

I. Review

Last week we looked at yet another key aspect to our Christian life. Understanding God's strength and how we learn in time through that growth process to trust in it instead of our own strengths and abilities. I firmly believe that there are a lot of things God would like to do with us and how He would like to use us, but He can't. Because we are too strong in our own abilities.

Thursday night we looked at Paul's thorn in the flesh and we know that God perfects His strength through our weaknesses. It is coming to the end of self and then allowing God's strength to sustain us, carry us through and give us the victory in Christ. Simply understanding how God works. How He will take us where He finds us and develops us as we yield ourselves to Him and as we allow the Holy Spirit to grow us and give us what we need. Throughout the Bible you are going to find when God calls men to His work this is how He does it. He hasn't changed His format or the way He calls men, trains people, and uses them in six thousand years of man's history. It is starting with what you have in your hand and letting God take it and use it for His honor and glory.

➤ God will Exercise our Spiritual Gifts & Spiritual Growth

I showed you the importance of understanding how He will exercise our spiritual gifts and our spiritual growth. He says in Hebrews 5:14 that it is by reason of use.

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.

As we begin to get into the word of God and use the word of God. Then through our willingness, God refining His strength in our learning to trust in His strength and power that we have in Him and not ourselves. Hebrews 5:14 exercising your senses to discern good and evil. That is what God wants to do. He wants to put a workout program into your life, spiritually speaking.

Honestly, I know of no greater way to learn about God's strength and how God will exercise you and help grow you than working with people. This will be obvious in any church that you will be able to see the folks who are involved in ministry to people and those who do not. Many of you here are just getting into it. When you go through our discipleship program there are four goals. One of the goals is to teach you the Bible and get you into church and meet people. But the end goal brings you back around and puts you into the ministry with people. That is the important part. As we take our time with this you grow.

Everybody here today that works with me on that third level in dealing with people and their issues, we all started the same way. We all started out not knowing anything and started with what you hand in your hand and the willingness in your heart. Then God began to exercise you, strengthen you and taught you to trust in him and not yourself. You will see a vast difference in people's spiritual levels for those that are actively working in people's lives. Because that is how

God exercises you. It is how God will grow you. You won't grow just coming to church and sitting there or getting in your Bible every once in a while. I am not saying you won't grow and learn some things. But if you want to really understand these areas and have God exercise you through a spiritual workout; an exercise program that God will build you with, it will be in dealing with people. You have heard me say it time and time again, the ministry is people. As you invest your life in the two things that matter in life, the word of God and the souls of men, you will find that God has a two-tiered program that you help them grow. But as you help them grow, they will also help you grow. Because God takes what you are doing and giving in somebody else's life by your investing in them, then God invests in you. In time you will be involved in every issue that will befall man in this life. If you do this for any length of time you are going to come to the point where you see and understand every dark side of life that someone can get into.

➤ By Reason of use – God Taking the Word in You & Exercising You as you Give it to Somebody Else - Hebrews 5:14

A man or a woman can make their life so complicated that it is beyond belief. You will see how they can make bad choices and destroy everything in their life. Destroy their family and any chance that God could use them. You will need to have the answers to help them, to bring them through and lay it out for them. But as you do that, God exercises you. He takes you and stretches you. He molds you; he allows you to see things that you don't see sitting on Sunday morning or Thursday night. He takes you through the places where you can understand what Hebrews 5 says, by reason of use. Using the word of God and allowing God to take His word in you and exercise you as you give it to somebody else. Through it all as you do that you make the investment in people's lives and God's Holy Spirit makes the investment in your life. Then you will learn some key things along the way. You will learn things in dealing with people that you will never learn by just coming to church on Sunday morning and Thursday night. Obviously, that is important, but the church exists as a training ground and a spiritual gymnasium where you will get your senses exercised to be able to have God use you. As you invest in people, God is going to in time give you the key qualities that are going to make you invaluable in the ministry, when it comes to people.

1.) God Will Teach You Patience

The number one aspect of ministry is patience. You have to be patient with your own growth process first. You can't get in a hurry. There are some things you can do to accelerate it, but you can't get to the place where you can jump over the steps that you need to do. You must have patience as you grow and then patience as you deal with people as they grow. You are going to be dealing with imperfect people, and they are going to make mistakes. Sometimes we get the mindset that because they are in church, in the Bible, and you are working with them, that they should be above the issues that they would stumble over. That is not true. You must be patient with the people you work with and the way you learn that is to understand how patient God was with you and me.

2.) God Will Give You Wisdom

As you work with people and invest in people, God begins to exercise you, and then you will get wisdom to use the Biblical principles and know how to apply them. I think most important when you work with people, that you may not be able to solve their problems. But you understand that you never want to leave them without a plan to get out of whatever they are in. Wisdom will help you look at them and then give them a plan. The light at the end of the tunnel. The ability to see that no matter how dark their world is, there is a way out and you get the wisdom to be able to do that.

