

## I. Review

Last time we were together in Psalms 18, we dealt with what I believe is the issue of our day in Christianity. I've been around for a few years, and I've watched how things have come and gone and how they have deteriorated; we talked about that in greater detail last week. If there is anybody who doesn't know or understand: the hourglass of God's timing on planet Earth is down to the last few grains of sand.

### ➤ The Word of God is the Mind of Christ

What we face in our final days has been an ongoing issue in the 20th and 21st centuries, and now we've seen it develop into the place that it has actually come full circle. We see the complete and total collapse of New Testament Christianity—it's far from what the Bible says it should be. I know churches are packed today, but that's not what I'm talking about. Just because you get a crowd, it doesn't mean you have a church. **I've told you many times what happens when you lose the Bible. The Bible is very clear in I Corinthians 2:16 and Philippians 2:5 that the word of God is the mind of Christ.** The idea that God would go back to heaven, give us a mandate to do, but then not let us understand what His mindset of it was and what He wanted us to do, would be quite out of the question. The truth of the matter is that when God gave us the Bible, as part of the revelation and the plan that God wanted us to have for our lives to do what He wanted us to do, it's in that Book that we find the mind of Christ.

The Bible tells us that we are to *Let this mind be in you, which was also in Christ Jesus*. When you lose God's mind, the word of God, then it's only a matter of time until you're going to lose your mind, and you're going to go into apostasy when it comes to either your Christian life or Christianity in general. The greatest proof of that is hundreds of thousands, if not millions of Christians who once went to church, loved God, loved the Bible, but then fell by the wayside: the Bible goes out of their lives, the things of the world come in, and pretty soon they get caught up in some of the most unbelievable stuff you could ever imagine. It's hard to imagine how a person could end up so far away from where they once were, but the answer is simply that when you lose God's mind, in time you're going to lose yours. It's the insane idea that somehow you can know God and Christ, and yet reject His Bible.

### ➤ You Cannot Separate the Two

I showed you how that was the issue at the first coming of Christ. They all believed in God, but they killed His son. It's also true at the second coming of Christ. Everybody believes in God today, yet the manifestation of His Son is the word of God. *John 1:14 says, And the Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us. John 1:1. In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God.* You cannot separate the two, but people do that today and wonder why their churches, as well as themselves, are in the messes that they are in.

## ➤ The Cycle of History Repeating Itself

I also showed you how history will repeat itself. For those who want to learn about God, the Bible, and history in your own life, if there is ever a rule #1, it will be the repetitiveness of history. You find that in the book of Ecclesiastes which tells you that there is nothing new under the sun. Everything just keeps going through a cycle, and even though 400, 500, 600, or 800 years will pass, it will pop up again and somebody will say that it's something new. In truth, the Bible tells us that no, it's been around before.

I gave you nine parallels of the history and showed you how God had a plan for not only the nation of Israel, but the United States of America. The parallels between the two nations are quite incredible as you look at God down through history and what He's trying to accomplish. Both nations at the end rejected God and His word and both entered into the captivity of the world. **Where Israel entered into the Babylonian captivity, and the Assyrian captivity for the northern tribes, Christianity has entered into a spiritual captivity.** We're at a place now in Christianity where we no longer know the true God, and we no longer know who Christ really is. God's people are like rats in a maze just going down through the little tunnels trying to find the cheese at the end of life. They have no direction, no purpose, no desire, and no understanding of the things of God. At both the first and second comings of Christ, we see that both nations have a form of godliness but deny the power thereof: denying the power of God, denying the power of Christ, denying the power of the word of God. I John 5 tells us that *these three are one*.

## ➤ God will Always Have a Remnant

**The scribes, Pharisees, and Sadducees of Jesus' day are alive and well today in New Testament Christianity.** Yet you'll find in both cases, at the first coming of Christ and today, that no matter where you are in the Bible or history, God is always going to have His faithful few—His remnant. You're going to find that in the tribulation period, when God comes back to deal with the nation of Israel, they are killed down to a remnant. At the first coming of Christ, Israel who believed that Christ was the Son of God was a remnant. Today, you're going to find in Christianity the people who still believe God is the God of the Bible, the Bible is the Bible of God, and Christ is who He says He is, will be a remnant.

At the first coming of Christ, and this has always amazed me, when they were deep in apostasy, the Bible tells us in Matthew 2 (now keep in mind the nation of Israel is completely gone, they're going to reject Christ, the devil is doing everything he can through the established religion of Israel at the time to reject Him and in time kill Him), that at His birth, there came wise men from the east to find Him. Traditionally we always say that there were three wise men, although that doesn't mean there couldn't have been more, because of the three gifts that they bring Him. The three gifts that they bring Him represent the three offices that Christ holds: a Priest, Prophet, and King. It's immaterial how many came, but the point is that the Bible says they came from the east. That would be where Babylon is, and it would be safe to make the assumption that they had the book of Daniel because he wrote the book of Daniel when he was in Babylon. It would be the book of Daniel that would actually guide them, along with the rest of the Old Testament.

