart, (fainted in KJV) unless I had believed that I would see the goodness of the Lord in the land of the living" (Psalm 27:13).
- VI. "Our soul has escaped as a bird from the snare of the fowlers; the snare is broken, and we have escaped" (v. 7).
- A. The *fowler* is one who traps and controls the bird. The snare is a small string that is hidden in the leaves. It is just barely large enough to go around the leg of the little bird.
  - B. My soul escaped because the snare was broken.
    - 1. These are soulish traps that have been set for my soul.
    - 2. My soul is my mind, will and emotions (this is the window to my life).
- VII. "Our help is in the name of the Lord, who made heaven and earth" (v. 8).
- A. There are over 800 names in the Bible ascribed to the person of Jesus. He is called: the True Vine, the Living Way, the Treasure, the Light, the Bread of Life, the Son of Mary, Son of David, Son of God, Plant of Renown, Wonderful, Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace, King of Kings, Lord of Lords, Alpha and Omega, First and the Last, Beginning and the End, Son of Righteousness rising with healing in His wings, Healer, High Tower, Buckler, Shield and on and on.
  - B. There are over 200 names ascribed to God the Father. You can start with Elohyim, which is the creative name of God. You can shorten this name to the word El, which means "God is."
    - 1. El-Shaddai—God is sufficient
    - 2. El-Elyon—God is the sustainer
    - 3. El-Olan—God is everlasting
  - C. Then there are His Jehovah names: Jehovah or Yahweh, means "self-sufficient" (in other words, He's God all by Himself).
    - 1. Jehovah Rolphi—God my healer
    - 2. Jehovah Shammah—God is there
    - 3. Jehovah Tsidkenu—God is my righteousness
    - 4. Jehovah Rohi—God is my shepherd
    - 5. Jehovah Nissi—God is my banner
    - 6. Jehovah Jireh—God sees and provides
  - D. There is *Adonia*, which means "Lord" or "owner of all things." If my help was in my name, I may fail, but my help is in Your name—the all-sufficient One—the all-seeing One, the all-knowing One, the all-powerful One.



# MEET ME IN THE MORNING

Text:

"Then Jacob was left alone; and a Man wrestled with him until the breaking of day. Now when He saw that He did not prevail against him, He touched the socket of his hip; and the socket of Jacob's hip was out of joint as He wrestled with him. And He said, 'Let Me go, for the day breaks.' But he said, 'I will not let You go unless You bless me!'" (Genesis 32:24-26).

- I. **Introduction**—A lot of people struggle with getting up early in the morning. You hear things like, "Oh, it's just too early," or "I can't concentrate when I first get up." However, when we look at different characters in the Bible and their devotion times with the Lord, it seems that they understood the principal of starting their day with God.
- II. "Now in the morning, having risen a long while before daylight, He went out and departed to a solitary place; and there He prayed" (Mark 1:35).
- III. "My voice You shall hear in the morning, O Lord; in the morning I will direct it to You, and I will look up" (Psalm 5:3).
  - A. What is so important about starting your day with God?
  - B. "Through the Lord's mercies we are not consumed, because His compassions fail not. They are new every morning; great is Your faithfulness" (Lamentations 3:22, 23).
- IV. **Inspection Time**—the sons of God presented themselves before God.
- V. "Then he dreamed, and behold, a ladder was set up on the earth, and its top reached to heaven; and there the angels of God were ascending and descending on it" (Genesis 28:12).
 

The vision was not meant to be literal, but it was an illustration.
- VI. "For He shall give His angels charge over you, to keep you in all your ways. In their hands they shall bear you up, lest you dash your foot against a stone. You shall tread upon the lion and the cobra, the young lion and the serpent you shall trample underfoot. 'Because he has set his love upon Me, therefore I will deliver him; I will set him on high, because he has known My name'" (Psalm 91:11-14).
  - A. Angels are not just going to come and help you because they feel sorry for you.
  - B. Ask Balaam—He would have been killed if his mule had not seen the angel and stopped. The angel was sent to guard that pass.
- VII. "Then Jesus sent the multitude away and went into the house. And His disciples came to Him, saying, 'Explain to us the parable of the tares of the field.' He answered and said to them: 'He who sows the good seed is the Son of Man. The field is the world, the good seeds are the sons of the kingdom, but the tares are the sons of the wicked one. The

enemy who sowed them is the devil, the harvest is the end of the age, and the reapers are the angels" (Matthew 13:36-39).

VIII. "But to which of the angels has He ever said: 'Sit at My right hand, till I make your enemies your footstool'? Are they not all ministering spirits sent forth to minister for those who will inherit salvation?" (Hebrews 1:13, 14).

IX. Three classifications of angels mentioned in the Bible

- A. Warring angels—the leader is Michael
- B. Word angels—the leader is Gabriel
- C. Worship angels—the leader was Lucifer
- D. According to Revelation, when Lucifer fell, one third of the angels fell with him. This was the choir of heaven. Maybe that is why Satan fights music ministry so hard.
  - 1. So God said, "Let us make man in our image." We are created to worship.
  - 2. When you begin to worship, you attract the other angels. It is the atmosphere of heaven. All of the angels worship, but they were not created just for worship, they have been created for other things.
  - 3. In 2 Chronicles 20, they put the choir in front of the army. When they began to worship, the angels came down and fought the battle.
  - 4. In Joshua 5:13-15, the commander of the Lord's army showed up at Jericho with a drawn sword. Joshua said, "How do we take the city of Jericho?" The angel said, "Take off your shoes, march around the walls and shout." If you will worship, we will fight.