3.) You Will Learn the Patterns of Human Nature

I think this is the most important aspect of your exercise program. Being able to recognize the patterns that human nature falls into. You look at people and they have all kinds of issues and problems. When you have wisdom, you understand that all of their problems will all come down to just a few patterns that you will want to look for. Being able to help them to the best of your ability, to see and understand the patterns. Because in understanding the patterns and the answers found in the word of God, they show you how to deal with each pattern. This is what we are doing in our Patterns of Human Nature class. In time God will give you the patience and wisdom to look at things through the patterns. Then you will gain understanding. Understanding why people have the problems that they have and how they got into them. Not only for you to understand, but to take them and help them understand it. Because the only way to get out of something is to understand how you got into it.

4.) Through All of This You Will Get Long-suffering

Going the distance with people. Not everyone turns the corner as fast as we would like them to. When you are dealing with people, it takes time. When dealing with people, they can get discouraged and to the point where it is not moving fast enough, or they are struggling. Having wisdom and understanding the patterns brings you to the long-suffering where you can get them to see it takes longer to get out of the problem than it did to get into it. It takes no time to get into a bad situation, but it can take you a long time to get out of that situation. But they need to understand that there is a way out.

Most of all, I think that as God exercises you and God strengthens you, we all see how helpless we really are to help anybody by our own abilities and in our own strength. It comes down to God's power and strength. Not just the ability to react naturally to somebody's circumstance, but to have the ability to respond supernaturally to their circumstances. Helping them to see that they got into their mess by their own strength. But they will get out of it only by God's strength.

➤ Understand not Everybody is Going to Make it

I love the ministry, and I can't see myself doing anything else in life. It is the number one thing in my life. It always has been as far as God and what God wants me to do. But there is always a downside to the ministry, and it is something that you have to come to terms with if you are going to stay in ministry. Whether you become a pastor or you take a large chunk of my ministry and you work it with me. There are going to be some realities that we must understand. It is hard sometimes. The reality in ministry will be that not everybody is going to make it.

It all comes down to the choices that they make in life. We can have all the Biblical principles, but at the end of the day, it comes down to the choices that we make in life. It is just two simple choices. You either are going to go your way or you are going to go God's way!

I have seen people that have gone their way, and they are not bad people. The tragedy is they have done it their way for so long that when you try to help them break that cycle it is hard. We have all seen it where they all get on fire and start for a while. They get into Discipleship I, then they go from that to Discipleship II. Then because this is what life is, they come to the place when they decide to go God's way. At that point there are going to be some things that they are going to have to deal with. Some things that they are going to have to change in their life. There comes a point at the beginning where they are all for that and they get into Discipleship I, they are playing volleyball and are going to play softball. But in the process of time as God's Holy Spirit begins to speak to their heart, they are now faced with something that they will have to deal with. Some aspect in their life that they have gone as far as they are going to go until they deal with it. At that point, it is simply too much to break that shackle, and they are gone.

I know how that bothers some of you because you have talked to me about it. You get frustrated with it. I understand that because you do everything you can to help people. You give them the best chance that you can for them to make it. But at the end of the day, we all come back to that cardinal rule in dealing with people. You all know what it is. You can't want somebody to do right more than they do. It just comes down to that. This is where through your dealing with people and their indifference to God and His word, that we learn how our abilities in a natural sense will never be enough. You begin to see that it is all based on God's strength in our lives and the people's lives that you are dealing with. It can be hard sometimes. It is the downside of ministry. I have seen it affect a lot of people and discourage them. I can't let that happen to me and I learned a long time ago, **my goal is to save as many as I can.** But I know you are not going to win and help everybody. Even though you wish you could. You have to learn that you put your emphasis and your focus on the ones that stay and the ones that you can invest in who do something for God. You can't always worry about the ones you lose, because you did everything you could do.

➤ Most of God's People are not Going to do Anything for God

We live in a world in Christianity where most of God's people are not going to do anything for God. You need to understand that. I think sometimes we forget that. I think sometimes because we love the word of God so much, and we enjoy what we do so much, that we just can't figure out why everybody else wouldn't love it too. The day and age that we live in Christianity, not

too many people are going to do what they need to do for the Lord. We can spend time going back through the book of Revelation and in the first three chapters and talk about the Laodicean church age. But I would be preaching to the choir. You know what I am talking about. It simply comes down to the day and age that we live in. **Your way or God's way!** Let's be honest. The whole world is geared to give you everything to take you away from God's way to make it your way. You learn a great truth about people who don't make it. I always focus on this, and it helps me keep my perspective. That is you learn a great truth through exercising your senses in dealing with people and that is the weaknesses that people have. I don't care who they are, they come into this church and have a problem. But I see it in God's frame of reference. It may be a problem, but it is probably the beginning of the greatest opportunity of God turning their life around.

