

I. Review

The book of Psalms is probably one of the key books in the Bible. There are more people drawn to the book of Psalms than probably any other book in the Bible. The book of Psalms contains every emotion that we feel in life, and much of it is expressed through the life of David. When we decided to study Psalms, we wanted to do an exhaustive study where we really laid the book out from a historical aspect, from a doctrinal aspect dealing with Israel in the Tribulation and the Second Coming, and then as it applies to your life and my life and the struggles that we have.

My goal for anybody in my church who really desires to get to that level is for you to have a complete understanding of the Word of God. I am not interested in you just knowing some things about the Bible in your Christian life; I want you to know your Bible.

➤ All History Revolves Around the Word of God

At the same time, you will see in our studies that you cannot separate the Bible from history. The God of the Bible is also the God of history. History is simply a record of what God was doing to establish two identities by which He was going to fulfill His plan in eternity, according to Isaiah 9:6-7, a fulfillment of that government. Obviously, the nation of Israel and then the body of Christ. All history will revolve around that, and all history will revolve around the Word of God. That is why you cannot separate the Bible that you learn, no matter where you are in it, from what God was doing down through history.

Most of God's people are not aware of what goes on around them today in the world and how it impacts the Bible or history. Everybody is excited about the World Cup being played throughout the country. I do not really know that much about the World Cup, but I know they are playing it in Kansas City right now, and everybody is excited about that. I saw a thing on television—I do not know if it was in Kansas City or where it was—but the soccer team from Holland is coming over to play. They showed the parade, the buses, the people, and everybody was dressed in orange. Orange is the official color of the Netherlands, and they all were wearing orange hats, orange flags, and everything.

I thought to myself, there is a perfect example of a bunch of people who are doing something and have no idea why they are doing it. Do you know why Holland's favorite color is orange? It is because of William of Orange, who in the 1500s was the king of Holland. He was a born-again, Bible-believing Christian who kept the Roman Catholic Church out of Holland. Later, he became associated with England, but he is held up in Holland as one of their greatest kings, and they do not even know why. Of course, Holland today is about as amoral as a country could ever get. But here again, it shows you how most of God's people look at that and say, "Oh, that guy is wearing an orange shirt. What is wrong with that?" No, you do not understand. The God of the Bible is the God of history, and down through the history of Europe, America, and the world, everything connects back to that Book.

I want my people to understand the Bible. That is why when we do the book of Leviticus, I want nothing left unturned so that you can have everything you need to get into your Bible and make that Bible work for you. That is the goal, and that is the key. I know not everybody is going to do that, but at the same time, God will raise up some young men and some young ladies who will fall in love with that Book, and your lives will never be the same.

II. How Psalms 38 and 39 go Together

This brings us today to Psalms 39. When we read this today and get into it, you are going to see how Psalms 38 and Psalms 39 go together. A lot of the Psalms do that.

In Psalms 38 last week, we saw through David's life the three stages of sin that a man can get into that lead to his complete destruction in this life. It was based on the book of Leviticus, which we are going to get into on Thursday night. The book of Leviticus is about the priesthood and how the priesthood is to stay clean to be the proper priests before God. You can obviously see the inspirational application of that.

In Leviticus 13 and 14, we have the disease of leprosy. Leprosy in the Bible is a type of sin. It starts in your flesh. In fact, I gave you the three stages of leprosy found in those chapters:

1. It starts in your flesh, which is inward.
2. The leprosy spreads to your garments, which is outward, and everybody sees it.
3. The third stage of leprosy, which comes from prolonged uncleanness in a person's life, goes from your flesh to your garment, and then it gets into your home, gets into your house, and it destroys your family.

I showed you out of those passages that in the real disease of leprosy that represents sin, there were **two types of leprosy** that a man could get. One was called the old leprosy. That is basically the struggles that we go through in life—the old man, Romans 7, the flesh. But then the second type of leprosy was a running sore. A running leprosy, ongoing that the running out of that sore affected everything on your body and anybody whom you came into contact with.

Then I showed you that when you get to that third stage, where it goes into your flesh, into your garments, and now into your house, there are seven things that God takes from you that put you into the state that David was in. Psalms 38 was a graphic picture of the chastisement of God in our lives through the life of David. He said himself in Psalms 38:4-5 that it was because of his iniquity (verse 4) and (verse 5) because of his foolishness. Psalms 38 showed us the consequences of walking away from God—the destruction of you and your family—to the third and fourth generation, as we talked about out of Deuteronomy, and then it is over.

III. Psalms 39:1-13

Now we come to Psalms 39 today. In Psalms 39, we see David coming back to God. It is incredible. Psalms 38 shows him way out there, but then in Psalms 39, he starts to come back, and we begin to see his attitude about who he really is, and more importantly, what he really is.