They would have from Daniel Chapter 9 everything that they needed to know almost within six months to a year when Christ was to be born. They would know from the Old Testament where He would be born, they would know to look for a star that would lead them... in other words, the book of Daniel, along with the Old Testament, gave them everything that they needed because they were wise men, and they accepted the Bible. They hit it right on the mark at the first coming of Christ when everybody else in the nation of Israel was blinded to it. For us, in Daniel Chapter 9 you will find the great prophecy on Daniel's 70<sup>th</sup> week which actually puts the whole thing into perspective for you and for me. Anybody who understands Daniel's 70<sup>th</sup> week and looks at what it says in Matthew, Mark, and Luke about the coming of the Lord as well as all of the other places, knows exactly, like the wise men of Jesus' day, and can see and look and find the second coming of Christ. **My point is that wise men still seek Him today, but it's going to be a remnant.**

### ➤ The Handwriting on the Wall

I showed you the incredible concept of Daniel Chapter 5 about the handwriting on the wall which is soon going to be the newest book that we put out. At that time, in Daniel Chapter 5, Babylon was the world power. They're sitting around, praising their gods, drinking and eating—just like America is doing today. Then a finger came out of nowhere and wrote, with the finger of God, upon the wall about their coming destruction. Nobody could understand the writing because it took somebody who was connected with God and a type of the Holy Spirit (Daniel) to be able to interpret that. When Daniel is called in and interprets it, he tells them that the end of their kingdom is coming. God has had enough. They had rejected God, rejected His people, and yet they sat there boasting about their gods, what they had, their great nation, their power...and the handwriting on the wall says their kingdom is coming to an end. **Most of God's people today cannot see the handwriting on the wall. They can't understand what this country has done to God and the word of God, the name of God, the cause of Christ.** God's own people today, who He saved and gave His mercy, are indifferent to anything that God would ask them to do. **It isn't just about the depravity of our country; it's about the depravity and apostasy of Christianity.** People claim to have the act of salvation in their life but have no action to serve God after that act.

I showed you Paul's message on Mars Hill when he walked into Athens, and I showed you the seven areas of their apostasy and their devotions, like today, **to the unknown god.** I also showed you how we keep it all straight in this world that we live in with the collapse of Christianity; a Christianity without the true God and as 2 Chronicles 15:3 says, a long season without a teaching priest.

### ➤ Losing the Landmark and Entering the Fields of the Fatherless

I also gave you the two landmarks that all history is built around. Proverbs 22 talks about the ancient landmark which we know from last week is the nation of Israel. Then in Proverbs 23, we see the old landmark which we know will be the true church out of Antioch and its line as it comes up through history. Proverbs 23:10 tells us that when you lose the landmarks you move into the fields of the fatherless.

President Trump, last week, signed an executive order (one of many that he signed) making the English language the official language of the United States of America. Duh! What has our country come to? This country was founded from England, founded on English, wrote the English Bible into its constitution, some of the greatest preachers that ever lived helped form and forge this country in its beginning out of an English King James Bible, they spoke English, English, English; yet here we are in the 21<sup>st</sup> century and now, we have got to define that this country's official language is English. Can you see where we are at? There are places in this country where the road signs are all Spanish. Not that I'm knocking Spanish or anybody from Central America, Mexico, or South America, but what I am telling you is that the official language of this country is English. It always has been.

President Trump stated that he did this because America (his words; not mine) has lost its identity. Then he said identity matters, and that is so true. In this country we have lost our native tongue, and now a secondary language is kind of taking over which is Spanish. As I look at this and try to put it into some kind of Biblical framework, **it's too bad that God's people cannot see that Christianity has also lost its identity. Christianity is an orphan today. Christians, God's people, don't even understand where their own history comes from. They're in the fields of the fatherless.** They couldn't tell you why they believe what they believe or where it came from; they have just been told what to believe, and they believed it without ever finding out anything about their history. Christianity has no father today. American Christianity has lost its founding fathers, and where America has lost its identity from English to Spanish, American Christianity has lost its identity from English to Greek and Hebrew. This is where it goes.

### ➤ God's Hand in My Life

I've often looked back at how God's hand was in my life long before I saw what He was doing or had any understanding of what He was trying to do. Many times, on Thursday nights and as I've worked with some of you guys and gals with God's hand and calling in your life, I always take you to I Samuel 3 because that's what God used in my life. It showed me what I needed to do long before I ever understood what God was doing in my life.

I was born in 1950, and I'll soon be 75 years old. I know I look like I'm 40; I get that, but trust me, I don't feel like I'm 40. Everyone must come to a point in their life when they've got to stop and see why God had them born in the time they were born. If you think it's just a biological accident because your parents decided to have kids, and you popped out; that's not what happened. Well that's what happened, but that's not what happened! Everybody must stop and look at why God chose the timeframe that He chose for you to be born in. Then you've got to weigh that up against the time that you grew up in, the time that you live in; and all of that, honestly, will forge for you a direction, when you get the understanding, of what God wants to do in your life.