If they just get to the end of self and realize that their way of doing things isn't going to work anymore. And begin to allow God to take their life and to trust in God's strength instead of their own. Life will simply be about the choices that people make!

➤ We Trust in God's Strength First, then Lead Others to God & His Strength

I think the greatest lesson you will learn in dealing with people will be that they cannot fix it in their own strength. I can't help them in my own strength. We must get to the point where we trust in God's strength first and then lead others to that. It must be God's way and God's strength. Then learning to trust in that. That is hard today. This is not a criticism toward anybody. I understand how hard it is. If you are a young man or woman here today and you are saved, I wouldn't trade places with you for anything in this world. Because of what you are up against. You came in and were born into a world and into a Christianity, that nobody around you understands what the real Christianity is like. You were born into a world that doesn't even recognize that there is a perfect Bible anymore. You were born into a world that has taken everything that were the great things of God and tell you everywhere you turn that those are the strange things of God.

At least when I grew up and got right with God, there was a resemblance of what real Christianity was. There still were churches that held the truth. There were still men and woman that were the soldiers for Christ, that were on the firing line. You guys were born into a world where there was none of that. On top of that you got born again into a Christianity where there was none of that. I know that the deck is stacked against you. You are in a Christianity that is foreign to the Bible.

I can't even imagine if you are unsaved and trying to figure out life on planet Earth. America is an insane asylum that is run by the inmates. I don't criticize you. I feel sorry for you and all it does is reinforce in me the dedication to save as many of you as I can. I take you young men and ladies that are saved and hopefully, while my time on earth is still here, I can give you a little glimpse of what it really ought to be like. For you that are here this morning that have never trusted Christ as your own personal savior, to help you see that you have got to quit going your way and you must begin to go God's way.

II. Psalms 18:1-2 My Buckler

Today we are going to move deeper into Psalms 18.

1. *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.*

My biggest problem today in the day and age that we live in is that I was born in the wrong time. I watched a movie last night that was made in 1952 called the Greatest Show on Earth. It shows you the inner workings and mindset of the country's attitude through the story about the Ringling Brothers and Barnum and Bailey Circus. I was only two years old. It shows how the circuses went from town to town. They had two trains, sixty cars on a train with all the animals. As I sat there and watched it, then it hit me. It showed me the train coming into town and all the towns' people coming down to watch the train unload all the animals. They had a parade all the way to the place where the circus was going to be. I was probably five or six years old when Barnum and Bailey came to Canton, Ohio.

Right up at the end of my street is where the train stopped, and they unloaded all of those animals and there was a great caravan right out to the fairgrounds. I sat there and thought to myself, that was a day and age that nobody would understand today. Life was so much simpler back then. Life was so much easier back then. It shows kids going to the circus with their families enjoying it. Today we have kids that are always on their iPhone and never talk to their family. It showed a lifetime that I was born into. I look around today at the indifference of people because of the world that we live in that has given us the mindset that we are in today. I look back at Christianity and the way it was back then and how it is today.

I will always be thankful for that early time in my life and the men back then who were still around. They all have gone home to be with the Lord. God saw what he wanted to do with me, and he wanted to give me an understanding of the two worlds. The one back then and the one that I am preaching to today. Because I look at you out there and I see you swallowed up in this world system that you cannot really understand what the real deal is.

➤ Continuing to Build on our Foundation, Adding to our Faith

So far, we have developed some incredible truths for our own personal life out of Psalms 18 on a daily building process week by week. We started out by seeing our love for Him was based on knowing Him. That was so prevalent back in the day. It is nowhere today. Then based on that laying and building our foundation on a rock, building a fortress on that rock. Through our fortress understanding the offense and the defense that God is going to deliver us in our life no matter what we do for Him. Never losing the true God in your life. The God of our fathers, the God of the Bible through the landmarks. Back in my day that was not an issue. Back in my day it was a simpler Christianity. It wasn't as confusing as it is today. I get it! It wasn't as compromising as it is today. It was more black and white back then than it is today. Too many gray areas. That is why the Bible says it is important for God to exercise your senses to discern good and evil. Because there is no discernment of that today. Week by week we have added to

our faith. I don't know what you are doing with it. I am doing everything I know how to do. We have the outlines done each week for you and I am hoping you are doing something with it. I hope that you begin to see that in the world that we live in we have to come back to the sanity of the word of God. The only way we do that is to put the building blocks of the Christian life, Isaiah 28:9-10, line upon line, precept upon precept. To whom shall he teach doctrine! Here a little, there a little.

