

I. Introduction

Today we are going to start our third section of Psalms 37. It will be in my estimation one of the greatest practical personal sections that you will find in all your Bible. All the verses of the Bible, we love them all, and they are all important to us. But you also know that there are certain verses that God gives you, maybe He gives them to you when you go through a tough time. He might have given them to you when you went through a great time. But they stand alone. All the other verses that are great and good, that you can learn from, there are verses that stand alone in your life that really are your favorite verses. You have them memorized; you have them on your refrigerator. They are verses that God gave you that impacted your life and you want to keep them close and never forget them.

Well, not only is that true of verses in the Bible, but it is also true of sermons that you will hear. I know in my own personal life that I can recall a number of sermons that I will never forget. It was during hearing those that God did something in my life that changed my direction or changed my focus. I can actually say that a part of my life was never the same once I heard that sermon. I could stand up here and go through those, and I am sure that is true of many of you out there today.

The message today is out of this third section of Psalms 37 and what its impact should be on every child of God who really wants a relationship and a walk with God. Let me just preface what I am going to say here. This is a message that you need to hear, but at the same time, it is a message that not all God's people want to hear. It isn't going to be an easy message in some aspects. I think it is a no-brainer, but people are different.

II. Psalms 37:23-28

So let us read our text today. As always, we will begin to break it down for you. We are going to be in Psalms 37 for a couple more weeks. Psalms 37, starting in verse 23 and to verse 28.

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| <p>23. <i>The steps of a good man are ordered by the LORD: and he delighteth in his way.</i></p> <p>24. <i>Though he fall, he shall not be utterly cast down: for the LORD upholdeth him with his hand.</i></p> <p>25. <i>I have been young, and now am old; yet have I not seen the righteous forsaken, nor his seed begging bread.</i></p> <p>26. <i>He is ever merciful, and lendeth; and his seed is blessed.</i></p> <p>27. <i>Depart from evil, and do good; and dwell for evermore.</i></p> <p>28. <i>For the LORD loveth judgment, and forsaketh not his saints; they are preserved for ever: but the seed of the wicked shall be cut off.</i></p> |
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III. Israel's Journey-How God Ordered their Steps

Today, I want to build this message around verse 23. I think this verse is so important. I think it is one of the premier principles found anywhere in the Word of God. It simply says this: "*The steps of a good man are ordered by the LORD: and he delighteth in his way.*"

As always, I want to break this down for you. Let us look at the **historical** aspect first. This great verse is clearly seen, and we just came through the book of Exodus on a Thursday night a couple of weeks ago. We know that Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers, and Deuteronomy—those four books of the five, called the Books of Moses, Genesis being the first—we know that all of those books deal with the leading of God with the nation of Israel. What I want you to begin to see here as we develop this is that I want you to know and understand that the historical aspect that we are going to look at first will actually lay the foundation for where we are at in the church age. But we will develop that as we go.

You will remember from Exodus, in Exodus chapter 12, Israel comes out of Egypt by the blood of the lamb. We know that Egypt is a type of the world, and that lamb is a type of the Lord Jesus Christ. We made all those connections when we came through. Then I showed you, as we got into chapter 13 and on, how we saw the life of the believer characterized by the things that the nation of Israel went through as they started their journey to the promised land.

I remember telling you that for the nation of Israel, the promised land was the land that God had for them. So that when they got there, if they stayed true to God, stayed true to the Word of God, the promises that God gave them of the land would be fulfilled and they would never get kicked out of that land. If they didn't, then God would have taken those promises away, kicked them out of the land, which He obviously did in 606 BC. For you and for me, the promised land is our spiritual growth through our journey in life. We get to that place in a spiritual sense, not a physical land like Jerusalem, but in a spiritual sense where you and I live by the promises of God, and have the victory in those promises. So hence, for Israel, it is a literal piece of ground that was promised to them. But for you and for me, it is the spiritual life that we have through spiritual growth that we now live our lives in the promises of God. As long as we stay in those promises, we always keep the blessings.

❖ God Ordered Israel's Steps in Three Ways

Now, going back to Israel here for a moment. When you look at that and study it, you will find that there are **three ways that God ordered their steps.** They are going on their journey to the promised land, and God ordered their steps three different ways. We want to look at that for just a moment.

1.) The **first** way that He did was **the Ark of the Covenant.** Turn over, if you would to Joshua chapter 3 for a moment. In Joshua chapter 3, we find that Israel is on the move. God is bringing them on their line of march, which is going to bring them through the wilderness and then take them into the promised land. I told you before, that was only a two-week journey. It took them 40 years. We talked about the reason for that. We begin to see here, in the historical application, the prophetic inspirational picture for you and for me. When they started that march, the Ark of

the Covenant had to be out front. That Ark of the Covenant is a type of Jesus Christ. It is a picture of God ordering our steps by us following Jesus Christ. If you look at it a little closer, you will find that it had to be out 2,000 cubits. In other words, they are here marching, 2,000 cubits ahead is the Ark, and they are following that Ark. The question would be, why 2,000 cubits? Because it is a picture of God leading you and me, spiritually now in the church age, under 2,000 years of the church age. So, you have 2,000 cubits, right there!

*2. And it came to pass **after three days**, that the officers went through the host;*

3. And they commanded the people, saying, When ye see the ark of the covenant of the LORD your God, and the priests the Levites bearing it, then ye shall remove from your place, and go after it.

*4. **Yet there shall be a space between you and it, about two thousand cubits by measure:** come not near unto it, that ye may know the way by which ye must go: for ye have not passed this way heretofore. Joshua 3:2-4*

Incredible picture of what God was doing with them. You will also find in verses 2 and 3, it talks about that they are not to leave, till after the third day, a picture of the second coming of Christ. You will notice that Ark is a type of Christ. Their line of march, the order of their steps, was to follow that Ark.

2.) The **second** thing that you will find that He had for them, and you will find this in Exodus chapter 13, verses 17 through 22, the order of their steps, was as they marched during the day, **they followed the cloud.** So that cloud, wherever you find it in the Bible, is a picture of the return of Jesus Christ. So, they are told to follow that cloud. That cloud, inspirationally, is a picture of you and me in the church age, following Christ based on what we know about His return.