# IS THIS WHY YOU BROUGHT US OUT?

Text:

"When your son asks you in time to come, saying, 'What is the meaning of the testimonies, the statutes, and the judgments which the Lord our God has commanded you?' then you shall say to your son: 'We were slaves of Pharaoh in Egypt, and the Lord brought us out of Egypt with a mighty hand; and the Lord showed signs and wonders before our eyes, great and severe, against Egypt, Pharaoh, and all his household. Then He brought us out from there, that He might bring us in, to give us the land of which He swore to our fathers (Deuteronomy 6:20-23).'

- I. **Introduction**—The journey of the children of Israel serves as an illustration of our own journey from salvation to victory. Egypt is an example of the world. The 10 plagues of Egypt are examples of the distress God allows sinners to get in so they will recognize their need for God. The Passover is a type of Calvary. The children of Israel leave with the wealth of Egypt to illustrate the true riches of God through salvation. The next part of their journey is interesting. God has an 18-month trip planned for them. This trip is designed to turn them into people of faith. It is during this time that God will give them miracles. He provides water from a rock, a pillar of cloud by day and a pillar of fire by night. He destroys their enemies at their feet. He gives them the law and a new civil government. He feeds them with miracle food every day.
  - A. There came a time when the children of Israel complained and wanted to return to Egypt. They wanted a life of slavery instead of freedom. (Describe the life of slavery in Egypt.)
  - B. There is only so much God will do to take us to victory. The rest we have to do for ourselves. There is a reason for this.
- II. "And I will send hornets before you, which shall drive out the Hivite, the Canaanite, and the Hittite from before you. I will not drive them out from before you in one year, lest the land become desolate and the beast of the field become too numerous for you. Little by little I will drive them out from before you, until you have increased, and you inherit the land" (Exodus 23:28-30). The Children of Israel were experiencing a time of spiritual plateau. Miracles had become an everyday occurrence and were no longer a big deal.
- III. "Now the mixed multitude who were among them yielded to intense craving; so the children of Israel also wept again and said: 'Who will give us meat to eat? We remember the fish which we ate freely in Egypt, the cucumbers, the melons, the leeks, the onions, and the garlic; but now our whole being is dried up; there is nothing at all except this manna before our eyes!'" (Numbers 11:4).
  - A. In the spiritual illustration given here, they are being enticed back into the world by old friends (mixed multitude), old cravings and old memories.
  - B. All they see in their new life is manna (Bread of Life). The name *manna* means, "what is it?" This represents the person who gets saved and goes to a church, but is only told to read the Bible.

- C. For a new convert, a Bible is not enough.
  - D. New Christians need to have fun and fellowship. Why do people think they need a prayer meeting or a Bible Study every time they get together? Sometimes you need fellowship, fun and friendship.
- IV. "Then I will come down and talk with you there. I will take of the Spirit that is upon you and will put the same upon them; and they shall bear the burden of the people with you, that you may not bear it yourself alone" (Numbers 11:17).
- A. God gives the leadership a moving of the Spirit to be able to help the people.
  - B. If you are being pulled back, you need to reach out to the people God has anointed to help you. It's not just prayer that you need.
  - C. It is the responsibility of the mature in the Lord to help new Christians. We cannot get so stuck in our comfort zone that we forget to raise the children the Lord has given us.
  - D. Story of the new convert who asked the deacon, "When do we get to do the stuff?" "What stuff?" the deacon asked. "The stuff I read in this Book; the stuff in Acts. Now that's exciting."
- V. "Now a wind went out from the Lord, and it brought quail from the sea and left them fluttering near the camp, about a day's journey on this side and about a day's journey on the other side, all around the camp, and about two cubits above the surface of the ground. And the people stayed up all that day, all night, and all the next day, and gathered the quail (he who gathered least gathered ten homers); and they spread them out for themselves all around the camp" (Numbers 11:31, 32). God gives us tastes of victory to make us want more.
- VI. "When your son asks you in time to come, saying, 'What is the meaning of the testimonies, the statutes, and the judgments which the Lord our God has commanded you?' then you shall say to your son: 'We were slaves of Pharaoh in Egypt, and the Lord brought us out of Egypt with a mighty hand; and the Lord showed signs and wonders before our eyes, great and severe, against Egypt, Pharaoh, and all his household. Then He brought us out from there, that He might bring us in, to give us the land of which He swore to our fathers'" (Deuteronomy 6:20-23).
- A. There is a reason God brought you out. He brought you out to bring you in.
  - B. God did not go to the trouble of bringing you out so you could get bored.
  - C. God wants you to live in victory; He wants you to live in freedom.
- VII. **Conclusion**—When you get to victory, the world holds nothing for you any longer.



# THE LESSER LIGHT WILL RULE THE NIGHT

Text:

Then God said, "Let there be lights in the firmament of the heavens to divide the day from the night; and let them be for signs and seasons, and for days and years; and let them be for lights in the firmament of the heavens to give light on the earth"; and it was so. Then God made two great lights: the greater light to rule the day, and the lesser light to rule the night. He made the stars also. God set them in the firmament of the heavens to give light on the earth, and to rule over the day and over the night, and to divide the light from the darkness. And God saw that it was good. So the evening and the morning were the fourth day (Genesis 1:14-19).

In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth. The earth was without form, and void; and darkness was on the face of the deep. And the Spirit of God was hovering over the face of the waters. Then God said, "Let there be light"; and there was light. And God saw the light, that it was good; and God divided the light from the darkness. God called the light Day, and the darkness He called Night. So the evening and the morning were the first day. (Genesis 1:1-5).