*9 Whom shall he teach knowledge? and **whom shall he make to understand doctrine?** [them that are] weaned from the milk, [and] drawn from the breasts.*

10 For precept [must be] upon precept, precept upon precept; line upon line, line upon line; here a little, [and] there a little:

➤ My Buckler

Today I want to talk about one of the most unusual and unknown aspects of the Christian life that is found right in the middle of our building process. I want to talk to you about an aspect of our spiritual warfare that we hear absolutely nothing about today. We have come all through these and now the next thing that he talks about here in verse 2 is something called "my buckler". Most people today have no idea what a buckler is, how it was used, or its purpose. But in our text here today it will represent one of the most important aspects of your Christian life as you grow. If you are going to grow. All of you should understand by now the difference between the church triumphant and the church militant. You and I right now in the day and age that we live in, this church, we are the church militant. I know this is foreign today. Christianity was once looked at as a true spiritual warfare. It is no longer looked at that way because the white flag has been raised in almost every church in America today, if not around the world. The church militant is about you and I taking the attitude of a soldier of Jesus Christ and a world, a warfare, and a battle. But the reason why Christianity and churches are not strong, we have too many conscientious objectors in churches today, spiritually speaking.

2 Timothy 2:3-4 tells you and me that we are to endure a hardness as a good soldier of Jesus Christ. That is so foreign today!

*3. Thou therefore **endure hardness, as a good soldier of Jesus Christ.***

4. No man that warreth entangleth himself with the affairs of [this] life; that he may please him who hath chosen him to be a soldier.

Christianity is now about love and peace. It is about getting along with everybody. It is about Kumbaya. But Hebrews 2:10 says that Jesus Christ is the captain of my salvation.

For it became him, for whom [are] all things, and by whom [are] all things, in bringing many sons unto glory, to make the captain of their salvation perfect through sufferings.

If we wanted one book to go back to lay this out it would be the book of Joshua. The book of Joshua is a picture of the battles and wars that Israel fought when they crossed over Jordan. It is a picture of Joshua as a type of Jesus who will lead you through the battles that you have to fight. That is foreign today! Most of God's people couldn't even find the book of Joshua. Add insult

to injury in Ephesians 6 you have Paul laying out the seven pieces of armor spiritually speaking, for our warfare. I have always been amazed at this. When Paul lays it out, he lays out the armor of a first century Roman soldier. I know exactly why he did that, and here comes in the importance of understanding history.

➤ A History Lesson on Rome & the Roman Soldier

You will find out at the time that Paul writes this in Ephesians 6, the Roman army has conquered the known world. The Roman army was the greatest military power in all the world at that time. By 300 AD Rome had conquered the known world and sat on over three or four million square acres. Rome had conquered all of Europe, all of Africa and the Middle East. We all know about the Roman Colosseum that is in Italy. What most people don't know, and this is a great principle, there were over 250 colosseums as big as that one or bigger throughout the Empire from North Africa to central Europe to Italy. Everywhere Rome went she built another Rome. Every country that she conquered, she converted it into a Roman world by building the colosseums. As the old saying goes, "all roads lead to Rome". Wherever Rome goes they built that country to be like Rome. If that isn't one of the greatest assets to understanding the Roman Catholic church which comes into being about a hundred years later, I don't know what is.

I understand exactly what Paul was thinking. Paul was a man who sacrificed everything in his life. He was a man who made statements like, to live is Christ, but to die is gain. Paul was a man who had such a fervor, such a burden and such heartache for the lost world. He is clearly the greatest Christian that ever lived. As he lays out our spiritual armor, he is looking at that first century Roman soldier, because Jerusalem was occupied at this time. Jerusalem was under the Herods and under the Caesars. They had crucified Christ. They are permeated throughout all the Middle East and everywhere he looked he saw Roman soldiers of that first century. He knows the power, might and fighting ability of the Roman soldier. He is saying to himself, if I could get God's people to fight and stand for God like these Roman soldiers do for Rome, we could win the world to Christ as they have won it for Rome and the devil.

I understand that because honestly, I do the same thing. I look at the incredible military special operational units that are in the world today, especially in America. You have the Navy Seals, the Special Forces, the Force Recon, the 82nd, the 101st, and the Rangers Battalion. Soldiers who are not satisfied with just the status quo. Soldiers who will sacrifice everything they know to be the best at what they do. Just like Paul looked at that first century Roman soldier who had conquered the world and was the greatest military power in the world. I look at what we have today in this country with our military who do incredible things. Their courage, dedication, commitment, and training. If I could get God's people to get with God and the spiritual things like those guys do it for the government, we would win the world to Christ. But we have lost that haven't we?

Messages like this are foreign to people. They don't even understand what you are talking about. But it was true in the Old Testament. We saw it a couple of weeks ago. We saw it in our Biblical Patterns class on leadership, the Old Testament under David's mighty men of valor in 2 Samuel

23. Men that were in Israel's army were higher and better. More trained, more motivated, and more dedicated than your average Israeli soldier of the Old Testament.

➤ The Shield of Faith (Ephesians 6) Compared to the Buckler

Having said that let's talk about the buckler for a moment. Let's talk about what a buckler was, and how it was used. First off, just by definition it was a small shield. You will note that it is not found on the spiritual list of armor in Ephesians 6 that Paul talks about. There is a reason why it is not found in Ephesians, but it is found in Psalms 18. There was a major difference between the shield of faith in Ephesians 6 and the buckler in Psalms 18, though they are both shields. The Roman shield of Ephesians 6 was probably four to five feet high, and it probably weighed 60-70 pounds. It was carried into battle on an offensive platform. It was used in combat and associated with attacks in the Roman army against other armies.