3.) The **third** thing was during the night. They could not see a cloud at night. It would be hard to even see the Ark at night, 2,000 cubits ahead of them. In their line of march, as they followed the steps of the Lord, at night, it **was a pillar of fire.** That pillar of fire lighted their way, so they would not get out of step because God was ordering the steps of the nation of Israel to get them to the promised land. The Bible says that “*the steps of a good man are ordered by the Lord.*”

*And the LORD went before them **by day in a pillar of a cloud**, to lead them the way; and **by night in a pillar of fire**, to give them light; to go by day and night: Exodus 13:21*

So, you begin to see here in the Old Testament passage, I thought it was interesting—when He begins to lead them out of Egypt, He tells them in verse 17, that God had a particular way that He wanted them to go.

17. And it came to pass, when Pharaoh had let the people go, that God led them not through the way of the land of the Philistines, although that was near; for God said, Lest peradventure the people repent when they see war, and they return to Egypt:

18. But God led the people about, through the way of the wilderness of the Red sea: and the children of Israel went up harnessed out of the land of Egypt. Exodus 13:17-18

He took them out and took them a particular way. That tells me there were other ways they could have gone. But He clearly tells you in that verse that He brought them a particular way to protect them so they would not be afraid till they got ready to really understand God. That is a picture of your spiritual growth. When God begins to order your steps, and remember, “*the steps of a good man are ordered by the Lord,*” when He does that, He is going to take you a particular way. Boy, you cannot miss that! That is so absolutely incredible to understand. **All of these three things are a picture of God leading us today, ordering our steps to go His way, not our way.** You will see how this all fits into our lives today in just a little bit.

IV. Doctrinal Application: Israel in the Tribulation

Doctrinally, the leading of the steps of a man will be the nation of Israel found in the tribulation period. You know that Israel is likened to God’s son in Exodus chapter 4 in a physical sense. You and I are likened to God’s son in a spiritual sense. You will find that God leading them through the tribulation period, God will order their steps because of the antichrist and him trying to wipe them out.

The text for this will be Matthew chapter 24. We have talked about it many times. When you want to look at it, you will pick it up in verse 3 and it goes all the way down to verse 27. We will not read it all today. But he says in verse 3:

*3. And as he sat upon the mount of Olives, the disciples came unto him privately, saying, **Tell us, when shall these things be? and what shall be the sign of thy coming, and of the end of the world?***

There are two questions that they ask Him. One is going to be—He is on the Mount of Olives, (where He comes back to at the Second Coming) and they ask Him question one, what is the sign of your coming? Question two, and what is the end of the world? When you come down through verses 5 through the end of the chapter, you will find the answer to that. But my point that I want to make today is “*the steps of a good man are ordered by the Lord.*” He says there in verse 5:

5. For many shall come in my name, saying, I am Christ; and shall deceive many.

6. And ye shall hear of wars and rumours of wars: see that ye be not troubled: for all these things must come to pass, but the end is not yet.

7. For nation shall rise against nation, and kingdom against kingdom: and there shall be famines, and pestilences, and earthquakes, in divers places.

8. All these are the beginning of sorrows.

9. Then shall they deliver you up to be afflicted, and shall kill you: and ye shall be hated of all nations for my name's sake.

He says in verse 11:

11. And many false prophets shall rise, and shall deceive many.

Then He tells them in verse 15, and here is what we want to see:

15. When ye therefore shall see the abomination of desolation, spoken of by Daniel the prophet, stand in the holy place, (whoso readeth, let him understand:)

16. Then let them which be in Judæa flee into the mountains:

17. Let him which is on the housetop not come down to take any thing out of his house:

18. Neither let him which is in the field return back to take his clothes.

19. And woe unto them that are with child, and to them that give suck in those days!

20. But pray ye that your flight be not in the winter, neither on the sabbath day:

21. For then shall be great tribulation, such as was not since the beginning of the world to this time, no, nor ever shall be.

Let me explain what you have here. We know for the first three and a half years of the tribulation period, the antichrist shows up and he brings in relatively peace and safety and he deceives the whole world. The abomination of desolation, as he talks about in Daniel, is also connected to Daniel's 70th week. That will be the great tribulation period. This will be in the middle of the tribulation, the three and a half year mark. Matthew chapter 24 coming on down through here is talking about that. He says here, the antichrist is now coming after the Jew. In verses 15, 16, 17, 18, you see God ordering their steps, telling them to run out of Judea, out of Jerusalem, do not take time to get your clothes, run into the mountains. This is where you will find in Revelation chapter 12, verses 1 through 17, where the nation of Israel is given two wings of a great eagle that lead her into the mountains through the wilderness. God orders Israel's steps. God leads them through the tribulation just like He did in Exodus. In both cases, He orders their steps.

❖ God will always give you a man to follow.

You will notice in Exodus, and this is very important, that God gave two men to the nation of Israel for them to follow. God will always give you a man to follow. In the Old Testament, it is Moses and Aaron. But in the tribulation period, He again gives them two men and it will be Moses and Elijah. Moses represents the law, Elijah represents the prophets, and those two men will lead them. So our passage in Psalms 37 will deal with two different applications historically and doctrinally.

V. Inspirational Application: The Steps of a Good Man

There is also an **inspirational** application to you and to me, and verse 23 says, "*The steps of a good man are ordered by the LORD: and he delighteth in his way.*"

First off, I need to explain this. I think we need to define what a good man is because this seems to be a contradiction with Romans chapter 3, verse 12, which says that there is none that doeth good, no, not one. In fact, this is one of those cases in the Bible where both verses are correct. Let me show you how you know that. First off, let me show you how it works. Jesus Christ is God's goodness to us. Jesus Christ is God's righteousness to us, but Jesus Christ is also God's goodness in us. Before we were saved, there is none that doeth good, no, not one. All of our righteousness was as filthy rags in the sight of God. You know that. But the moment you got saved, God gave you not only His righteousness, but when you got Jesus Christ, you also got His goodness. Romans 2 verse 4 will tell us that the goodness of God is what leads us to repentance.

*4. Or despisest thou the riches of his goodness and forbearance and longsuffering; not knowing that **the goodness of God** leadeth thee to repentance? Romans 2:4*

You and I have no goodness in us, but when you get saved, you get Jesus Christ and that is God's goodness that now resides in us. In Romans chapter 15, verse 14, we are told that after you are saved, you now are full of goodness, filled with all knowledge, able also to admonish one another.

*14. And I myself also am persuaded of you, my brethren, that ye also **are full of goodness, filled with all knowledge, able also to admonish one another.** Romans 15:14*

When the Bible tells us that "*the steps of a good man are ordered by the Lord,*" I want you to understand this, He is talking about a man or a woman who is saved and now has God's righteousness, Romans 5 verse 1.

1. Therefore being justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ:

He has the goodness of God in the sense that his salvation is the Holy Spirit of God living inside him, which is now leading and guiding him into all truth.