1. *I said, I will take heed to my ways, that I sin not with my tongue: I will keep my mouth with a bridle, while the wicked is before me.*
2. *I was dumb with silence, I held my peace, even from good; and my sorrow was stirred.*
3. *My heart was hot within me, while I was musing the fire burned: then spake I with my tongue,*
4. *LORD, make me to know mine end, and the measure of my days, what it is; that I may know how frail I am.*
5. *Behold, thou hast made my days as an handbreadth; and mine age is as nothing before thee: verily every man at his best state is altogether vanity. Selah.*
6. *Surely every man walketh in a vain shew: surely they are disquieted in vain: he heapeth up riches, and knoweth not who shall gather them.*
7. *And now, Lord, what wait I for? my hope is in thee.*
8. *Deliver me from all my transgressions: make me not the reproach of the foolish.*
9. *I was dumb, I opened not my mouth; because thou didst it.*
10. *Remove thy stroke away from me: I am consumed by the blow of thine hand.*
11. *When thou with rebukes dost correct man for iniquity, thou makest his beauty to consume away like a moth: surely every man is vanity. Selah.*
12. *Hear my prayer, O LORD, and give ear unto my cry; hold not thy peace at my tears: for I am a stranger with thee, and a sojourner; as all my fathers were.*
13. *O spare me, that I may recover strength, before I go hence, and be no more.*

IV. The Journey Back to God

I want you to note first off, look at verse 1, David says, "*I said, I will take heed to my ways, that I sin not with my tongue: I will keep my mouth with a bridle.*" As we read through this and compare it with last week, we can see that David has learned some things out of his chastisement.

Last week, we looked at **two examples** in the Bible. One is the prodigal son who walked away from God. The Bible says he is out there in a pigpen, and the thing that began his journey back to the Father was when "he came to himself." He came to the place where he began to really look internally at where he was with God.

The second example was the maniac of Gadara, where Jesus comes to him. He has tremendous strength and twelve thousand demons in him, yet when Jesus casts them out, the Bible says he is sitting there in his right mind. He began his journey back to God.

V. The Danger of a Self-Righteous Attitude because of Power

One of the greatest things that we can learn from David's life—and believe me, there are so many things we can learn. If you want one book that is probably one of the best books I ever read is by Arthur W. Pink, before he got messed up in Calvinism, he wrote *The Life of David*. It is an incredible book.

What we learn from David specifically today is what led to him walking away from God. It is the one thing that every child of God, as you grow spiritually, must be careful with and that is the danger of power. The danger of power and we will put along with that the danger of money.

David's issues that got him into the mess was the development of a self-righteous attitude because of the power that he had. He was the king of Israel, and as the king of Israel, he was accountable to no one. He developed an attitude that he was above the law—the very law that he held the people to. David had absolute power as king, and as the old saying goes, absolute power corrupts absolutely. His self-righteous attitude is where his problem started.

As we grow in the Lord, and you get more responsibility and authority in any church, and you become a leader and learn your Bible. I have seen God's people, like David, develop that self-righteous attitude where you can apply the principles to everybody else, but you have ceased to apply them to yourself. You work outwardly at others, but not inwardly at yourself.

I see this on all levels of churches, all levels of the world, and all levels of our government. When you become the President of the United States—and I am not just picking on any one of them, they have all had their issues. The only president in my time that I ever heard take responsibility for something that went south on his watch was John F. Kennedy. Every other president will never get up and say, "I made a mistake, and I was wrong." They look at that as if, "If I do that, everybody is going to think I am weak." No, if you do that, people are going to think that you are human, just like they are.

It was the disastrous Bay of Pigs. When the CIA went behind John F. Kennedy and wanted to invade Cuba and dethrone Castro, Kennedy knew nothing about it. They launched the Cubans to Cuba to try to take it over, and the Cuban army responded and pinned them down on a beach. The CIA then had to tell Kennedy what they had done and ask for air cover so they would not be slaughtered. Kennedy did not do it. All those Cubans who fought there went ashore to try to overthrow it were either killed or captured. It was a big black eye to the United States of America.

Kennedy knew nothing about it; it was done behind his back. The CIA had tried to pull off a coup to dethrone Castro and take over Cuba, and Kennedy was left holding the bag. He is one of the last presidents—I do not agree with everything he did—but he is one of the last presidents who had some kind of integrity. You know what he said? He did not blame it on anybody. He said, "Success has many fathers, but failure is always an orphan." Nobody wants to take responsibility for failure. He did.