We think modern warfare is so different, but it is not. We think artillery is a new thing. No, no, back in the day when an army would charge somebody, you would have 2,000 to 3,000 artillery guys back there with bows and arrows. They would all shoot those arrows one at a time, one after the other which would rain down on the troops that were coming. It was called artillery in the Bible, just different. You would have 10,000-20,000 troops attacking a stronghold or fort someplace and there would be 5,000 guys raining 5,000 arrows down on you every ten seconds. So, you know what the Romans did? They were the first modern tank on foot. They all had those big shields. If you have 20,000 guys out there charging, then they would have the first row put their shields up in one direction to cover the front and sides. The guys in the middle would put their shields on the top and they had an opening just big enough in the shield to put their javelins out there. They would all move in unison, just like a human tank. The arrows would hit the shields instead of the soldiers. They knew how to use a shield, but it was primarily an offensive weapon.

The buckler was also a shield, but it was much smaller in diameter. Maybe 12-18 inches in diameter and obviously it weighed much less. Some of them were made of wood and some out of metal. They had sharp spike-like things on the outside of them and it was used for close combat. Hand to hand fighting. They could use it to deflect sword thrusts. But at the same time if he blocks the sword he could swing around and cut somebody in the face like a pair of brass knuckles. A good soldier with a short sword in one hand and a buckler in the other is something you didn't want to mess with if he was trained in how to use it.

➤ Our Battles Can Never be Fought in Our Own Power & Strength or with Somebody Else's Armor

As you find in Psalms 18 the key areas that will give us the victory in our church militant, our personal warfare. You will now find in dealing with people another level of ministry. You will find yourself in time in close combat, hand to hand, with the devil's enemy. Most of God's people don't know what I am talking about. This battle as all battles can never be fought in your own power and strength or with somebody else's armor (David and Goliath). As you work with people and as God exercises you, strengthens you and grows you, you are going to find within

this world system false religions. One of the first things that went when you lost your King James Bible was doctrine. **Doctrine is what separates the truth of God from the heresies of God.** So, when you lose doctrine, you don't have any enemies in Christianity anymore. Without doctrine we are just a bunch of people trying to get to the same place by different means. I am not just talking about your general garden variety unsaved people. They will be relatively easy to deal with. They have problems in their life. But in time you will find out that the devil has his elite troops too, and in most cases, they are hands down better than any Christian you are going to find today. I say that to Christianity's shame! The devil's elite will rip you apart and turn you upside down and inside out. We have lost the concept of the church militant. We are now the churches of conscientious objectors. Ninety-nine percent of God's people up against Satan's elite will get hammered if you even attempt to go hand to hand with them. Sooner or later, you are going to get your head handed to you.

➤ Seven Great Awakenings & Seven American Cults

We know that when God began America the pilgrims came over in 1600, they landed at Plymouth, Massachusetts. God had plans for America and God began to bring Bible believing people over to this country that were under the persecution of Rome. God wanted a nation like Israel that would start with the word of God and take the gospel to the ends of the world. That would become the greatest nation on the face of this planet by God's blessing like England was in her day. We see that God's Spirit begins on the East coast and then follows the flight plan of the Bible moving East to West.

God begins to develop America, and everybody went westward from New England to Pennsylvania to Ohio to the Rockies and finally California. God followed every move that man made in America with the great awakening of the Holy Spirit of God. There are seven awakenings in America's history starting in the 1700's and going up to the last one around 1950. There have been no more great awakenings since that time for obvious reasons. The devil knew God's plan for America just like God knew what He wanted to do. As God was building His Spirit and taking men and women (just like you) and building them to reach America and in time the world to Christ. He gave them seven awakenings, but then the devil gave America seven cults which become the American cults. They didn't start in Europe; they started right here between 1800 and 1900. In 1800 the first attack against the Great Awakening was by the Mormons. In 1830 was the Seventh Day Adventist. As the Spirit of God moved, by 1840 you found Christian Science, by 1850 as the Spirit of God moved you found the Church of Christ. In 1860 as the Spirit was moving the devil raised up the Jehovah Witnesses. Then in 1889 Unity and by 1900 he puts the icing on the cake with the charismatic movement.

➤ By Design these Seven American Cults were Part of the Devil's Plan to Stop Christianity in America

I have not talked about Roman Catholicism because they are not an American cult. But they are a lot easier to deal with because I have never met a Roman Catholic that knew what he believed about anything he believed. But these groups are the devil's hardcore. They are his elite, and they were founded in America between 1800 and 1900. By design they were part of the devil's

plan to stop Christianity in America. Today they are worldwide. These groups will be the close combat that most of God's people will get swallowed up by today.