- I. **Introduction**—It seems as though something is backward here. He made the moon and the sun on the fourth day, yet there is light on the first day.
  - A. The light on the first three days is not coming from the sun or the moon—it is coming from the "command of God."
  - B. God doesn't need a sun or a moon to make light. He can speak it into existence. He can just speak and create anything He wants.
  - C. Have you ever walked in a blessing that made no sense? Not enough money, but bills paid anyway? Ridiculous blessing?
  - D. Sometimes God chooses to do things that way so you will know that your resource is not from what you can see, but from God. It's not from the sun or moon, but just God.
- II. **Fourth Day.** In God's prophetic time table, the 4th day or 4,000th year is when Jesus came to the world as the Savior.
  - A. That's why Jesus called himself the Light of the World to rule the day. That is why he said that we are "Children of the Day" and "Children of the Light."
  - B. Look over in John 8:12: "Then Jesus spoke to them again, saying, 'I am the light of the world. He who follows Me shall not walk in darkness, but have the light of life.'"
- III. The Book of Genesis says there are two lights—one rules the day and the other rules the night (Genesis 1:3-5).



- A. "You are the light of the world. A city that is set on a hill cannot be hidden. Nor do they light a lamp and put it under a basket, but on a lampstand, and it gives light to all who are in the house" (Matthew 5:14, 15).
- B. In this spiritual analogy, Jesus is the Light of the day and the church is the light that shines into darkness. We are the lesser light. Two great lights—one greater, one lesser.
- C. Illustration—Using a mirror, reflect the light of the spotlight onto the audience. Dim the lights in the building and only use one spotlight on the stage.
  - 1. In actuality, the moon is not even a light. It looks like a light, but it is only reflecting the light of the sun.
  - 2. If anything gets between you and the sun, you cannot give your light.
  - 3. You may act out ministry, but true ministry is reflecting the light of Jesus Christ to a lost and dying world.

#### IV. The lesser light will rule the night.

- A. The first thing you need to know about the moon as a type of the church is that it moves in cycles. When it's your cycle, no devil can stop you from shining. How do you know you are coming into your season? Everything starts to spin. And you know, if this would have happened to me a year ago, I wouldn't have been ready, but now . . . forgive me if I don't seem myself lately, but I am coming into something I have never been in before.
- B. The next thing you need to know is that we have been assigned to work the night shift.
  - 1. We are at our best when it's the darkest hour.
  - 2. Maybe that's why you work by that sinner everyday.
  - 3. It's the midnight shift that hears the announcement, "Behold the Bridegroom cometh."
- C. "Upon this rock, I will build my church; and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it" (Matthew 16:18, KJV).
  - 1. The moon is the cleansing agent of the earth. It is the pull of the moon that creates the turn of the tides. We are suppose to be upsetting darkness.
  - 2. The church of our Lord was not established so we could build beautiful buildings, sing pretty songs and get into a holy huddle once a week while the world goes to hell. We are working the night shift.
  - 3. We do our best work in the dark. Satan would have . . . but the church was praying. Peter would have stayed in jail, but the church was praying.
- D. Next, he said the moon will divide the light from the darkness.
  - 1. We do not walk in our authority. We are mere reflections. We walk in the authority of Christ.
  - 2. Satan does his best work in the dark, until the night watchman shows up.
- E. Let's not forget what He said, "The lesser light will rule the night."
  - 1. God is raising up people out of nowhere. You don't have to be well-bred to rule. You don't have to come from a prominent family to rule. Only lesser lights will rule anyway.
  - 2. "Lesser light" speaks of humility and servant attitudes.
  - 3. As we go up, our challenge is to stay down. The minute you start thinking you are

the light, your light goes out. We are reflections of the True Light.

4. Those voted "Most Likely to Succeed" in the Kingdom are not the ones God usually exhorts.
    - a. God says, "It's not the older brother but the younger one."
    - b. It's the stone the builders rejected that has become the Chief Cornerstone.
    - c. There's nothing more nauseating than false humility!
      - (1) When you think it should have been you
      - (2) Self-righteousness and pride
  - F. As long as you know it really wasn't your slingshot that brought down the giant. It really wasn't your jawbone that slew your enemy.
- V. **Conclusion**—John 1:1-9
- People get so jealous at what others are doing in the Kingdom that they forget we are all on the same team.

# L

# IFESTYLE EVANGELISM

Text:

When the Day of Pentecost had fully come, they were all with one accord in one place. And suddenly there came a sound from heaven, as of a rushing mighty wind, and it filled the whole house where they were sitting. Then there appeared to them divided tongues, as of fire, and one sat upon each of them. And they were all filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak with other tongues, as the Spirit gave them utterance (Acts 2:1-4).

## I. Introduction

- II. "When the Day of Pentecost had fully come, they were all with one accord in one place. And suddenly there came a sound from heaven, as of a rushing mighty wind, and it filled the whole house where they were sitting. Then there appeared to them divided tongues, as of fire, and one sat upon each of them. And they were all filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak with other tongues, as the Spirit gave them utterance" (vv. 1-4).
- III. "And when this sound occurred, the multitude came together, and were confused, because everyone heard them speak in his own language" (v. 6).
- IV. "And it shall come to pass in the last days, says God, that I will pour out of My Spirit on all flesh; your sons and your daughters shall prophesy, your young men shall see visions, your old men shall dream dreams. And on My menservants and on My maidservants I will pour out My Spirit in those days; and they shall prophesy" (vv. 17, 18).
- V. "Then Peter said to them, 'Repent, and let every one of you be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins; and you shall receive the gift of the Holy Spirit. For the promise is to you and to your children, and to all who are afar off, as many as the Lord our God will call'" (vv. 38, 39).
- VI. And they continued steadfastly in the apostles' doctrine and fellowship, in the breaking of bread, and in prayers (v. 42)
  - A. Every home became a sanctuary. "Then fear came upon every soul, and many wonders and signs were done through the apostles" (v. 43).
    1. "And when they had prayed, the place where they were assembled together was shaken; and they were all filled with the Holy Spirit, and they spoke the word of God with boldness" (v. 31).
    2. Illustration—Underground churches in China are experiencing this same phenomenon.
  - B. "Now all who believed were together, and had all things in common, and sold their possessions and goods, and divided them among all, as anyone had need" (vv. 44, 45). Benevolence was not a program—it was a lifestyle.
  - C. "So continuing daily with one accord in the temple, and breaking bread from house to house, they ate their food with gladness and simplicity of heart, praising God and having favor with all the people. And the Lord added to the church daily those who were being saved" (vv. 46, 47).