❖ How do we Know the Steps we Take are Ordered by the Lord?

Once we understand that, there is a real question all of us have to answer today. This is where the message gets a little, oh, how should I say, stepping on some toes maybe. The real question for every child of God will just be one simple question after you are saved. Life after salvation is a journey. I told you it is a journey like in Exodus, Israel to the promised land. But that journey, verse 23, has to go His way. The question we ask ourselves today, notice I did not say the question I am asking you. I cannot ask you this question, I have to ask myself this question. But the question that every one of us should be asking ourselves today, how do we know? **How do we know the steps that you take in your life or your journey were ordered by the Lord? Or is it that you are doing what you want to do and trying to pretend that God is in it?**

I try to get as many of you as you grow into ministry with me working with people. You might think that it is beneficial to the people you are working with. That is certainly true. But probably, it is more beneficial for you working with somebody than necessarily the person you are working with. I think that you will help them do some great things. But in your spiritual growth, you cannot ever forget the value of dealing with people in what you learn. The question is, do we learn?

❖ As you work with people & grow yourself you learn about human nature

Hey, I will use myself for an example here, but some of you are right behind me here. When you spend 50 plus years in ministry, you are going to see all kinds of people. When you lay out the Bible for years and years and years to what, hundreds, maybe thousands of people, over the years, you cannot help but catalog the different reactions that people have to the Word of God. Wouldn't it be wonderful if everybody just fell in love with the Word of God the first time they found it, responded to it, and did everything they were supposed to do with it? Yes? Amen? But that is not going to happen. I wish it would, but it is not going to happen. So, as you work with people and you grow yourself and you learn from what you are putting into them, you will learn some things about human nature. You may be saved, God's people may be saved, but you still have an old sin nature and you still have a human nature.

You will remember when we came through the Book of Exodus, and I love the way God did this. He showed us down in Egypt before we got saved under Pharaoh, the devil. God brought us out under the blood of a lamb. Then I showed you how every chapter after that, starting with chapter 13, 14, 15, 16, every one of those chapters showed us a different aspect that we build into our lives as we grow. I love the way He did it. He covered every aspect. I cannot think of anything He left out. But when He gets to chapter 32, and if you remember, this was our final section in Exodus. When He gets to Exodus chapter 32, all the way to the end of the chapter, this is where He really shows you the reality of working with people in God's ministry. This is where the people of God, who God delivered out of Egypt, they turned on God. They turned on the man of God that God gave them. God gave them the 10 commandments. God gave them the law, and they continually transgressed that law, violated that law and did their own thing. God's people!

I tell young guys this, when they want to go into the ministry, you better get down hook, line, and sinker, Exodus chapter 32. Where they start with a golden calf and all the way up to chapter 40. The idea of getting out of God's way and then either blaming God for it, which they are famous for doing, or in many cases, they get out of God's way, but they still pretend that God is in it. All the way back to Genesis, where you have the beginning of the study of human nature. Let me just say this. I do not care how spiritual you are, how spiritual I am, or try to be. How do you know? **How do you know that God is leading and your following His steps? Or are you just falling into the trap of the early stories in Genesis, of pretending God is in something when He is not?**

I learned this years and years ago and have used this over and over. I have even taught it to you guys in the people ministry. Back in Genesis 3, you want to learn the lessons of human nature. In Genesis chapter 3, yes, we have the fall of man, Adam and Eve. But in Genesis chapter 1 and 2,

God gave Adam everything he needed to know. It was not like He left Adam in the dark. The Bible says that they met daily in the cool of the day. God gave Adam and Eve everything they needed to understand what God's plan was, what He was going to do with them, and what He expected out of them. In Genesis chapter 3, they both get out of God's way. They have gotten out of God's way, His steps of the Lord, and they have decided to go another way. I find it interesting in Genesis chapter 3, verses 11 and 12, God comes down to deal with them. But before He deals with Adam and Eve, the Bible says that they know that they are naked, they run and they make aprons of fig leaves, a picture of self-righteousness, and they cover their nakedness with those fig leaves, and then they hide from God.

*7. And the eyes of them both were opened, and **they knew that they were naked**; and they sewed fig leaves together, and made themselves aprons.*

*8. And they heard the voice of the LORD God walking in the garden in the cool of the day: and **Adam and his wife hid themselves from the presence of the LORD God amongst the trees of the garden.***

*9. And the LORD God called unto Adam, and said unto him, **Where art thou?** Gen 3:7-9*

The first thing that happens, I am telling you, you can write it down. If I do not see you writing it down, I am going to be very upset. **The first thing that happens when you start getting out of step, you hide from God.** But you still pretend you are not. I love it! God comes down, they are hiding from Him. You know, God will play the games that we play with Him. You do know that, right? We like to play games with God. God will play games with us. But here is the problem. You want to write this down. He plays it better than we do! You betcha He does! So Adam and Eve got the little fig leaves on, you know, and they are hiding out in the bush or someplace. God comes down, first thing out of His mouth; "Adam, where art thou?" Do you think for a moment God did not know what bush he was hiding under? Do you think the God of the universe that created everything, had a problem saying, "Come out, come out wherever you are! You know what God will do sometimes? When we hide from God, and we pretend we are in the steps of God when we are not. God will simply ask you where you are at, even though He knows where you are at. You know why He asked him that? He knew where he was at. He wanted to see if Adam was honest enough to tell Him where he was at.

What did Adam do? I love this. Genesis chapter 3, verses 11 and 12, God comes down with Adam and He says, "Hey Adam," He says, "what in the world is going on?" Adam said, "Well, God, I will tell you, the woman that **you** gave me." See, it is God's fault. She gave it to me and I did eat, but **you** gave her to me."

*11. And he said, **Who told thee that thou wast naked?** Hast thou eaten of the tree, whereof I commanded thee that thou shouldest not eat?*

*12. And the man said, **The woman whom thou gavest to be with me, she gave me of the tree, and I did eat.** Genesis 3:11-12*

Do you know how many times I have heard and seen people who really screwed up and yet they get mad at God like God did something that made them do it? Then we have our second case of

human nature. This will be in Genesis chapter 3, verse 13. Now He comes to Eve and He says to Eve, "What hast thou done?"