You take the average Christian that has been saved 20-30 years, and you take a guy that has been a Jehovah Witness for five or six years. He will tear you apart. He will rip you six ways from Sunday. He will gut you like a deer and leave you hanging on a tree. You will have no way to deal with him. You have lollygagged your life in Christianity and did your own thing. You went to church and were a nice person. You never took the church militant or your spiritual warfare seriously. God's people ought to be ashamed of themselves. They have a devotion that Christianity doesn't have. They have a fervor that was lost years ago in Christianity. They have a dedication and a zeal for what they believe and have put their whole lives around, and they are going to hell! We who are going to heaven couldn't stand or contend with them for five minutes. From day one they are trained to defeat Christianity.

If God's people would spend half the time that these cults do learning the truth of God's word and letting God exercise their senses and use them, we would turn the world upside down too! Hey, if I didn't know what we believe, you and me, was the absolute truth of God and the absolute way it should be; I would know it by how little God's people care about it. I would know it by how God's people have rejected the truth, rejected the concepts and are all in retirement. I would know it by how little God's people care about the true God, the true word of God and we couldn't contend with them for ten minutes.

➤ Learning Lessons the Hard Way

I learned this lesson the hard way. We are going to walk down memory lane together. It is about 1971. My dad had gone home to be with the Lord, and God had really done a work in my life that I needed to get my life back where it needed to be. I had gone forward on a Sunday night and got right with God. Got my life back on track. I got in with Mel Sabaka in the College and Career class. I made up my mind I was going to do what I needed to do. Every year in August in Canton we had the Stark County Fair. You know at all fairs they have those big, long buildings where you go through, and everybody gives you free stuff. Mel got a booth there and we all staffed that booth. It was the thing where people were walking by, and we would go out with a clipboard and ask them if they wanted to take a religious survey. The first night I won three people to the Lord, or so I thought. I can tell you I was on cloud nine that night. This is me, Bob Alexander in his stupidity as a young Christian.

This was the beginning of God teaching me lessons the hard way. Barb lived right down the street, so I parked my car there. So, I am walking down there after we are done and the heavens are opened, and angels are singing! Here is what I thought. I had been in church enough to see all these guys older than me really knew their Bible and I knew that took a lot of work. So, me in my brilliance, after winning three people to Christ and walking back on cloud nine with the angels singing. I said to myself, I am not going to really study the Bible. I am just going to win people to Christ. I am not going to get into it like those guys got into it. Tonight showed me that I can win people to Christ and that is what I am going to do. I am going to dedicate my life to winning people to Christ. The deep things of the Bible, studying the Bible, that is all good, but I

think God is calling me just to be a soul winner. I was so happy! I drove home that night, and I was convinced that I was going to just be a soul winner. That I didn't have to do the stuff that all those other guys were doing, which was good. But God had called me just to be a soul winner because I won three people to Christ tonight.

So, I went out the next night standing there with my clipboard. I see this young guy walking down there and I say hello sir, my name is Bob we are doing a religious survey, would you like to take the religious survey? He said absolutely. We went back and closed the little drapes, and I came down a little list of questions and the last one was the trap play up the middle. It was, sir, do you know if you die today, would you go to heaven? You see that was to be the kicker then when they said no, you would go after them. I said sir if you were to die right now do you know that you would go to heaven? He asked, what about Acts 2:38? What about Mark 16:16? For the next thirty-five minutes he beat me senseless. I wasn't even sure where Acts was, I knew Mark was in there someplace. He devastated me! I had gotten ahold of a Jehovah Witness. He ripped me up one side and down the other. He gutted me for 30-40 minutes. I had nothing to say. I kept repeating my little stupid remarks and I probably had that dumb look on my face that I have sometimes. I will never forget that. It was one of the greatest lessons God taught me.

I walked back that night to my car. No angels were singing tonight. I said to myself okay, Lord, I got it. That isn't ever going to happen again, ever! I am never going to take my stand for you in such a flimsy way that a guy like that could do what he did to the cause of Christ. Forget me, I was out there trying to tell him about You, and he devastated me. So, I picked up my sword and I picked up my buckler and I went to work. I got me a copy of Walter Martin, The Kingdom of the Cults, devoured it. I got the book Roman Catholicism by Loraine Boettner, devoured it! God hooked me up with a guy by the name of Glenn Maze. He has gone home to be with the Lord, but Glenn had a ministry to Jehovah Witnesses.