I had the unique privilege of living through two centuries. I probably won't see 2050, but it's a thing where I understand why He put me where I needed to be; although, I didn't understand it for many years. I often looked back at how God's hand was in my life long before I ever really understood what He was doing. How God, in my early years, prepared me for the days that I live

in now and my ministry as a pastor. You may not understand how important it is in your life now to have somebody who has lived through both centuries and seen Christianity at its high point, at its low point, and where it's at today. The Bible makes it very clear that the older men of a church, and we have some here, they're all on different spiritual levels, I get that, but I'm going to tell you right now that as a young man or a young lady you can learn buckets from their lives. Some have built businesses from scratch; some have been very successful. Don't ever discount the fact that you can learn something from anybody who has been to places and done things that you can't do. The Bible makes it clear how important the older men and older women are although churches don't generally have older women. They all stop aging at about 30!

### ➤ Why Did God Pick Me?

I'll never understand why God picked me. I mean I'm absolutely nothing. I don't see myself as having any value to a God with a plan for planet Earth and then a plan for all of eternity. I've said many times that I don't know why God has blessed me the way He has with my family, the church, you, and the things He's allowed me to be a part of and do, but if God is counting on me to do anything spectacular for Him, He's picked the wrong guy! **It's a thing where I don't understand to this day what God saw in me.** I look out here and see some of you who are much smarter than I am, and probably much better at things than I am. Don't get me wrong: I'm thankful that He did, and I love Him for it, but the greatest question I'll have when I get to heaven is, "Why me? Lord, you know me better than anybody. What did you see in me?" The answer to that is probably the same reason I can see in you what you don't see in yourself yet.

I grew up in the 60s, 70s, and 80s, and life was different. You dressed up when you went to church, a funeral, or the doctor's office...even if you were sick. It was the world we lived in. I remember when doctors still made house calls. I remember when the milk man delivered milk to your house. There was a mom-and-pop grocery store on almost every corner. It was a simpler and easier life; much less complicated than what it is today. I was born right at the end of World War II, and most of the kids I played with had older brothers that were in the service and fought in World War II. We were kind of like war babies, so our big thing was that we played Army. The great thing about it was that we had real equipment because most of their big brothers brought their stuff back with them. It was a different world. When you sat around for dinnertime, the family ate together. You communicated; you talked. Families hardly ever eat together anymore. Everything has changed. I'm not saying it's bad, I'm just saying that I came out of a different world.

If I had my choice on when to be born, it wouldn't have been 1950. It wouldn't have been in the 19<sup>th</sup> or 20<sup>th</sup> centuries at all. I would have loved to have been born around 1600, 1700, or 1800—someplace back there. I think I could have done some real damage, but God didn't see fit to do that. He had me born in 1950 and then He told me to do some real damage; however, I have the benefit of seeing where it was, where it's at, and where it's going. I look back, and I'll admit, this is like *True Confessions* this morning. I was never good at school. My grandkids Maddy, Kenzie, and Macy as well as many of you are incredible in school. Even my kids, Kelly and Jamie, were great in school. They were straight A students. In high school, I never made the honor roll. When I graduated, I didn't have a golden cord around my neck from the honor

society. I probably had a C average in high school. I had to bribe my Civics teacher to graduate from high school in 1968, or I would have flunked. I wanted to go into the military. He knew I wanted to go, so we had a little deal together. He needed something, and I got him what he needed from the government. I flunked Math in the 8<sup>th</sup> grade and had to go to summer school. It wasn't Geometry or Trigonometry; it was General Math. I was terrible in math. Don't look down on me because even in that, God had plans for me. He knew I didn't need General Math. You went through all that stuff and burned your brain cells with it, then what happened? They made a calculator!

### ➤ God Used What I Had in My Hand

I want you to see and understand this. Looking back, there were only two things that I was good at and really enjoyed. One was History and the other was English. Little did I know, way back then in 1964-1966 (long before most of you were ever born), what God had for me and how those two classes would impact my life some 40-50 years later. As I remember, History class came in two aspects—American History and World History. As long as I can remember, I've loved to get lost in history. Stopping and reading about things that have happened and going to historical places, which for me was like walking back in time. Even today, it's my relaxation. I don't take many vacations other than Ohio every year, so when I get stressed or need a break, I just check out from it all and spend my time researching something about history.

English class was also twofold—English Grammar (sentence structure, paragraphs, punctuation, adjectives, pronouns, nouns, verbs) and English Comprehension which was how to read a story and remember out of the story what you read. They would test you on it. The teacher would give us a story to read and ask questions about it. In the class, I was the only one who could answer them. I remembered everything about that story. I had my own little system to remember things about the stories. I was learning to read a story and to comprehend what I was reading to be able to remember it. Nobody does that today. **Technology has surpassed intellect.** You don't read anymore; you just get on your iPhone, and you can spend 24 hours texting somebody across the world. Now you put video games on your television and instead of engaging your brain in reading and learning something, you just waste the whole evening on the couch. **Nobody ever reads anymore, and I think that is probably part of the issue why our young people today are so inept when it comes to understanding anything about history and life.** Most of them think that manual labor was the president of Mexico!