*And the LORD God said unto the woman, **What is this that thou hast done?** And the woman said, The serpent beguiled me, and I did eat. Genesis 3:13*

Who knows who Flip Wilson was? Well, we just dated ourselves, nobody else knows who he was. He was a comedian and he had a famous line that he always said that everybody just roared at. It was the way he said it and the way he did it, that when somebody would get on him, he would say, "Oh, the devil made me do it." I do not think Flip Wilson was on TV back then, but Eve must have got a inkling of it because when God confronted her, you know what she said? "*The devil made me do it.*" You know what? You start to see the biggest problem we have as God's people. Because in both cases, and also yet today, **the biggest problem you have and I have, God's people not taking responsibility for the actions that we get into.** We either blame it on God, or we blame it on somebody else. This is human nature 101.

You want to see another one? Oh, here it is. Genesis nails us, man! No wonder it is the book of the beginnings. Genesis chapter 4, verses 1 and 2. This is classic.

*1. And Adam knew Eve his wife; and she conceived, and bare Cain, and said, **I have gotten a man from the LORD.***

2. And she again bare his brother Abel. And Abel was a keeper of sheep, but Cain was a tiller of the ground.

I always tell you that you read the Bible with an investigative eye. I see this all the time. You see, when you get out of step with God, you are going to do your own thing. You always try to bring God into it to make it look and make people believe that it is really of God when it is not. Come on, the strangest thing in the Bible, verse 1. She bare Cain and says, "*I have gotten a man from the Lord.*" Then the next verse, she bears Abel and says absolutely nothing. Yet, when we investigate what she said, nothing could be farther from the truth. When the story plays out, Cain most certainly was not a man from the Lord. The man that was from the Lord, she did not say anything about him. 1 John 3:12 says Cain was of that wicked one. She is hiding something.

*12. Not as **Cain, who was of that wicked one**, and slew his brother. And wherefore slew he him? Because his own works were evil, and his brother's righteous. 1 John 3:12*

I do not have time to get into it today, but you are looking at one of the deepest, darkest sins found anywhere in the Bible. The passages that crack the case for you will be matching up with the words in Numbers chapter 25, and also with 2 Corinthians chapter 11, verse 3. We do not have time to do it this morning. But she is completely out of step, trying to hide her sin by bringing God into it. "*I have gotten a man from the Lord.*" No, you did not. You have got one who was of that wicked one. God is not a hundred million miles around this. But you are going to find people who are hiding from God, who will not take responsibility for their actions. They are out of step with God, and God is not ordering their steps. When they want you to believe and want you to fall in line with their little ruse, "*Oh, I have gotten a man from the Lord.*" They always bring God into it. You know an unsaved man will do the same thing. You do know that!

The name of God, Jesus Christ, there are two most powerful names in all of the universe. So when a Christian wants to add weight to his deception, he will bring God's name into it, "Jesus is leading me." When an unsaved man wants to add weight to what he is saying, in a negative sense, he will use God's name, God or Jesus Christ as a cuss word. He brings in the most powerful name in the universe to justify the actions of what an unsaved man says and justify the actions what a child of God says, out of step with God. *"The steps of a good man are ordered by the Lord."* We got one question, guys, one, not you, me, we. We got one question today that you have to answer. **Who is ordering your steps?**

❖ God's people will get out of step with God. Who is ordering your steps?

Want to see the best one? I saved the best for last. This one is in Exodus chapter 32. Moses goes up on a mountain. He is up there with God. He is gone a little longer than everybody anticipated. Now the people say, "He is not coming back, he is dead. We should have never come out of Egypt, (a picture of the world) make us gods." Let's make us a golden calf." So they broke off their earrings, their rings, and all of that stuff, and they threw it in a fire, and out walked this golden calf, and they are worshiping it! This is Exodus 32. You know what happened in Exodus chapter 20? Exodus chapter 20, they got the law, the 10 commandments. They all knew the 10 commandments. They came down on the tables. You know what the first one was? *"Thou shalt have no other gods before me."* You see, don't kid me. I am not necessarily talking about you. I am just talking about human nature in general. They had the law of God in their hand that number one was, have no other gods before me. Here they are, what? Eight chapters later, ten chapters later, putting another god before Him. How do you explain that? I will tell you how to explain it. The same way some of God's people can have a King James Bible in their lap today, and you do what you want to do over what the Word of God tells you to do.

That was not the best part. That was the mean part. You know what the best part is? Here it comes. They made the calf. They are worshiping it. They know what commandment number one said. Now in verse 5, Pastor Aaron, who made the calf, brought them into idolatry, defaced and defamed everything that God told him. Then he has got the audacity to say to them, "We got a nice calf. This is great. We are all worshiping, dancing around and having a great time. Tomorrow, we are going to take the calf. We are going to have an offering unto the Lord." Are you kidding me? They had gotten so far out of step that they thought the golden calf was okay and God was going to bless it. Been there, done that, bought the T-shirt!

God's people will get out of step with God. They will get bad advice like Moses and Jethro, or I do not know, just get out of fellowship, get mad about something, I don't know. When they want to justify their bad decisions, they will tell you, "Oh, God is leading me. I prayed about it. God is telling me, you know, He is leading me. I mean, I prayed about it." I am going to tell you something. I have learned this from bitter experience. So trust me. When they come into your office or they tell you on the phone or whatever the case may be, there is really nothing you can say. The moment you say, "This is not of God, and you are out of fellowship or you are out of step," you know what you are going to get? "Well, who does he think he is? How can he tell me when I know what God is doing?" So you shut your mouth.

I have told you many, many times, and we saw it in Matthew chapter 24 two times, the number one thing the devil will do is try to deceive you and me. Try to get you to think and me to think that we are following God when in fact we are not. You will know that everything I am giving you, I throw a principle into you because that is what you do. But the classic example of this is found in Luke chapter 2, verses 41-52, where Jesus and His brothers and sisters and His mom and Joseph, they are on a journey. They traveled for three days. A little family, maybe one, two, three, four, five, six, seven, eight, nine people at the most, a little group walking together. It was three days later that one of them said, "Anybody seen Jesus?" Know what that tells me? We can think we are walking with Him when we are not. "*The steps of a good man are ordered by the Lord.*" The greatest deception will not come from the devil trying or succeeding in deceiving you. **The greatest deception will come in you and me deceiving ourselves. How do you know who is ordering your steps?** I have told you, this is probably, as far as the judgment seat of Christ is concerned, and God, the blessings of God in your life and God using you, this is probably the greatest message you will ever hear. Not because I am preaching it, because of the content in it.

VI. Six Key Principles for Knowing God Ordered Steps

I want to give you six key principles that you never want to forget. The Bible says, "*Prove all things.*" It did not say prove some things. It said prove ALL things. So if you were put on a spot today, forget you. If I was put on a spot today, how can I prove that my steps are ordered by the Lord and not by me? What I am about to give you will be worth a million dollars in dealing with people to help you better understand this issue of human nature.