Every Tuesday night I went with Glenn to visit Jehovah Witnesses. He taught me everything I needed to know. I bought every book that Jehovah Witnesses had. I got a copy of their bible, the New World Translation. I took all seven of those cults apart piece by piece. I fit them into God's great cult chapter, Deuteronomy 18. But most of God's people don't even know where it is at. It is the chapter that shows you the key thread that every one of them has, even though they are different. I used the landmarks against them. I used history against them. I went back in the Old Testament in 1 Kings 18, and I found out how I was supposed to deal with them and my attitude. I learned the secret to all of them was putting them into a position that they had no answer, just like he did to me that night. I learned that you never come at them from a frontal assault. You always come in the back door when they are looking out the front door. I planned my close combat. I found the weakness that each one of them had and I exploited it. I hit them where they had no answers. Exactly what he did to me except I could find my answers, they didn't have any answers for where I took them. I slashed them with my sword and smashed their face with my buckler. I hit them where they had no answer. I found their weak points and I hammered them.

➤ A Key Area of Our Christian Warfare – Our Ability to Fight in Close Combat with the Devil's Elite

As we look at Psalms and study Psalms 18, we see how God will put things in our lives to prepare us. One of the key areas of our Christian warfare in this Christian church militant will be our ability to fight the fight, hand to hand, close combat with the devil's elite. I will tell you right now my dear friend, we are greatly outnumbered. The devil has many more elite men and women who are much more dedicated to their heresy than God's people are to His word. That is a tragic shame and a terrible thing to admit today. You see, a real combat soldier will be trained, and he will follow his training. But he also will learn about his enemy on his own. He will study them, study their history, their warfare and prepare himself for that close encounter. I read some statistics one time that 60% of Jehovah Witnesses were former Baptists. You know why? Because they didn't have a way to stand when they came to the door and hit them. They convinced them over. I am saying the average Mormon; the average Jehovah Witnesses could take most of you and have you doubting what you believe in fifteen minutes. Because you don't know why you believe what you believe.

➤ We are Outnumbered and ill-equipped for the Battle

Have you ever noticed this? You might want to mark this down. Have you ever noticed in school sports you have your kids in little league, soccer or basketball. But you never find a Jehovah Witness or a Mormon or a Church of Christ. Why? I am not saying there is anything wrong with your kids getting into those sports, unless it becomes the god. If you have your kids miss Thursday night Bible Study because they are playing sports, you are probably going to lose them. You take them out Sunday morning because they have got a game, you are probably going to lose them in time. You are teaching them a terrible thing. I am not against it, but you got to ask yourself, why won't they put their kids in sports like we put our kids in sports? Because we have a tendency to make sports your kids god. They are too busy training their kids to stand up against people like you and me. I am not saying you don't get them involved in sports. I am trying to get you to see the difference. They take their heresy and what they are teaching that is going to send them to hell, much more important than God's people teaching their kids how to go to heaven. We are outnumbered and God's people are ill-equipped.

God wants to train you; he wants to exercise you. Not just to deal with people's common variety problems, he wants you to be effective in hand-to-hand combat. He gave you the sword of the Spirit which is the word of God. But now he is giving you the buckler. You deflect their swords with the buckler and when you catch them off guard you rearrange their molecules in their heads. Being able to use the instruments of war that God has given us spiritually speaking. This is the problem with God's people today.

➤ David's Mighty Men of Valor were Outnumbered Yet Still Got the Victory

In the Bible back in 2 Samuel 23 with Davids mighty men of valor, you could go through each one and they all have one thing in common. They are the examples and our ensamples. The one thing every one of them had in common, they were all greatly outnumbered. He had one guy

where the odds were 800 to 1 and he took them all on and killed them. It seems impossible, doesn't it? It was 800 of the devil's best against one mighty man of valor and he killed them all. You have another guy that took on the whole Philistine army. One guy! Another guy took on a whole troop of Philistines. That is about 200 men. Another three took on another 200 at the Cave of Adullam. We read that and think, wow! No, no! These guys were greatly outnumbered against these odds and with God's power and strength they defeated overwhelming odds. Another guy killed two lion-like men of Moab and then he kills a lion in the pit. Then the Bible just throws in the time of snow. You people read that and don't even understand what the time of snow has to do with the story at all. There was a giant Egyptian and one guy is standing there with a staff in his hand. This gigantic Egyptian has a big spear in his hand and this guy goes up and plucks the spear out of his hand and stabs him with it. He kills him with his own spear and all he had was a staff. All of these are pictures of what God wants to do with you and me. He wants us to be his elite. He wants us to be able to be trained to such a fine tune that none of the devil's elite (seven cults) will send you home with your tail between your legs.

You see it back in 2 Kings 6 where Elisha and the young man were surrounded by the devil's army. The young man, like most young Christians, looked up and saw them all surrounded. He was fearful and afraid. But Elisha was the man of God. Elisha was the man that understood the power of God. He understood the deliverance of God, the close combat of God. He says hang on son, look up here. When God opened their eyes, they saw the great spiritual host of God's heavenly host that was there through God's strength, and God's power for their deliverance. Elisha makes one of the greatest quotes ever when he says fear not for they that be with us are more than they that be with them!