# L

# IVING IN A LONELY HOUSE

Text:

Nothing is better for a man than that he should eat and drink, and that his soul should enjoy good in his labor. This also, I saw, was from the hand of God. For who can eat, or who can have enjoyment, more than I? For God gives wisdom and knowledge and joy to a man who is good in His sight; but to the sinner He gives the work of gathering and collecting, that he may give to him who is good before God. This also is vanity and grasping for the wind (Ecclesiastes 2:24-26).

- I. **Introduction**—Loneliness is one of the most painful issues in life. You can literally be in a crowd of people and still be alone. Loneliness is not determined by the number of people you are around. It is determined by how fulfilled you are as an individual. The emotion of loneliness says that “No one understands,” or even worse, “No one cares.” God has created us as social creatures who need each other. We cannot be happy unless this basic need is met. There are five basic needs that a lonely person is trying to fill.
  - A. Explain how Ecclesiastes came into existence. The author finds only five things that can make a person happy. Today these five things will become our foundation.
  - B. Select readings from chapters 1—2.
    1. Position
      - a. Position tells us who we are. It identifies us with a particular group. It ensures safety and acceptance. People will go to the extremes to be accepted.
      - b. Ecclesiastes 2:24
      - c. We have a basic need to belong (clubs, groups, associations with hobbies, etc.).
    2. Purpose
      - a. In order for you to be secure, you not only need to know who you are, you need to know where you are going. An unsettled future will only lead to depression and fear. Worry is the fear of future events.
      - b. Many people are lonely because they have encountered a crisis of purpose (Ecclesiastes 1:2, 3).
      - c. Finding your place in the kingdom of God (Ministry Gifts Test). To everything there is a season and a purpose (Ecclesiastes 3:1-8). There is not one purpose, there are many purposes in life according to the season you are in.
    3. Pleasure
      - a. Proverbs 17:22
      - b. Ecclesiastes 8:15
    4. People
      - a. Ecclesiastes 4:8-10, 12
      - b. Proverbs on friendship.
        - (1) Proverbs 17:17
        - (2) Proverbs 18:24
    5. Partnership
      - a. Genesis 2:18
      - b. Ecclesiastes 9:9
- II. **Conclusion**—Start living today! Ecclesiastes 9:10-12 is a good start.



# HE BROUGHT ME THROUGH

Text:

Likewise the Spirit also helps in our weaknesses. For we do not know what we should pray for as we ought, but the Spirit Himself makes intercession for us with groanings which cannot be uttered. Now He who searches the hearts knows what the mind of the Spirit is, because He makes intercession for the saints according to the will of God. And we know that all things work together for good to those who love God, to those who are the called according to His purpose. For whom He foreknew, He also predestined to be conformed to the image of His Son, that He might be the firstborn among many brethren. Moreover whom He predestined, these He also called; whom He called, these He also justified; and whom He justified, these He also glorified (Romans 8:26-30).

- I. **Introduction**—What do you do after you pray and things get worse instead of better? What happens when instead of God taking you out of tough situations, He requires you to go through them. One promise is for sure: the road will not always be easy, but God will be with you all along the way.
- II. “Likewise the Spirit also helps in our weaknesses. For we do not know what we should pray for as we ought, but the Spirit Himself makes intercession for us with groanings which cannot be uttered” (v. 26).
  - A. The Spirit helps in our weaknesses. We know how we should pray until we get in it.
  - B. Do you know the difference between praying in the Spirit and letting the Spirit pray?
- III. “Now He who searches the hearts knows what the mind of the Spirit is, because He makes intercession for the saints according to the will of God” (v. 27).
  - A. The He in this verse is Jesus. This means that even in your mess, when you are doing the wrong things and saying the wrong things and you think you are about to lose your mind, God still knows the true intent of your heart.
  - B. Even when you don’t know how to pray, Jesus is interceding to the Spirit of God who is interceding on your behalf.
- IV. “And we know that all things work together for good to those who love God, to those who are the called according to His purpose” (v. 28).
  - A. All things
  - B. Work together (like a puzzle coming together—it makes no sense until it is finished).
  - C. The Called
  - D. His purpose; not my purpose, but His purpose.



- E. Yours is the Kingdom, the power and the glory.
- V. "For whom He foreknew, He also predestined to be conformed to the image of His Son, that He might be the firstborn among many brethren. Moreover whom He predestined, these He also called; whom He called, these He also justified; and whom He justified, these He also glorified" (vv. 29, 30).
- A. Consider the phrase *conformed to the image of His Son*.
1. *Conformed* means to "adapt in order to bring into harmony or agreement."
  2. If I am being conformed, I am becoming like something else. In this case, like someone else.
- B. He called, He justified, He glorified. This is a process to glorification.
1. The calling
  2. The justification
  3. The glorification
- VI. "What then shall we say to these things? If God is for us, who can be against us? He who did not spare His own Son, but delivered Him up for us all, how shall He not with Him also freely give us all things? Who shall bring a charge against God's elect? It is God who justifies" (31-33).
- A. What things? The things we must endure to be conformed to the image of Christ. The things we go through in our glorification process. The things that cause others to bring charges against the elect of God.
- B. What is happening to you is secondary to what is happening in you.
- C. What do we say to these things? He answers the question for us. The answer is, "If God is for us, who can be against us?" (v. 31).
- D. He did not spare, but He did glorify. Spare means to get out of it. Sometimes He wants you to go through it—not so it can destroy you, but so it can conform you.
- VII. "Who is he who condemns? It is Christ who died, and furthermore is also risen, who is even at the right hand of God, who also makes intercession for us. Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? Shall tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or peril, or sword? As it is written: 'For Your sake we are killed all day long; we are accounted as sheep for the slaughter'" (vv. 34-36).
- A. How are you going to answer the question, "Who shall separate us from the love of Christ?"
- B. Loosed in the fire. He could have saved three Hebrew boys, but instead He loosed me in the fire. As a matter of fact, He used the fire to set me free.
- VIII. "Yet in all these things we are more than conquerors through Him who loved us" (v. 37).
- A. We get focused on the word *conqueror* when we quote this verse. A conqueror just means we survive it and won. That's wonderful, but that is not what He is saying.