So when God gave me an English Bible that was in a perfect English form structure, and I began to read it based on what I learned in Reading Comprehension and how to remember it, and once I saw the punctuation, paragraph marks, the structure, the semicolons, the colons, and all of the things that were part of it, I began to learn how to read it correctly and learn how to comprehend correctly what I was reading to remember it. Then most importantly, God took those two classes that back in the day, I had no idea where He was going with it (I was just a young kid and I was just enjoying what I was reading), and He taught me how to take all of that and apply it to history. The key to it all, when it came to the Bible, was my lack of intelligence. That kept me from ever getting overwhelmed with all the things that are out there that took from me the simplicity that the Bible says is in Christ in 2 Corinthians 11:3. If I had been a straight A student

or on the honor roll, it could have been a whole different world. What I'm saying is this: God used my stupidity and my lack of intelligence. God used somebody who flunked Math and had to bribe his way out of high school. God used somebody who couldn't figure out anything about this or that but had two things that he loved. And those are the same two things that I love today because God gave me the Book, but He also kept me from ever getting educated out of my intelligence. The greatest thing about this English Bible is that it's written in a third and fourth grade language. The NIV is written in a seventh and eighth grade language. The Bible is about how simple Christ is. The Bible doesn't require intelligence or somebody to have a high IQ. Mike Fernandez said it when he was preaching here: "God just used what I had in my hand." I tell you this because that's what God wants to do with you.

Now Grayson, here it comes. I can't think of a better class to take and be good at than a Debate class. It's going to give you everything that you need to know so that down the line someplace, when God really gets ahold of your life and you begin to be what He wants you to be, how incredible that will be for you to understand how to debate, talk, put it together, come at somebody, and how to do this or how to do that. It will serve you in a great way, and I was so excited when I heard that this morning because it's things like that, right now, as a young man or a young lady, if you allow Him, God will begin to form in your life and will come out on the other side just like He did with me. **God wants to take you where you are, with what you have in your hand, and develop you through His word and through this church to be whatever He wants you to be.**

He wants us to be like John the Baptist who was probably one of the most unsavory characters who you would never want to have come to dinner. He comes out of the wilderness dressed in a loin cloth. His special treat and diet are locusts because he's got them stuck in his beard where he is eating them, and he's the most uncouth guy you ever met in your life, but you know what? God took what he had in his hand, and he was the one who God chose to be the forerunner of Christ by six months. I've often looked at his life and what God gave him. The Bible says in John 1:23 that he was *the voice of one crying in the wilderness*. **If there's ever a time in the wilderness of this country that we need a voice that will cry out in this wilderness, it's the day and age that we live in.**

### ➤ Dare to be a Daniel or the Voice that Crieth in the Wilderness

For us to see the handwriting on the wall, and like Daniel, be able to interpret that and know how we can be faithful and fruitful in these last days. That's really all God asks of us.

All God really asks is that we be found faithful and through that faithfulness, God will make us fruitful. The Bible says that the key to Daniel was in Daniel 1:8 where the Bible says *Daniel purposed in his heart that he would not defile himself with the portion of the king's meat*. God raised this young man up—the third in the kingdom. He's a picture of the Holy Spirit of God who should be in your life and my life because He was the only one who could interpret the handwriting on the wall. **And what God is looking for today is men and women who will Dare to be a Daniel, who will be the voice that crieth in the wilderness, who will define the handwriting on the wall.**

## II. Psalms 18:1-2 - My Strength, in Whom I Will Trust

Now today, we're going to be back in Psalms 18—our building blocks of our relationship with God and Christ. Having pastored for most of my life and dealt with churches all through that time, you'll find basically three kinds of people in any church. I've never found a fourth one. I've looked at them from across the country—almost in every state and across the world—Africa, England, Germany, France, and the Philippines. They're all the same. You're going to find in any church, and I don't care where it is, these three kinds of people.

1. Those who want it all and do something with it.
2. Those who will take it all and do nothing with it.
3. Those who it's hard to imagine why they even bother going to church

This last group goes to church year after year and never does anything or takes anything from it. It's almost like they go to church because that's what they're supposed to do.

**They key in these last days, like I said, is for us to be faithful and then through that faithfulness, God will make us fruitful.**

So far, we started out by learning that to know Him is to love Him. Then we went into the Rock of our foundation and then we talked about on that foundation of the Rock, building a fortress. Then we talked about God through it all always being our deliverer. And then last week we talked about the understanding of the true God of the Bible and history. Now let's read our text again, and we will look at yet another key area here that we want to add to what we're learning.

*Psalms 18:1-2. I will love thee, O Lord, my strength.*

*2. The Lord is my rock, and my fortress, and my deliverer; my God, **my strength, in whom I will trust**; my buckler, and the horn of my salvation, [and] my high tower.*

Now today I want to talk about the concept: *my strength, in whom I will trust*. **I want to talk today about where we need to get in our Christian life to have the ability to trust in God's strength and not in our own strength.** That is a real problem today for many people. I've seen Christians for whom I think there were many things that God probably wanted to do with them and wanted to give them to do for Him, but He couldn't do it because they were just too strong in themselves.