We are God's people! We are Christians! We are soldiers within the church militant! We are supposed to be surrounded! All you see around us today is the shameful and disgraceful condition of most of God's people. Absolutely no desire to be anything for God. Our lives are so busy doing what we want to do. The judgement seat of Christ which should be first and foremost on our minds, is so far in the back of our minds. We are busy doing all the things that we want to do. We play at Christianity. God's people today have absolutely no desire to be anything meaningful for God. The devil has got his elite out there that are just tearing this country up. God has got a remnant, a few men and women, who can stand up to them with a sword in one hand and a buckler in the other.

➤ Training Today's Youth for Tomorrow's Soldier's for Christ

We have had a lot of good youth pastors in our church over the years that have really helped build our youth group to where it is today. God always gives us the man and his wife that we need to get us where we want to go. Today we have Jared and Kenzie who do a phenomenal job. Most of you don't know this. He trains those kids. You know what he is doing with them on Sunday mornings before church? He is taking them to a cult church so they can see and learn firsthand what is wrong with them. Then comes back and teaches them out of the word of God what is right with the word of God. They got to watch babies being baptized last week for salvation. They got to hear a message that is the most godless perverted message you could ever hear. They got to go to a church where gays sit right down front and hold hands. He is training

them at that early age not to be like most of God's people 20-30 years from now. Today the army of God's people are not the church militant anymore. It is a church malignant. Weak and powerless. Not only in their own lives, but any form of ministry is only a pipe dream.

➤ This Church isn't for Everybody

Now you know why this church isn't for everybody. I make no apology for it. I don't want everybody. Mike and I had a conversation about this, and he feels the same way because our churches are so similar. Did you ever notice how the growth in our church doesn't come from people who have gotten mad at one church and go to another church and then get mad at that church and go to yet another church? God brings us the best. God brings us young men and ladies that most of you bring in and win to Christ. We don't have to detox them of what they have been taught. God will bring some of the oldies that were with me years ago, back. Who know what we stand for, that want to be part of this and are soldiers personified. But we don't build our church based on people who are just church hopping from place to place. It only takes about one or two weeks, and they say I don't think that is what I want. They want no part of any church militant. They have been saved all their adult life, and they couldn't defend their faith against one of these satanic elites to save their souls. They are Laodicean Christians that want a Laodicean church. I am okay with that. Our strength in this church is in our young couples and singles and our older people that have been around that are standing in the gap and can fight their way out of anything. It takes a particular breed of young men and ladies who still have that fighting spirit that you find today. God seems to keep bringing them to us and we get them saved and train them. We don't have to deal with 20-30 years of Laodicean stuff that we got to get out of their brains. They don't know anything but what we teach them.

➤ There is no Discharge from this War as a Christian

I look at Christianity today and I just talked with two guys last week. They were both 68-69 and are retiring, and I never understood that. In my mind I believe Ecclesiastes 8:8 that there is no discharge from this war. When you are a pastor, I don't see an end date unless God kicks you out of it. You know I may get killed in a car wreck or have a heart attack. But as far as just the natural thing I look at Moses. Moses lived to be 120 years old, and he fought and was strong and his natural strength never abated right up to the day he died. I look at Joshua. Joshua died at 110, right up to the day he died he was staying in that fight and doing everything that God called him to do till God took him out of the fight.

➤ Caleb Wholly Followed the Lord

If there is anything I learned in ministry over the years watching guys on both sides of the fence. Don't ever take yourself out. God will take you out when he is ready to take you out. Then you can go home in good shape. But I think my favorite is Caleb. I don't know how long Caleb lived. We lose track of him after Joshua 14. But Caleb and Joshua were two of the guys that went over to spy out the land. When everybody else was scared and afraid, those two guys were not. The last time you find Caleb is in Joshua 14 the great chapter where God divides up the inheritances to the tribes of Israel. Caleb gets his own inheritance, Mount Hebron and Joshua

says to him in verse 9, Caleb wholly followed the Lord. The last thing you see of him he is 85 years old, and they just gave him a mountain that is filled with God's enemies. All by himself, the last time you see him is with a sword in his hand and a glimmer in his eye. He says I want that mountain; it is mine. That is the last time you hear of him. He went up that mountain to claim his inheritance with a sword in his hand.

III Summary

Building for God today, men and women who will be God's mighty men of valor. The Army recruiting posters say, "Be all you can be" and "Be an army of one". There are not two greater slogans than that to apply to Christianity. Be all you can be and like Caleb, going after your inheritance, be an army of one. A sword in one hand and a buckler in the other. Claiming your inheritance. It is your way or God's way. Your way even as a Christian, you lose your inheritance. God's way, God will give you the mountain. He just didn't give him a flat piece of land. He gave him a mountain that he had to climb, that had caves and rocks for the enemy to hide behind. It wasn't an easy inheritance, but Caleb had learned that it doesn't matter, because he knows that God gave him that and he is trusting in God's strength. He didn't care who was up there or how many. It was his mountain. Don't worry about how many are out there or how surrounded you are, it is your inheritance!