- B. In all "these things," we are more!
- C. God is using these things to make me more than I used to be. The process to my glorification is that through my trials, I am becoming better; I am becoming more.
- D. What did you need more of before your process started?
- IX. "For I am persuaded that neither death nor life, nor angels nor principalities nor powers, nor things present nor things to come, nor height nor depth, nor any other created thing, shall be able to separate us from the love of God which is in Christ Jesus our Lord" (vv. 38, 39).
- X. **Conclusion**—I am persuaded. I have changed my mind; I am now convinced (persuaded) that neither death nor life . . . I used to go through hard times and feel that maybe God didn't love me anymore, but I've changed my mind. I now believe that it is during the hard times that He loves me the most.

# SNAKES IN THE FIRE

Text:

Now when they had escaped, they then found out that the island was called Malta. And the natives showed us unusual kindness; for they kindled a fire and made us all welcome, because of the rain that was falling and because of the cold. But when Paul had gathered a bundle of sticks and laid them on the fire, a viper came out because of the heat, and fastened on his hand. So when the natives saw the creature hanging from his hand, they said to one another, "No doubt this man is a murderer, whom, though he has escaped the sea, yet justice does not allow to live." But he shook off the creature into the fire and suffered no harm. However, they were expecting that he would swell up or suddenly fall down dead. But after they had looked for a long time and saw no harm come to him, they changed their minds and said that he was a god (Acts 28:1-6).

- I. **Introduction**—One of the strategies in warfare is to take out the officers. This is primarily how the colonists defeated the British army in the early 1700s when we became a nation.
  - A. There is a level of fire that Satan can hide in. He has been to church more times than some people. But when the level of the fire increases, it flushes out hidden things. Satan is not disturbed by the mediocre church of today. Our routines are no threat to the world. But the moment we break out of "normal church" and start doing "supernatural church," hell is shaken to the core. When the church starts having prayer meetings, when the level of praise increases, when people start evangelizing, and when the altar fills up with hungry souls . . . that is not business as usual.
  - B. The Spirit of Michal (*me-kawf*) is the spirit of intimidation. She was the wife of David and the daughter of Saul. Her voice was there to silence the celebration of praise in the streets of Jerusalem. The spirit of Michal wants to intimidate worshipers.
    1. 2 Samuel 6:14-16, 20-22
    2. But just like Paul, David shook it off into the fire.
  - C. The Spirit of Jezebel is the spirit of control. An interesting fact is that even though Jezebel is an Old Testament character in the Books of the Kings, she also appears on the pages of John's Revelation in the letter to the churches.
    1. Revelation 2:18, 20
    2. How does she operate? In the Old Testament, you will see three prominent features of Jezebel.
      - a. She is always trying to gain control through the men who are already in control.
      - b. She goes after leadership.
      - c. She uses seduction tactics.
      - d. She uses other people to send her messages.
      - e. She hides behind people who will take her words to others, otherwise it will blow her cover.
    3. Jezebel sent Elijah a word that drove him into the wilderness.

- D. The Spirit of Herodias is the spirit of murder.
1. Mark 6:17-20, 25
  2. This spirit is after the head because it knows that if the head is removed, the body will die.
  3. In Mark 6: 21, 22, 26, she used the law, nobles and things written to get what she wanted.
  4. Herodias did all of this because she was offended at the truth.
  5. With one swipe of the blade, the prophet's voice was silenced.

**II. Conclusion—Shaking it off**

- A. 2 Timothy 1:7-9
- B. Romans 8:36-39
- C. 1 John 4:3, 4
- D. Matthew 5:11-16

# THE POWER OF COVENANT PRAYER

Text:

And you, being dead in your trespasses and the uncircumcision of your flesh, He has made alive together with Him, having forgiven you all trespasses, having wiped out the handwriting of requirements that was against us, which was contrary to us. And He has taken it out of the way, having nailed it to the cross. Having disarmed principalities and powers, He made a public spectacle of them, triumphing over them in it (Colossians 2:13-15).

## I. Introduction

- A. We have the legal right to triumph over Satan, our adversary. Christ's death is the lawful platform upon which the church rises to do spiritual warfare.
- B. The Power of a Covenant
  - 1. Covenant was made by the shedding of blood.
  - 2. God first made a covenant with man when Adam sinned. God killed the first animal, but He promised Adam that day that the seed of woman would bruise the head of the serpent.
  - 3. God made a covenant with Noah. Noah killed one of every kind of clean animal on the earth. When he came out of the ark, he sacrificed them to God (Genesis 8:20).
  - 4. God made a covenant with Abraham by choosing five animals. Walking in the middle of the blood, He promised Abraham that He would bless his seed forever.
  - 5. As a part of the blood covenant, Abraham was to cut the foreskin of every male. This was a blood covenant so that every man could enter into covenant with God.
  - 6. God cut covenant with Moses and Israel through the killing of the first lamb the night He took them out of Egypt. We call it the Passover.
  - 7. He established His covenant of blood through the Levites in the offering of the sacrifices. Each time the sacrifice was offered, the blood was sprinkled on the altar.