- **First Principle:** When a man or a woman deceives themselves, they in turn will always define themselves.

When a person, man or woman, deceives themselves, they will always through that deception define themselves. Deceiving and defining will always go together. The principle, how about the life of Jacob? Here is a man that all of his life, in fact, the very name Jacob meant "supplanter," he deceived his way through life with God and people around him all his life. You have got to go all the way to the end and see how that worked out for him, because it didn't. You see, when a man or a woman stops having their steps ordered by the Lord and now doing their own thing, a blind man could not miss it.

In 1 Corinthians chapter 8, verse 3, another great verse that I hold very dear to me. It simply says

<i>3. But if any man love God, the same is known of him. 1Corinthians 8:3</i>

Let me show you something. I love marching bands. I was in a marching band in high school. I know some of you were. Some of you played musical instruments. I played the trumpet. I go to watch some football games and things like that, high school kids. At halftime, you get the band coming out, they just stand there and they are playing and when they are done, they get off. I look at that and I think, man, have times changed. When I was in the band, it was precision marching. Our band director was old school; we drilled and drilled. We drilled every morning

before school for an hour. I mean, we would march down the field, and it was just like that. But I tell you, it gets in your blood. One time, it was one of the last shows that we did. He put together out of the Semper Fidelis, what they called a simple Marine drill. We marched down the field, peeled off, and split. I mean, the precision was unbelievable. You do not see it much anymore, but I just love watching it. When I was in the army, I used to watch the dress and reviews when the general would come in or something, and they would bring every battalion and they would be marching through there, the band would be playing. I mean, they are coming down there, and the commander of the battalion is out front, and He snaps left as he crosses that flag, and the band is playing. It is crazy, man. But you know what I learned? You can watch 200 people marching, and in those 200 people, if one person is out of step, the whole thing loses its effect. The beauty is 200 people in step, and there is some dingbat out there who is out of step, and the whole focus shifts from what everybody is doing to dingbat here who cannot stay in step.

I call this my 300 to 1 equation. In most churches, you will have churches of 300 or 400 and one person gets out of step, and all those 300 people are wrong, and that one person is now right. See how that works? All you have got to do is watch within any church who is out of step. Just like watching the band, watching the parade, watching the military march. Everybody is in step, right? If somebody in the middle of that drops their rifle, everyone sees it. Out of step!

There are three things you want to remember. This is still in our first principle.

- 1.) A person out of step with God will always be contrasted to the church that is in step with God.
- 2.) You cannot fake true spirituality.
The second thing that you need to understand; you cannot fake true spirituality. The quicker you get this one, the better off you are going to be. You can talk the talk, you can say the right thing. But there are certain things that go along with loving God, "*If any man loves God, THE SAME is known of him.*" There are certain things that identify with you loving God and you cannot fake them.
- 3.) When you deceive yourself, you have now defined yourself.
Like Eve, "Oh brother Bob, I love you, oh brother Bob, God this, God that." "Oh Eve, I have gotten a man from the Lord." Sure you did, and how did that work out for you?

If I could be honest today, maybe not here. I am prejudiced to you guys. But most of the churches that I have associated with and been around and seen over the years, one sign ought to be hanging around most of God's people's neck. You know what it should be? "Out of order." The order we like to pretend we have in our life from God is nothing more than the disorder that we have in our life because we are not going His way. Do not tell me about human nature!

- **Second Principle:** The Lord always pays for what He orders, 100%.
Or you are going to pay for what **you** have ordered, 100%.

The principle for this will be found in the story about Jonah, Jonah chapter 1, a great example. You see, Jonah was called by God to go to Nineveh. God's steps ordered him to go to Nineveh. But he gets out of step, he does not want to go to Nineveh. So, he goes down to the boat dock, and he finds a ship that is headed to Tarshish. I know human nature. I know what I have done. I know what we all do. When you do not want to do what God has ordered your steps to do and you want to go another way, you go find the ship and then I can just hear it. "Thank You, Lord, for this ship to Tarshish. Now I really know You did not want me to go to Nineveh." Oh, look at it. Don't miss it! Look at verse 3.

3. But Jonah rose up to flee unto Tarshish from the presence of the LORD, and went down to Joppa; and he found a ship going to Tarshish: so he paid the fare thereof, and went down into it, to go with them unto Tarshish from the presence of the LORD. Jonah 1:3

He found his ship going to Tarshish, but he paid the fare thereof. Listen, when you go your way, when I go my way instead of God's way, you will pick up the tab and what follows him will be what will follow you and me, the biggest horrendous storm that you are ever going to face. You know, the greatest proof that God is not in what we tell people He is in will be the storms that we have in our lives.

➤ **Third Principle:** When it starts wrong, it is going to end wrong.

You can take it to the bank. I have seen it 50 plus years worth. Like Jonah, you too will wind up in Whale University, and you will graduate with your PhD in bad choices. The storms that come could destroy everything that God has. You realize that in life, we all have to make decisions. I hope you also realize that just one bad choice, one bad decision can cancel the rest of your life, everything out there that God had for you. Do you understand that this morning? Do you understand the absolute necessity to have God ordering your steps instead of you deciding you are going to go your way? It is not just about the storms you get into in life. It is about one bad choice; one bad decision can end everything that God was going to do for you the rest of your life. Been there, done that, have several of the T-shirts!

I have heard it all, I have seen it all. I have heard every excuse. I have seen every excuse of human nature that God's people use when they get out of God's steps. I have said this a hundred times. We live in a Christianity today where people like to pick and choose out of the Bible what they want to follow or what they do not want to follow. All the time, Genesis chapter 3, God is leading me. My ministry has been full of examples of that.

I had a young guy a number of years ago in our ministry for, I don't know, five or six years. For three or four months, they kind of dropped the ball and were in and out, were not here more than they were here. One day he came into my office and he says, "I just want you to know I am going to leave here and God has called me to start a church." I said, "Listen, son, this is a bad decision. I love you to death and you are a good kid; you are not a pastor." He says, "Well, I do not know how you can tell me that, when God has called me." My answer to that, "Well, I just did." Now, he and his wife, they were good people. But as I said, they kind of got out of step for four or five months and suddenly, and he comes in to me and he says, "I just wanted to let you know and I wanted to ask for your blessing." I looked at him and I said, "Well, I appreciate that,

but you know what, you do not have to worry about my blessing. But you better worry about, do you have God's blessing?" And he didn't. He defined himself, he defined his ministry. For the next 10 years, he tried to build a church, couldn't build one. The only people he ever got for the most part were people who were mad at some other pastor and had a problem at some other church that went there. So, in time, they could get mad at him and leave his church. His heart's desire, honestly, is he wanted to pastor, but he was not pastor material. Believe me, I know what it takes to become a pastor. He did not have it. He was a good kid. He could have done a lot of things, but he deceived himself.