*Zechariah 4:6. Then he answered and spake unto me, saying, This [is] the word of the Lord unto Zerubbabel, saying, **Not by might, nor by power, but by my spirit, saith the Lord of hosts.***

This is a great verse that I would tell you to always keep before you. It has nothing to do with our mightiness, it has nothing to do with our power, but it all has to do with the spirit of God and our spirit—our ability to do all that God has called us to do. **All that God wants to do in your life and my life will never be based on our ability or on our strength.** This is why I told you the story of where I started in life, and God taking those two areas of my life and helping me with that which I would use so many years later.



Today we put so much emphasis on man's ability, and I understand that. When I see somebody do something really well, and I see them do something really good for the Lord, I understand that they're good at what they do, but I also understand that the reason why they're good at what they do is simply because it's really not their ability. They have turned themselves over to the Lord, and the Lord now uses them. That's what you want.

### ➤ Paul's Weakness and God Perfecting Him Through it

I thought this week, as I put this together, that the greatest Christian who ever lived, Paul, in 2 Corinthians 12:7-9 had his thorn in the flesh. I know that a lot of guys conjecture about what that thorn in the flesh was. I think that it's very clear when you read the scriptures concerning him, and what he says, probably what his thorn in the flesh was, but no matter what it was, he says that it was the messenger of Satan to buffet him. Three times he asked God to take it away because it was hindering him from being everything that God wanted him to be.

Now let me just stop here. If there was ever a guy who could live in the notoriety of who he was in his day, it would be Paul. Can you imagine? He is the only man who God pulled aside and took him for 10, 12, 13 years, spent time with him, gave him the message of the church and the gospel, then turned him loose on the Gentile world. Nobody else! Everything came from him. Now can you imagine if that was today with Dr. Fine, Dr. Howard, Dr. Fine of the Christian world and all the great PhDs—how they would lord that over everybody. Paul never did that. In fact, he was just the opposite. It's obvious that Paul didn't have a lot of confidence in himself when he started to go to the Gentile world. There are a couple of reasons for that. It seems obvious that he didn't speak well, but then he goes to a group of people that before he got saved, he was part of murdering probably 10, 20, 30, 40,000 of them. That's what he did before he was saved. He turned Christians into the Roman government. They were murdered and tortured, and that's the man God chose to take the gospel to the ends of the earth! There's the mind of God in the thing. God knew if He took somebody that was just an educated guy who didn't have any skeletons in his background, that he would take that thing, and he would puff himself up and make himself look like the savior of the Gentile world instead of Jesus. So he picked a guy like Paul who was responsible for 100,000-200,000+ people's deaths who were true believers. Then he saved him. **It was Paul understanding what he had done before he was saved, yet he understood God forgave him, but it was that which drove him forward to be better than everything he did for the cause of Christ because of what God did for him.** This is why God will take some of you who have some bad situations, some bad baggage in your background, and if you can ever get past it and you can see that in spite of that, God chose you. God wanted to use you. I don't care what mistakes you've made. I don't care what you've done. **He'll take you where you're at, and if you can come to the place where Paul was, it'll be the driving force that will keep you on track as God begins to use you.**

Paul said that three times he asked God to take away his thorn in the flesh because it was hindering him, but God said to him in 2 Corinthians 12:9, *My grace is sufficient for thee: for my strength [is] made perfect in weakness.* It isn't about your education. It isn't about how smart you are. It's how weak you are, and weakness can be a terrible thing if you stay weak; however, **weakness is a great thing because weakness is the entry level to you getting God's strength**

**in your life if you put the right things in your life. Every man that God used in a mighty way started with his weakness, and God had to perfect him through it. From Adam to Abraham to Moses to David to Jacob to Joseph to Daniel, God took them where he found them with the infirmities and the weaknesses and the struggles that they had then He perfected them to be what He wanted them to be.** And when you get saved, as you grow, you and I too will be faced with the issues that we need to deal with. We will have our own issues in the flesh; our imperfections, the things that would stop us, but if a person loves God and God's word and wants God's plan in his life, he like Paul will be faced with the opposition in his old weakness just like Paul was, but he'll want to fix it so bad that it will drive him into the arms of God's strength because he knows he can't do it on his own strength. We all have these problems, and when you get to that point, then God shows you His grace.

You see, it was grace that God saw in me when I didn't see it myself. I look at myself and say, "Why me?" and God says, "You're right in everything you say. I don't need you," but it's grace. If you want to see a great example of all of us before we were saved, go back and look at the story of Mephibosheth. **The grace of God to take our infirmities and our weaknesses to get us to trust in His strength and no longer ours.** But you first must admit you've got a problem and not run from it. I've seen it all my life—trying to hide our weakness behind our own strength. This is what has happened to Christianity today and Christians, but what needs to happen is that we come to the end of self. **Hey! Paul was taught by the greatest minds of his day, and when he finally got into the Bible, he said that all of that is dung compared to what God has given him in His word.** Yet today, we take the Bible and make it dung, and we take our education and hold it up above the word of God.

Quickly here, I'd like to give you just two verses today that will show you how you get to the point of trusting in His strength and not your own. It's a great verse and one of the key verses in my own life. I'm sure many of you have it down and probably could quote it back to me. I'm going to break it down for you into what I call the Five Sections of Life, and it's simply looking at Proverbs 3:1-6. We will primarily deal with verses 5-6, but for the sake of context, I'm going to read the whole thing then we'll break down verses 5-6. I'm sure they're familiar verses.