## II. Hebrews 9:16-26

- A. The shedding of blood continued until the time of Christ. It was the blood of Jesus that paid for man's repentance. Why His blood?
  - 1. Mankind had been separated from God by sin. Man could not approach God except through a high priest.
  - 2. But now, through the blood of Jesus, man can approach God and be saved.
  - 3. The veil was rent in two at the death of Christ, making it possible for every man to approach God for himself.
- B. All of this guarantees that we are saved, but that is still not covenant prayer.
- C. *Covenant* means that two are now one. Marriage is not an agreement; it is a covenant. The act of love with a virgin broke a veil and caused blood to flow. That blood was the covenant that two have now become one flesh.



- D. Jesus has saved us, but He wants to walk in covenant with us through the power of the Holy Spirit.

### III. John 16:13-15

- A. *Covenant prayer* is not just when we ask God to agree with us, but when we, through His Holy Spirit, come into agreement with Him.
- B. "Likewise the Spirit also helps in our weaknesses. For we do not know what we should pray for as we ought, but the Spirit Himself makes intercession for us with groanings which cannot be uttered. Now He who searches the hearts knows what the mind of the Spirit is, because He makes intercession for the saints according to the will of God" (Romans 8:26, 27).

# S

# EEKING THE FACE OF GOD

Text:

Seek the Lord and His strength; seek His face evermore! (1 Chronicles 16:11).

## I. Introduction

### II. One of God's dilemmas is trying to help man understand Him.

- A. He has given us the Creation, but we still can't comprehend how He made something out of nothing.
- B. He made us in His own image, but we still argue over theological idiosyncrasies.
- C. He gave us ministers, teachers and gifted us with spiritual gifts.
- D. He gave us sunsets and sunrises, mountain peaks and other phenomenons of beauty.
- E. So how does God introduce Himself to us?
- F. He sent His only begotten Son, the Holy Ghost and 66 volumes of writings. Yet with all of that, at the first sign of a bad day, we will say, "Where is God? How do we really know He exists? Does He care about me?"
- G. God's design is for us to seek Him.

### III. God likes to be sought after.

- A. "Seek the Lord while He may be found, call upon Him while He is near" (Isaiah 55:6).
- B. "And He has made from one blood every nation of men to dwell on all the face of the earth, and has determined their preappointed times and the boundaries of their dwellings, so that they should seek the Lord, in the hope that they might grope for Him and find Him, though He is not far from each one of us; for in Him we live and move and have our being" (Acts 17:26-28).

### IV. God rejected Saul as King of Israel because he sought the position of God more than the presence of God.

- A. God is not promoting people who are self promoters. God is not your butler or your maid. God said, I am going to wait until you understand that I am not here to serve you; you are here to serve Me.
- B. We live in a world where the people only seek God when they are in need. They seek the blessing more than the blessing. They seek gifts more than the giver. They seek His hand, but not His face.

- C. God rejected Saul because Saul sought position over God's presence. But while Samuel lay around in depression, crying over God's rejection of Saul, God went on a manhunt. God has everything and can create anything, but the only thing He ever looks for is a worshiper.
- V. When God finds one who is seeking Him, He promotes him or her.
- A. David wrote about it in the 27th Psalm.
 

"One thing I have desired of the Lord, that will I seek: That I may dwell in the house of the Lord all the days of my life, to behold the beauty of the Lord, and to inquire in His temple. For in the time of trouble He shall hide me in His pavilion; in the secret place of His tabernacle He shall hide me; He shall set me high upon a rock. Hear, O Lord, when I cry with my voice! Have mercy also upon me, and answer me. When You said, 'Seek My face,' my heart said to You, 'Your face, Lord, I will seek.'"
  - B. God told Samuel to anoint the one who would sing these songs of worship; to find the one who wanted God, not just His gifts. David's brothers didn't like him and his father didn't believe in him.
  - C. Could it be that we don't seek Him because we have gotten used to Him. It is like a married couple who has been together so long they are used to the things that once impressed them. Now they just like those things they used to be in love with. We are . . .
    1. So used to Him that we decide whether or not we feel up to worshipping Him
    2. So used to Him that we have to hire people to lead us into His presence.
    3. So used to Him that when He moves we view it as a form of entertainment.
    4. So used to chill bumps on our spine, to songs that once moved us to tears, to anthems that declare His glory, to sermons that reveal His character, to the anointing falling, the glory coming down and the shekinah filling the room.
- VI. One of the problems of this generation is we think we know God. God—by whom all things exist. God—who spoke into nothing and created all things.
- A. We know church. We know Greek and Hebrew, but we don't know God.
    1. Moses confessed, "I want to know you."
    2. Paul confessed, "Oh that I may know Him."
    3. Your children are still shocking you; you are trying to figure them out, and yet you think you know God.
  - B. Job thought He knew God until God said, "Brace yourself like a man and answer Me." (Job 38:3).
  - C. Solomon, the wisest man who ever lived, said, "But will God indeed dwell with men on the earth? Behold, heaven and the heavens cannot contain You. How much less this temple which I have built! Yet regard the prayer of Your servant and his supplication, O Lord my God, and listen to the cry and the prayer which Your servant is praying before You" (2 Chronicles 6:18, 19).

# THE POWER OF A PRAYER PARTNER

Text:

"Again I say to you that if two of you agree on earth concerning anything that they ask, it will be done for them by My Father in heaven. For where two or three are gathered together in My name, I am there in the midst of them (Matthew 18:19, 20).

## I. Introduction

## II. The Principle of "Two by Two"

- A. Ecclesiastes 4:9, 10, 12—Two are better than one.
- B. Mark 6:7 and Luke 10:1
- C. The power of two: One mule can pull, but two mules are even stronger.