Listen to me, I love you to death. There will be times in your life when you want to do something so desperately that you will deceive yourself to think that God is leading you to do it when He is not. This guy's whole dream was to pastor a church. He has no church. He has a bunch of riffraff bumkins. He has had a church for, I do not know, 10 or 12 years, and he still has to work a part-time job because the idiot sticks he has got for members do not give enough to support him as a pastor. You know what? We started this church and we stepped out by faith. We saved up enough money that we could go a year without ever getting any kind of decent salary. You know what? This church paid for my salary less than six months. You go 10, 12 years, and your church is still not paying you? **God always pays for what He orders, or you pay the tab.**

➤ **Fourth Principle:** Good people do not leave good churches.

We had a family come in one time, and they were always a little bit of Pharisee. They said, "Well, you know, I do not think the women should wear slacks." They did not like Halloween, they did not like Easter, that was too pagan for them. So they decided they found another church down there, someplace, and they were all going to move down there and now we are going to a spiritual church, and we are really going to find what God has for us. Five years later, he committed suicide. Who knows what happened to the rest of them? Now, how do you explain that kind of stuff? What? God is leading me, I prayed about it, God is showing me, praise the Lord, and then you get down there and said, "Yeah, I prayed about it, and all that stuff, but today I decided to kill you." Really? How do things like that—they play their Genesis chapter 3 card, wind up in a disaster? Happens all the time. *"The steps of a good man are ordered by the Lord."* End of Story! How do you know? How can you prove all things when it comes to God ordering the steps of a good man versus somebody getting out of step?

The context of our passage here in Psalms 37, here lies the answer. Drop down to verse 31 in Psalms 37.

31. The law of his God is in his heart; none of his steps shall slide. Psalms 37:31

There is the proof right there. The Word of God in a man's heart, doing what the Word of God says, following the principles, staying in step, and your steps shall not slide. Your decision, did you follow the principles found in the Word of God? Or are you just playing Genesis chapter 3? You see, the principles found in the Word of God, are the only proof that what you are doing, what you plan to do, saying you are going to do, is of God, or is it of you?

Obviously you have heard me say this many, many times before. You do not go out from a church to do another ministry or do something that you want to do. You do not go out. The model in the Bible, the principle in the Bible, Acts chapter 13, verses 1 through 3, **you do not just decide you are going to go out, you get sent out.** Look at Acts chapter 13. I hate to keep doing this. I do. I am sorry. I hate to keep doing this. What is that, Bob? Bringing the Bible into this. Look at Acts chapter 13, verse 1, 2 and 3.

1. Now there were in the church that was at Antioch certain prophets and teachers; as Barnabas, and Simeon that was called Niger, and Lucius of Cyrene, and Manaen, which had been brought up with Herod the tetrarch, and Saul.

*2. As they ministered to the Lord, and fasted, **the Holy Ghost said, Separate me Barnabas and Saul for the work whereunto I have called them.***

*3. And when they had fasted and prayed, and laid their hands on them, **they sent them away.***

*4. **So they, being sent forth by the Holy Ghost,** departed unto Seleucia; and from thence they sailed to Cyprus.*

Now, do you see that? It was not Paul and Barnabas coming around saying, "Hey, let us go out to the mission trip. Let us just, yeah, let us go tell the pastor what we are going to do." No, no, they said nothing. It was the leadership of the church through their ministry that recognized God was doing something in his life. They sent them out. Now you can do two things. You can accept that or get an exacto cutter and cut it out of your Bible. Either way, that is how it works. They did not go out, they were sent out. Verse 4 says, "**So they being sent forth by the Holy Ghost,**" through the structure of the New Testament local church. They did not pick and choose. They understood the structure of the New Testament local church.

You know what? Today, with most of God's people, the husband says, "I am a picking." And the wife says, "I am a choosing." And in both cases, God is not a million miles around it. There are times that we, dangerous times, it is not drinking, it is not fornicating, it is not getting high, it is not whatever. The most dangerous time in your life is when you want to do something so desperately, you deceive yourself that God is in it when He is not.

Hey, I have seen girls and guys ruin their lives because the potential spouse that they were going to marry was not saved. They wanted to get married so desperately, they actually deceived themselves into thinking that they were saved. And the storm that comes down the line, I am telling you.

- **Fifth Principle:** Anything other than God's way through the biblical principles will be your way through your deception.

This one is worth another 100 million. Anything other than God's way through the biblical principles will be your way through your deception.

I had lunch with a dear couple this last week, love them to death. They have been in our church for probably 11 or 12 years. We have been talking about sending them to a particular church to

really help minister in that church. Some things had to happen and had to change and take place. We went out to lunch and he said, "We have talked about this and now is the time." And I said, "Okay, brother." I said, "Give me the date that you are going to be here." And I said, "Our church is going to send you and your wife out. I want you to preach that Sunday." He says, "Oh, I would love to thank everybody in the church that has done so much, that has got us where we are." And I said, "You have earned the right to it." I am not going to tell you who it is because I do not want it to ruin their thing, but the bottom line is this. **You do not go out, you get sent out.**

I have got some young men right now in this church that God is going to call you into the mission field. But you will never have to just come to me and say, "Oh, I am going to go do this." You see, that is what the church and the pastor is for. It helps you pave the way. We got a church in Overland Park, Victory Baptist, and they want a pastor. So I have been sending guys in. I told the guy it may work out for somebody or may not. But the bottom line is, you got some health issues, we can help you preach and take care of some things. So we got guys going over there. I am about ready to end that first section, sending in another section of guys. I told him if somebody gets called out of this church, to go pastor that church, it will not be them just decide to go there. You, the pastor and I will sit down, and we are going to find out what you are going to do for them and what freedom they are going to have. I do not want one of my young guys going into a situation that looks good now, but we have to come back later and do something you did not tell me. I want everything on the table before I send somebody over there." That is the protection that God gives you through the structure of a New Testament local church with a pastor who works with you and God growing you and using you. It is coming, it is coming. Rest of it does not really matter.

- **Sixth Principle:** God never violates His own principles. We will, but He will not.