### III. The Five Sections of Life

*Proverbs 3:1-6. My son (talking to you and me), forget not my law; but let thine heart keep my commandments:*

*2. For length of days, and long life, and peace, shall they add to thee.*

*3. Let not mercy and truth forsake thee: bind them about thy neck; write them upon the table of thine heart:*

*4. So shalt thou find favour and good understanding in the sight of God and man.*

*5. Trust in the LORD with all thine heart; and lean not unto thine own understanding.*

*6. In all thy ways acknowledge him, and he shall direct thy paths.*

Now a couple of things I want you to see here. Notice verse 3, *Let not mercy and truth forsake thee*. Last week I gave you Hosea 4:1 that the controversy that God had with the inhabitants of the land was that there was no truth and no mercy, so we're seeing right where we're at today.

He says, *bind them about thy neck*. Now that's important because the neck in the Bible will always represent man's will. You find in the Bible where it talks about Israel being a stiffnecked people. **Stiffnecked means that you won't look to God, you look to yourself. So in the Bible, the neck of man will always represent the will of man.** So what he's saying here is that you take the mercy and the truth and don't forsake them, and then you bind them about your neck—in other words, wherever you go in life, whatever you do, wherever you wind up through the process of life from the time that maybe you're in your 20s to the time you're into your 60s. **You keep around your neck the mercy and truth of God because if you don't, you'll become stiff necked and you'll do your will over God's will.** Boy, you will see it all the time when you start dealing with people.

Then he says, *write them upon the table of thine heart*: You know in February, we had Valentine's Day. It's the day of hearts and making somebody your valentine. The best thing about Valentine's Day is the Resse's cups that are made into hearts! My point is this, I'm sure that if you're married or have a boyfriend/girlfriend, that was a special day for you. For a child of God, every day should be Valentine's Day. Every day of our life we should have mercy and truth upon the table of our heart. You see when you do those two things, you make sure that your will is always God's will and you don't become stiffnecked, and then you put that mercy and truth into your heart, then look what happens in verse 4. *So shalt thou find favour and good understanding in the sight of God and man.* **You notice you find favor and understanding with God first, and then God takes that and develops you and then takes you to the people that you're going to work with, and they see it, too.** You've got to see this.

Then in verse five come the five key areas we want to talk about here.

### ➤ #1 – Trust in the LORD

In our great examples in the Old Testament, you will find this completely laid out. I don't know if you know this, but God makes your Bible easy for you to understand by the way that He breaks it down. You take something like this where you want to learn about having God's strength in your life and then trusting in the Lord. I'd go back and recognize first off that in the Old Testament, it is built around seven men. I know there are a lot of stories and events that would be hard for you to get, but this is how God did it in His simplistic form so that you could get it. You don't have to remember everything in Genesis, Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers, Deuteronomy, and all that stuff. All you have to do is realize that your Old Testament is built around seven men. Just focus on those seven men and then build the other things around it and you're home free. How much easier could it be?

You will find none of these men started out trusting God the way they ended up. You're going to find that each one of them had the same weaknesses that you and I have. There were no Supermen in the Bible other than Jesus Christ. They're all men and women just like you and me. Human nature and the flesh are the same in 200 BC as it was in 1955. Each one of them had

their weaknesses; each one of them found the strength he needed to get into God's strength; each one of them had to go through a process of growth just like you and I do. The difference is that they didn't have a church, a pastor, or people who were willing to help them. I think about all the young men and young ladies over the last 10-15 years who this church has taken in and helped. They're where they're at today because somebody cared. They didn't have that in the Old Testament. I wonder sometimes how any of them actually made it other than you see God getting directly into their lives, but God will get directly in your life today—through the word of God, through this church, and the people who God will put in your life. We've got this little gal coming in, and I have no doubt in my mind that this church will take her in, be part of what she's doing, help her grow, and give her what she needs. She's already on fire to get here because she just wants to serve God in a Bible believing church.

Everybody starts the same way. We all have our weaknesses that we've got to work through, and this will be why I come down on higher Christian education so much. In I Corinthians 8:1, Paul talks about how all the education will puff you up and in time you'll be trusting your education instead of the simplicity of Christ. You can always tell when somebody gets to that point in their life because now they believe that they're smarter than God. They take a Book that God wrote, and they say God didn't know what He was talking about. He needs them to change it so you can better understand it.

You'll see it on pulpit committees. In my 50+ years in the ministry, I've had a lot of calls from churches and deacons who had lost their pastor and were looking for another pastor. They asked me what they should be looking for and what they should be asking. It has always amazed me, within the mindset of Christianity, when you bring a guy in as a candidate for a church. Rule #1: you're going to get a chance to hear him preach. Never believe anything he says when he preaches. He's going to have his sugar stick candy message to try to impress you, so you'll think he's the guy. I'm not interested in how good he can give his one-shot sugar stick message. What is he going to do eight months from now?