## III. Covenant Relationships

Webster defines the word *covenant* as "a binding agreement between two or more individuals to fulfill a certain promise."

- A. Covenant relationship gives responsibility and accountability to each party.
- B. The relationship between God and Abraham was a covenant relationship. The promise was that Abraham would walk by faith, and God would give the land he walked on to his descendants forever.
- C. David and Jonathan entered into a covenant relationship. They swore to be brothers and to protect each others' lives.

## IV. Ministry Teams

- A. Paul and Silas prayed and sang at midnight (Acts 16:25).
- B. Ministry Teams
  - 1. Elijah and Elisha
  - 2. Moses and Aaron
  - 3. Charles Finney and Daniel Nash
- C. What is a team?
  - 1. It is not a group of equals, but it is a group of essentials.
  - 2. Every person on the team has a different function, but together they become a winning component.
- D. Dr. Cecil Knight, speaking to a group of younger ministers I was in, advised that before we get too involved in ministry to ask God for a friend—a confidant that we could pour

our hearts out to, without fear of repercussion.

- E. Some of the greatest ministers who ever lived give credit for their development to a mentor or spiritual parent. We need more fathers and mothers in the Lord.
- V. "Confess your trespasses to one another, and pray for one another, that you may be healed. The effective, fervent prayer of a righteous man avails much" (James 5:16).



# THE SPIRIT OF OFFENSE

Text:

Princes have persecuted me without a cause: but my heart standeth in awe of thy word. I rejoice at thy word, as one that findeth great spoil. I hate and abhor lying: but thy law do I love. Seven times a day do I praise thee because of thy righteous judgments. Great peace have they which love thy law: and nothing shall offend them (Psalm 119:161-165, KJV).

- I. **Introduction**—Everywhere I go, church people have been offended by other church people. When you examine this text closely, you will find out that even though the psalmist is a worshiper and is in the Word, those are not the things that keep him from being offended. There is a Law. I love thy Law. Nothing shall offend them. There is one law that keeps me from being offended. There are many words that come from or have within them as a root word, *torah*, which refers to the Law God gave to Moses. *Towrah* (to-row') is from the word *torah*, "a precept or statute."
- II. The Spirit of Offense
  - A. Offense is like a cancer; it dies if you stop feeding it. If you stop fueling it with your thoughts, your emotions or your words, it will die. We fuel it every time we tell the story. If we do not get rid of offenses, they will cause us to become an easily offended person. After a while, we will carry around a root of bitterness in us. "Looking diligently lest anyone fall short of the grace of God; lest any root of bitterness springing up cause trouble, and by this many become defiled . . ." (Hebrews 12:15).
  - B. There are some very talented people in the body of Christ who can't be used because they are filled with such hurt. Every where you put them, they cause problems. They are hurt and they continue to hurt others out of their pain. They judge, they complain, they argue, they talk in back rooms—all because they are still hurt over something somebody said.
  - C. Two Hebrew words that have been translated into the word *offense* are
    1. *skandalon*—the stick that dangles the bait in a trap and
    2. *proskomma*—to stumble or fall over.
  - D. A stern warning to those causing the offense: "Then He said to the disciples, 'It is impossible that no offenses should come, but woe to him through whom they do come! It would be better for him if a millstone were hung around his neck, and he were thrown into the sea, than that he should offend one of these little ones. Take heed to yourselves. If your brother sins against you, rebuke him; and if he repents, forgive him. And if he sins against you seven times in a day, and seven times in a day returns to you, saying, 'I repent,' you shall forgive him'" (Luke 17:1-4).
  - E. "I myself always strive to have a conscience without offense toward God and men" (Acts 24:16).
  - F. 2 Corinthians 6:3-10

1. *This is what they endured.* "We give no offense in anything, that our ministry may not be blamed. But in all things we commend ourselves as ministers of God: in much patience, in tribulations, in needs, in distresses, in stripes, in imprisonments, in tumults, in labors, in sleeplessness, in fastings; (vv. 3-5).
2. *This is how they endured it.* ". . . by purity, by knowledge, by longsuffering, by kindness, by the Holy Spirit, by sincere love, by the word of truth, by the power of God, by the armor of righteousness on the right hand and on the left, by honor and dishonor, by evil report and good report;" (vv. 6-8).
3. *This is how they were perceived by world and by heaven.* ". . . as deceivers, and yet true; as unknown, and yet well known; as dying, and behold we live; as chastened, and yet not killed; as sorrowful, yet always rejoicing; as poor, yet making many rich; as having nothing, and yet possessing all things" (vv. 8-10).

### III. There is a law that keeps all things from offending you.

- A. There is a law that lifts you above offense. We get offended at the unrighteous because of our righteousness. What is the secret to Psalm 119:165? What is the law he is referring to?
- B. We try to get rid of the tares ("weeds of grainfields"), but God said to let them alone and leave them in the field. Mature Christians are not easily offended by tares. Sometimes God uses even these unrighteous people to give you the opportunity to shine.
  1. Maybe it's the old Law—"But Israel, pursuing the law of righteousness, has not attained to the law of righteousness" (Romans 9:31).
  2. The Law of Life in Christ Jesus (Law of the Spirit of Life in Christ Jesus). But even though I found Him, it doesn't lift me above offense. There are a lot of saved folks who are offended and carry wounds in their spirits. Saved, yes, but in pain. Saved, but still trapped in a prison of hopelessness. Saved, but still imprisoned by the lack in their emotions. "For the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus has made me free from the law of sin and death" (Romans 8: 2).
  3. The Perfect Law of Liberty—"But he who looks into the perfect law of liberty and continues in it, and is not a forgetful hearer but a doer of the work, this one will be blessed in what he does" (James 1:25). We are all free and anything goes . . .
  4. The Great Commandment—"Teacher, which is the great commandment in the law?' Jesus said to him, 'You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your mind.' This is the first and great commandment. And the second is like it: 'You shall love your neighbor as yourself.' On these two commandments hang all the Law and the Prophets'" (Matthew 22:36-39).
  5. "Great peace have they which love thy law: and nothing shall offend them" (Psalm 119:165).