VII. God's Ordering of Bob's Steps to Kansas City

Give me just five more minutes and then I will be done. I need to explain something to you and I need for you to listen. You can put your pens down. Nothing here that you need to write down, there will be no more verses. Just listen to me. I want you to understand why this verse is so important to me and why I preached what I preached today because of how God used it in my own life. I have never really told this story to anybody. When I gave you all that about being sent out versus going out, it is based on my own experience with God's steps in my own life and how God ordered my steps to Kansas City.

Proverbs 20, verse 29 says that there is some value with an old man with a gray head. So cut me some slack. My family roots go back to a little town in Maryland called Frostburg. Online listening today is my cousin, Darlene, who still lives in the same house that my aunt, Nettie and uncle Clyde lived in that we would go visit. Aunt Nettie was my dad's sister. My dad's family and my mom's family were coal miners. They were born around 1912, 1915, went through the Depression, through World War II. My dad's family, if I remember this right, five or six brothers and two sisters. The dad either left or died when they were all young, left the mother to them.

They lived in a log cabin. I know this sounds like one of these stories, "I used to walk two miles to school every morning." I actually saw the log cabin, me and my sister way back in the day. I must have been eight or nine years old, probably gone now. But they were born and raised in a log cabin. No electricity, no inside plumbing. That woman raised all of those kids by herself.

During World War II, my mom and my dad and most of my mom's family left Frostburg to come to Canton, Ohio to get jobs in the steel mill during World War II. My mom worked at Timken Roller Bearing Company. My dad worked at Republic Steel. In time, they bought a house at 1451 Alden Avenue, Southwest. Right across the street was a church that a pastor had started in 1947, which was called the Canton Baptist Temple. My mom and dad got saved and joined that church. My mom and dad were very involved. Mom and dad had two kids, my sister Sharon, who is also watching this morning, and me.

Well, something happened and mom and dad quit going to church. You know how it works, in time, so did I. From about age 13 to 21, I was completely out of fellowship. I graduated from high school, joined the Army in 1968. Shortly after getting out of the Army, my dad died of lung cancer. My mom, who I was living with at the time, wanted to go back to church, so I took her. It was there I got right with God. It was there that God used some miraculous events of a preacher actually dying in the pulpit, speaking to me, and died of a heart attack. It was through that God gave me my father in the Lord, Mel Sabaka and Jeanne Sabaka. They basically adopted me. Many of you knew Mel and Jeanne from years past. He has preached to us over the years. For the next five or six years of my life, Barb had gotten saved, we got married, and we served God together with Mel and Jeanne. Mel was my mentor. Mel was my father in the Lord, and he taught me the Bible and taught me the art of ministry with people.

It was here, that I met Herb Koonce. It was here that Jim Lake became my best friend. It was here that Joe and Karen Sylvester became my best friends. It was here that Pat Dean had become my best friend. Pat Dean and I were in kindergarten together. Some of you know Sam Gibb, the evangelist that preaches around, Sam is an incredible guy. Sam was with us back then. All of us were out of Mel's ministry.

Well, after five or six years, my world fell apart. Mel informed me one day that he now had been called to New York to start a church in Staten Island. The same church that Mike Veach is pastoring now. Many of my friends went with Mel to New York, got jobs and helped support and build that work. I could not go. Nothing in my life ever in my heart, broke my heart more than watching the man in my life that God had given me, leave and go to New York City and I had to stay there. The reason why I could not go, this is where I want you to understand. I worked at the Hoover Company. They made vacuum cleaners. This had to be 1972, someplace in there. The big recession hit and I lost my job.

Barb's dad had a grocery store, Laverne's Market and he turned that over to her brother Tommy. Well, Tommy and her dad, I mean, you do not find a nicer, tighter family. So, Tommy called me in one day and he said, "Hey, I want to give you a job." I said, "Oh, okay." He says, "I want to make you my produce manager." I said, "Okay." He sent me to three or four different schools, paid a lot of money for them to teach me and I became the produce manager. But I tell you, my

whole heart ached. I did it because I needed a job, but that is not where my heart was. I was heartbroken. I could not go. I did not know it at the time, but God fixed it that I could not go. You see, Tommy was unsaved. I had a testimony to him and he had spent a lot of money putting me where I went. I just could not violate the principles of going to him and saying thanks a lot, but I am leaving you in the lurch and I am going to New York. I could not do that. That would have been a violation of every principle that I held dear to my testimony. So I was stuck. I was miserable. I tried to help the new guy as best I could. My heart was not in it. I missed the man that God had put in my life and had taught me everything. He is up there preaching and building a church, and I am taking old, wilted lettuce, singing, "Revive us again."

About a year later, this was 1975, I had a phone call from Mel Sabaka. He says, "Hey, how are you doing?" I said, "Oh, I am doing fine, what are you doing?" He said, "I got a question for you." I said, "What is that?" He says, "You want to go be a youth pastor in Kansas City?" I said, "What are you talking about?" "I just got a call from Truman Dollar and he is looking for a guy to come out and be his youth pastor and I gave him your name." Now, everybody knew across the country that Mel trained leaders. He built young men. So when they wanted somebody, they called him. So, I said, "Well, I will talk to him" I am thinking to myself, God, what are you doing to me? I mean, wasn't that enough? Now you are going to rip the rest of my heart out." It was not 20 minutes later, Truman Dollar calls. He says, "I would like to fly you out and interview you. Mel speaks very highly of you and he trains good men. I would like to interview you for a job of youth pastor in our church. Would you fly out and talk to me?" Now what do I do? The principle, God opens the door, you have to go through it. It does not mean I am going to take the job, but you have got to make decisions based on all your options.

So I flew out to Kansas City. It was Thanksgiving in November, never forget it. He hired me. He says, "I want you to come." At that point, I threw up one of those Nehemiah prayers. Do you remember what a Nehemiah prayer is? When he is standing before the King there in Nehemiah chapter 1 and 2, and he is talking to the King, but he is throwing a prayer up to God saying, "You better do something because I do not know what I am doing."

So I flew back to Kansas City, did not tell anybody. This is when God gave me the verse. I already had it. "*The steps of a good man are ordered by the Lord.*" I did not say anything to anybody. He wanted me to fly out every weekend to preach, fly me out on Saturday during the day and fly me back Sunday after church, which I did. I wanted to get a lay of the land. Never said nothing to Tommy. I couldn't. I would be on a plane in Kansas City, waiting to take off, and I can remember, I would say, "*Lord, the steps of a good man are ordered by the Lord.* Now, I ain't good, but I need you to order my steps because I do not know what to do." After about three weeks of that, on a Monday morning, Tommy called me into his office. I had not said anything to anybody. Tommy called me in his office and said, "Hey, Bob," I said, "Hey, Tom, what's up?" He says, "Oh, not much. By the way, you are fired." I said, "What do you mean I am fired?" He says, "I heard about your offer in Kansas City. I could never stand in the way of you going and preaching your heart's desire. You go to Kansas City." The steps of a good man. You see, I could have rationalized it and went to New York. Believe me, I am capable of doing that.