One guy asked me what they should ask him? I said I would ask, "If we call you to be the pastor of our church, what are you going to do for the families in this church? What programs do you have to make marriages better? What have you yourself written or done that you can use as teaching material to disciple somebody? What is your plan? Walk me through step-by-step what you will do in this church." They'll never do that. Do you know what they ask him? They ask, "Where did you go to school? How many degrees do you have? What Bible college did you go to?" **They're going to base the success of a pastor on his education, not what he has got hanging around his neck or what he has written on the tables of his heart.** This is the mistake.

## ➤ #2 – With All Thine Heart

Now in Christianity, as you already well know, attitude of heart is everything because, **whether good or bad, attitude produces action.** Whether it's a good action or bad action is based on the good attitude or the bad attitude; but it's going to produce action. If you want the key, to really work on *with all thine heart*, it is Psalms 119:1-176.

*Psalms 119:2. Blessed [are] they that **keep his testimonies**, [and that] seek him with **the whole heart**.*

Some people read that, and they don't have a clue what a *testimony* is. Did you know that in the book of Psalms, you've got six or seven legal terms that each mean something else? It's the key to what he's saying when he uses the word testimony instead of a commandment or a precept. Each one of them is different and bring to the party a different thing.

*Psalms 119:7. I will praise thee **with uprightness of heart**, when I shall have learned **thy righteous judgments**.*

Did you know that there are seven judgments in the Bible? Which one do you think he's talking about? He's talking about all of them, and yet you couldn't find 10 of God's people (or 10 pastors) in this city who could even tell you what the seven judgments are.

*Psalms 119:10. **With my whole heart** have I sought thee: **O let me not wander from thy commandments**.*

Wow! There's a prayer that ought to be on the lips of every person every morning before you ever head out to whatever you do.

*Psalms 119:11. **Thy word have I hid in mine heart**, that I might not sin against thee.*

On and on it goes. Fifteen times in Psalms 119 he tells us about *with all thine heart*. You know, learning the Bible and growing is a progression. Take somebody who has been coming around here and heard me teach John and Proverbs. He has taken notes and kept up with everything. Then he hears something today like trusting in God's strength and trusting in the Lord with thine whole heart. He hears about Psalms 119, and the heart and the attitude of all those things.

- God will give you the Principles and then Someplace Else the Example of the Principle in Action

In my mind, the next progression would be that in my Bible there are two books that will be all about our loving God with all our heart and our strength. In the Old Testament it will be the book of Psalms because **the book of Psalms is the heart of God. In the book of Psalms, I'm going to get the principle of loving God with all my heart**; however, I need more than that, so I'm going to go over to the New Testament, and I'm going to find the book of John. **Where the Old Testament book of Psalms gives me the principle, the book of John, through the life of John as the type of the greatest Christian that ever lived, I'm going to see the example of those principles.**

**You see how it works? God will give you the principles and then someplace else, he'll give you the example of the principle in action. You take that and now you can put it into your own life.** If you want to trust in the Lord with all thine heart and his strength, that's the way you do it. **You find out where the book is that lays out the principles to the greatest degree. That will be Psalms. Then you go some place to find the example in a person's life of those principles. That will be the Gospel of John. And there lies his strength.**

### ➤ #3 – Lean Not unto Thine Own Understanding

Now this is the fundamental core process of the Christian life. In Proverbs 2:1-5 you actually find the process for getting God's understanding and viewpoint on everything in life and then making it your viewpoint. This is the aspect of getting God's strength through not leaning unto your own understanding. I told you that you get God's mind (I Corinthians 2:16) then you let this mind be in you (Philippians 2:5), but this only comes after you learn to trust Him and His strength and to love Him with all your heart. Then because of the core value system of your life, Christ becomes center stage. He becomes the most important thing in your life.

#### ○ Making Christ Center Stage in your Life

The greatest example of it today is where this pulpit is located. Baptist churches throughout history always had pulpits in the center of the church. That comes out of the book of Nehemiah by the way. You'll find that when you go to a lot of churches, they'll have the pulpit over to the side or sometimes elevated. Do you know why Baptist churches traditionally put the pulpit in the middle? It is because they wanted the central focus of the congregation to be on the pulpit and the preaching of the word of God. **When you put these things into your life and you begin to get the strength of God and you trust in that strength, then he'll take center stage in your life. He'll become the core value system of what you live by.** I'm not saying you'll have a perfect life or won't make mistakes, but you'll have a baseline in your life and no matter what happens, you'll always go back to that baseline.

I think it would be safe to say today that 99% of God's people in Christianity will see and view everything from their own understanding. I mean it's just that simple. This will be the importance of biblical principles. The book of Proverbs tells us that within the book of Proverbs are the issues of life. **Where Psalms is God's heart, Proverbs will represent God's mind.** You'll find in the book of Proverbs (when I taught it, I laid it out very clearly), everything that God thinks, everything that God does, every opinion He has—all found in the book of Proverbs.