# REBUILDING THE ALTARS

Text:

If My people who are called by My name will humble themselves, and pray and seek My face, and turn from their wicked ways, then I will hear from heaven, and will forgive their sin and heal their land (2 Chronicles 7:14).

- I. **Introduction**—Over the past 50 years, America has seen a drastic change. We have transitioned from a nation based on faith and the Word of God, to a nation that seeks the momentary satisfaction of whatever truth makes sense for that societal trend. Because it is our responsibility to return to our godly heritage, we must uphold the truths of the Christian faith in the face of an ever-changing society. We must rebuild the altars of Christ!
- II. The America I grew up in, we had . . .
  - A. Prayer in School . . . everyday.  
Prayer before meals . . . at school . . . everyday.  
Prayer before meals, even with the unsaved.  
All-night prayer meetings.
  - B. Listen to the voice of our forefathers . . .
    1. In 1643, the colonies of Massachusetts, New Plymouth, Connecticut and New Haven were founded and declared, "We all came into these parts of America with the same end and aim, namely, to advance the kingdom of our Lord Jesus Christ . . . and for preserving and propagating the truth and liberties of the gospel."
    2. In 1639, Connecticut formed their own constitution which stated, "The scriptures hold forth a perfect rule for the direction and government of all men in all duties . . ."
    3. The first court system, known as the General Court, ordered, "God's Word should be the only rule for ordering the affairs of government in the commonwealth."
    4. The Legislature of Pennsylvania declared in 1682, "The purpose of the government was to establish laws to preserve true Christian and civil liberties . . ."
    5. As the War of Independence approached, the Continental Congress was established in 1774. The first act of the first session was to open with a prayer meeting at 9 a.m. at Carpenter's Hall on September 6, 1774.
    6. At the outbreak of the Revolution the same congress approved the importation and distribution of 20,000 copies of the Bible.
    7. President George Washington declared a day of public thanksgiving and prayer. On October 3, 1789 he stated, "It is the duty of all nations to acknowledge the providence of Almighty God, to obey His will, to be grateful for His benefits, and humbly to implore His protection and favor."

8. President Thomas Jefferson wrote a book titled, *The Life and Morals of Jesus of Nazareth*. The 57th Congress ordered 9,000 copies of this book for use of the Congress.
9. President Abraham Lincoln said, "We are under God and all men are created equal and deserve to be free."

III. But the America of today . . .

- A. Has taken prayer out of our public schools.
- B. Has taken the Ten Commandments out of our judicial halls.
- C. Has taken the name of Jesus out of all politically correct speeches.
- D. Has taken the Creation story out of our science books and replaced it with a theory that was denounced by it's own author.
- E. Has moral and social deterioration—our families are fragmented; our churches are liberal; our streets are filled with crime; our politics are dirty and our children do not know or fear the Lord.

IV. But is that the end of the commentary? No—in the midst of the chaos, a hope comes shining through.

- A. "If My people who are called by My name will humble themselves, and pray and seek My face, and turn from their wicked ways, then I will hear from heaven, and will forgive their sin and heal their land" (2 Chronicles 7:14).
- B. How can we repent without an altar?
  1. "Then the Lord appeared to Abram and said, 'To your descendants I will give this land.' And there he built an altar to the Lord, who had appeared to him. And he moved from there to the mountain east of Bethel, and he pitched his tent with Bethel on the west and Ai on the east; there he built an altar to the Lord and called on the name of the Lord" (Genesis 12:7, 8).
  2. "Then Abram went up from Egypt, he and his wife and all that he had, and Lot with him, to the South. Abram was very rich in livestock, in silver, and in gold. And he went on his journey from the South as far as Bethel, to the place where his tent had been at the beginning, between Bethel and Ai, to the place of the altar which he had made there at first. And there Abram called on the name of the Lord" (Genesis 13:1-4).
  3. "Then Jacob rose early in the morning, and took the stone that he had put at his head, set it up as a pillar, and poured oil on top of it. And he called the name of that place Bethel; but the name of that city had been Luz previously" (Genesis 28:18, 19).
  4. "Then God said to Jacob, 'Arise, go up to Bethel and dwell there; and make an altar there to God, who appeared to you when you fled from the face of Esau your brother'" (Genesis 35:1).
  5. "And he built an altar there and called the place El Bethel, because there God appeared to him when he fled from the face of his brother" (Genesis 35:7).



## ABOUT THE PASTOR

Bryan Cutshall is the pastor of Twin Rivers Worship Center in St. Louis, Missouri. As a long-term pastor, he watched the Twin Rivers church grow from 52 people to one of the most vital megachurches in the Midwest. Bryan is a pastor, convention speaker and church trainer. Each year he trains thousands of church leaders in conferences and diagnostic clinics. He is the author of several books as well as the "Church Trainer" book label, which is a resource line for training pastors, leaders and workers in the church. All of his books and resources can be found at *churchtrainer.net*, *BryanCutshall.com* and *pathwaybookstore.com*.

Bryan and his wife, Faith, have two children, Brittany and Lindsay.



These are sermons that will set the captive free. They will encourage your congregation to learn, grow and draw nearer to the Lord. Although they are structured in outline form, I would encourage you to dig into what the Word says and make them your own. We were all created in the image of God, but we are all individuals because God cares about us personally. So, take what is in this volume and apply your God-given personality and style to it. God bless."

—Bryan Cutshall, D.Min.