So now I am off to KC. So, I thought. I told him I am coming. We have to sell our house. Now, Kelly was born on December 7th, and I have got to be out there January 1st. I have got to sell my house. Who buys a house at Christmas? It is too big to wrap. So, in the church, there was a realtor, Mr. Bowlinger, who loves the Lord. I hired them to be my realtor. The house did not sell. I am on a plane to Kansas City and every time I am on a plane, I am saying, "Lord, what am I going to do?" I cannot afford two house payments. It came down to the week before I was to go. Nobody bought it. I went to Mr. Bowlinger and I said, "Sir, what do we do here?" He said, "About what?" I said, "The house has not sold." He said, "Do not worry, Bob. I will buy your house from you, and I will sell it if you go to Kansas City." *The steps of a good man are ordered by the Lord.*

So we pack everything up. Me and Jim Lake are going to drive out that Monday, Sunday night they ordained me. They had a big reception for us. I am praising the Lord, being slapped on the back, but inside I am thinking, I do not have a dime to my name left. How am I going to pay for the gas going to Kansas City in that jumbo U-Haul that gets minus three miles to the gallon? Afterwards, I am sitting there shaking hands. Pastor Henniger came over. He says, "Bob, I appreciate all you did for us and our church. Here is a check for \$500 to help you get to Kansas City." *The steps of a good man are ordered by the Lord.*

So, we headed off. Me, Jim, and the little dog, got to Kansas City, spent every dime of that \$500 on gas and eating. Jim was a big eater, you know, Jim. So when we get here, we unloaded everything into the house, and then I looked at the fine print to drop the truck off in KC. Because it was not a logical stop it was going to cost me another \$200 and I did not have \$200. So next morning, Jim and I drive up from the house to 50-highway right across from the school. The place is still there today. I never pass that way, and I pass it probably four or five times a day, that I do not think of what God did for me. I went in to see the man, and I said, "Hey, I just moved here from Kansas City. I want to drop the truck off," I said, "but I know there is a \$200 drop-off fee, and I do not have the money. I promise you, I just came out to work with Truman Dollar at the Kansas City Baptist Temple and be a pastor there," and I said, "I will get the money to you as soon as I can." He looked at me and he says, "So you are a Christian?" I said, "Yeah." He said, "So am I." He said, "We will waive the \$200 for you." Now you can do with this whatever you want to do with it.

God has ordered my steps for 50 years here. I have told you my personal story in this message for just one reason. I wanted to go with Mel so badly more than anything in my life, and believe me, I am just as vulnerable to deceiving myself as anybody else is. But it was the principles that held me fast. But verse 23 of Psalms 37, "*The steps of a good man are ordered by the Lord*" I just believed that, and I just said, "God, I am **not** going to do something just because I want to do it. I need the proof." You see, my plan, my desire was to go to New York. God's plan and His desire was Kansas City. As good as it looked and how I could have rationalized it to go to New York, if I had gone, and this is what I want you to understand, this is the basis behind the principle of everything I have said today. People are going to come and people are going to go. I know that. I understand that. Some will embrace this message. Some will not. I know that. Some people bring joy wherever they go. I get that. And some people bring joy when they go. I get that. But if I

would have gone to New York, we would not be here today. We would not have what we have. Listen, one bad choice for me to go to New York would have got me out of God's steps to bring me to Kansas City. You and I would never have the blessing and the opportunity for us to serve the Lord together. The eternal effects of us not being together with all God is doing with us would have been a disaster with unparalleled proportions. So will be your bad choices. Through that experience, I learned the importance of Biblical principles in making every decision in my life. That is why I beat them into you, that is why I hammered them into you.

VIII. He Delighteth in His Way

Last part of that verse, and I am done. "*And he delighteth in his way.*" After my salvation in the Word of God and allowing God to order my steps, and I will tell you, please understand me, I am far from perfect. I make more mistakes than you could ever want in your life. I am not setting myself up as someone who has always walked with God. I am just telling you this. I understand the principles. I have two of the greatest delights a man could ever have. The first one is my family, ministering with me. If I had went to New York, I would not have Danny. I would not have Woody. No man could ever want two men to take care of their daughters more than these. My wife, my daughters, my son-in-laws. Do you realize that if we were to go to New York, we would not have had these three grandkids. We may have had some grandkids, but all that we have here would have never happened. If I would have rationalized it because I wanted to do something so desperately that I convinced myself God was in it. The second delight is you, this church, my extended family, my sons and daughters in the Lord. The men and women God has brought together for the work of this ministry. I mean, my coworkers, my co-laborers, I love you more than you could ever know. All because of God's steps in my life that I was willing to allow Him to bring me here instead of where I thought my heart was.

IX. Summary

I leave you with this. Do what you will with today's message. **I leave two things.** In my 50 plus year journey, and I can say through the Word of God, two things got me where I am at today and gave me what I have today, and you will do well to learn this.

The **first thing**, that I recognize that God gave me a church structure. I never stepped outside that church structure. I understood the church was there for my benefit. I understood that I was prone to get off track and get all messed up and it was the structure of the church that God gave me and taught me the principles through the Canton Baptist Temple. When the time came, I was called by that church and sent out by that church, Acts chapter 13.

The **second thing**, God put a man in my life, Mel Sabaka. That man invested his life and his family in me. Everything that I have learned to invest in you, I learned because a man invested in me. Mel was not perfect. No pastor is perfect. But I recognized that he was the man that God put in my life. Nobody was going to take that spot. I never looked for a better deal. I never thought that the grass was greener on the other side of the hill. I recognized the structure and the man that God had given me and he got me through. He gave me everything that I needed. I never took him

for granted. I never would have thought of leaving him. He was the Apostle Paul of my life and in every sense of the word, I was his Timothy. He taught me how to love people. He taught me how to give everything that God has given to you to those that will take it. But he also taught me human nature and the games of Genesis chapter 3 that God's people will play. These two things got me here and where I am at today and what God has given us. Because I believe that "*the steps of a good man are ordered by the Lord.*" There is no accident that you are here today in this church. Maybe a visitor, yes, but there is no accident that God put you here. It is no more an accident for you than it was when God gave me Mel. Because this is the structure that God will put into your life, build into your life, that you can be everything that God wants you to be, you, your kids, your family, your marriage.