*Proverbs 4:7. **Wisdom** [is] the **principal** thing; [therefore] **get wisdom**: and with all thy getting **get understanding**.*

#### ○ You Need to Trust in God's Strength

You see that's how it works. **You get the principles, the principles then lead you to understanding, and what comes out of that is a principled life.** A life not based on your own understanding, but a life that's based on understanding that you can't do it in your own strength. Your strength is going to mess you up every time. **You've got to learn God's strength and just learning that God is stronger than you is not enough. Now you need to trust in it.**

### ➤ #4 – In all Thy Ways Acknowledge Him

I told you last week that life will simply be about two ways that you go—His way or your way. There's a great verse in Genesis 24:27 that I've used many times over the years. The key, in the middle of the verse, is *I [being] in the way, the LORD led*. Genesis Chapter 24 is the great

chapter on the Holy Spirit of God leading a man in his life to find what He wants, and you must acknowledge His way to get out of your way, to have the Lord's leading in your life. I think it would be 100% accurate and safe to say that every problem we have came about from us doing it our way and not His way.

Proverbs 8:22 actually shows us the beginning of God's way. As His way goes through history and moves its way into the New Testament, he makes it clear about *in all thy ways acknowledge him* in the book of John when Jesus said, *I am the way, the truth, and the life: no man cometh unto the Father, but by me*. The only way to God's strength and God's power, and the only way for us to get to the place that we can trust in that, is to do it His way and not our way any longer. That's really hard for some people.

### ➤ #5 – And He will Direct Thy Paths

In life there are many pathways for a man to travel. You have science, philosophy, religion, archeology, cosmology, and Proverbs 19:21 says, *[There are] many devices in a man's heart; nevertheless the counsel of the LORD, that shall stand*. There are many roads in life that a man can go on. Many pathways that he can travel, yet the truth will only be found in a simple saying found Matthew 7:14. *Because strait is the gate, and narrow is the way, which leadeth unto life, and few there be that find it*.

Broad is the way of destruction. The world loves to build superhighways to get you to wherever you're going faster, but the road to God is found in Jeremiah 6:16. *Thus saith the Lord, Stand ye in the ways, and see, and ask for the old paths*. God's way is not a superhighway, a turnpike, or a toll road, God's way is a simple path through life going His way and not yours.

When we started our church over 20 years ago, I chose the name based on Jeremiah 6:16 because this church will always stay on the old path. There will be no superhighways, no turnpikes, no fast lanes to anywhere. We're just on the old dirt road path of God's way.

## IV. Summary

Psalms 18:1-2 is one of the crucial passages in your Bible for it shows us how to build on the foundation the key areas of the victorious Christian life. We learned that the key of our victory will be getting God's strength and then trusting in it. Once you get saved, build on that foundation, get your fortress, and you realize that God is going to deliver you, part of your growth process then is that you're going to come and realize the end of self. I can't do this anymore on my own! Then you're going to get God's strength, but the key is trusting in it and coming to the end of self.

God through His mercy and grace taking us in our weakness, and then through the word of God, perfecting us for His work for the work of the ministry. This will be the job of any New Testament church. This will be the job of any New Testament pastor. Everybody that comes into this church, no matter what level, this is the process that we automatically begin in your life. Some make it; some don't. Some want it; some don't. Some take everything they get, and they just do everything they can do with it. Some take everything they get and do nothing with it.

And some, I'm not even sure why they go to church. It's taking God's people and building them the right way. Never building a mega church but building mega people.

Finally, and you know this to be truth: strength in a physical sense only comes through exercise. You see it at the gym. There are signs and t-shirts there that say, "No pain; no gain!" I get it. Physically you should have an exercise routine daily, but also spiritually. You know that when you work out physically, you never do the same things all the time (if you're really into it). You work different parts of your body. One day you do arms, one day you do legs, etc. I've often looked at that and thought to myself that it's what we ought to be able to do spiritually. It says in I Timothy 4:8, *For bodily exercise profiteth little: but godliness is profitable unto all things, having promise of the life that now is, and of that which is to come.*

*Hebrews 5:12-14. For when for the time ye ought to be teachers, ye have need that one teach you again which [be] the first principles of the oracles of God; and are become such as have need of milk, and not of strong meat.*

*13. For every one that useth milk is unskilful in the word of righteousness: for he is a babe.*

*14. But strong meat belongeth to them that are of full age, [even] those who by reason of use have their senses exercised to discern both good and evil.*

### ➤ Exercise Yourself Spiritually Every Day

Christianity is an exercise format. This is why you see people who must be disciplined four or five times over 20 years. They never finish. This is why you find people that *for the time ye ought to be teachers, ye have need that **one teach you again** which [be] the first principles of the oracles of God.* They're weak, and they can't handle meat of the word of God. They're like babies that can only handle the milk. Then he says, *strong meat belongeth to them that are of full age, [even] those who by reason of use **have their senses exercised**—spiritually exercising yourself every day.* Having a workable exercise program spiritually that builds you toward trusting in His strength and being everything that God wants you to be. God is not looking for any Supermen. God wants ordinary people just like you and me.

If you look back at your life, you'll see things that God did that maybe you never thought about or saw the relevance of it. But now, where you're at, you can see what God could take out of your life. I don't care if you went to church or not! You learned some good discipline principles that now will carry you into this and help others, too. Getting the strength and trusting in that strength because we can't do it by ourselves. Everybody in that Bible came the same way, and everyone in this room will come the same way. The question is not only do you get God's strength, but then will you trust it and will you come to the end of self. That's the key.