I do not have time to get into the assassination of JFK. But he dismantled the CIA and tore up those groups, and that is what got him assassinated. But he took a stand.

This has bothered me, the salary of the President of the United States is \$400,000 a year. Who in their right mind would put together a campaign to be president that costs \$250 million to get a job for \$400,000 a year for four years? You know why they do it? Power. The President of the United States sits in a chair where they say you are the most powerful man in the world.

A senator or a congressman makes \$175,000 a year. They will spend millions of dollars to get a job that only pays a fraction of what it cost them to get it. Why? Because five or ten years down the line, look at what their net worth is—millions and millions through power.

This is why the big fight in governments today is supposed to be about taking care of the working class and the middle class, not catering to the billionaires and the millionaires. But whether you are a Republican or a Democrat, your power level of never wanting to lose power will step on the mid-level people every time to stay in power. It's all about power.

VI. The Misuse & Abuse of Authority & Power

I am not going to stop there. I grew up in this. I just turned seventy-five last week, and I grew up in this. I saw it for fifty-some years how you can see this within pastors in churches all across America.

The job of any pastor will be about authority and power under the authority of the Word of God. You will find that in 1 Timothy and 2 Timothy. It is all laid out in the leading of God's people through the Word of God. What you see today is a misuse and abuse of that authority and power. If any pastor is not careful, he too will set himself up as the king over God's people. That is why so many of them, like David, get into the trouble they get into.

As king, he now has a higher lifestyle than the people. He lives in a house that the people in his church could never afford. I live in Raytown, which I lovingly call Raytona Beach. My house is just like anybody else's house. It is worth less now than when we built it.

But some pastors live in houses that none of their people could ever afford. He and his wife become social elites. They dress better and develop a social status. Many times, the pastor's wife is called the "First Lady" of the church, like the president's wife. They drive more expensive cars. They fellowship only with the rich and elite people and cater to them.

Somebody rich comes into the church, and I have seen it. I have been in staff meetings where the pastor's plan, when a judge came to visit the church or some guy who had a lot of money or power, everybody was in the huddle planning how do we get this guy. Look at what he could do for our church. They get to the place of power where they make them a deacon, make them part of the finance committee, or put them on the board of directors. But they never think about how Jesus was not spending His time with the scribes, the Pharisees, and the Sadducees; He was down eating with the publicans and the sinners—the ones who really needed a physician.

I have seen pastors distance themselves from their own people, the common, ordinary man. Now they look at them just like David looked at Israel: "I am the king. You are just the peasants. I am the king, and you are my servants who serve the king." Your church now becomes a group of social elitists.

You develop that attitude of self-righteousness. You think you are better than the common, ordinary man in your church. You isolate yourself from them. I jokingly tell people all the time, if you are going to a church where you cannot get the pastor's personal cell phone number because they won't give it to you, get out of that church. You ought to have his cell phone number. You should be able to call him 24/7.

But in the big mega-churches, I call it the Martin Bormann syndrome. Everybody thinks Adolf Hitler was the most powerful man in the Third Reich. No, you are wrong. The most powerful man was Martin Bormann. He was Hitler's personal secretary. You could not get to talk to Hitler without going through Martin Bormann. He controlled who had access to Hitler, and if he did not like you, you never got in. He was really in control of who got Hitler's ear.

That is what happens. They get a personal secretary, and you cannot just call your pastor up and say, "Hey, I really need to talk." You have to go through Martin. You have to go through somebody who will decide how bad your situation is to determine if you can even get in to talk to him. What are you talking about? That is the king. That is the president. That is David. You ought to have access to your pastor 24/7 for whatever you need.

The rules get reversed in the New Testament church. Peter made this clear in 1 Peter 5:1-4:

- 1. The elders which are among you I exhort, who am also an elder, and a witness of the sufferings of Christ, and also a partaker of the glory that shall be revealed:*
- 2. Feed the flock of God which is among you, taking the oversight thereof, not by constraint, but willingly; not for filthy lucre, but of a ready mind;*
- 3. Neither as being lords over God's heritage, but being ensamples to the flock.*

This problem is worldwide. I have seen it for years. I have seen deacons in churches who have been deacons for twenty years, and the pastor may be weak, so the deacons form a power base. You do not go against that power base.

Some of you were with me years ago when we went to Iowa. We went to one of the churches up there, and we were going to teach discipleship to the church. We took teams all over the country and all over the world teaching churches how to disciple people. We went in from Sunday to Wednesday. I kicked it off on Sunday morning talking about discipleship. We came back and broke the church up into groups and taught them how to disciple. By Wednesday, they had it, and we turned it over to them and let it go.

I preached that morning on the biblical concept of the importance of making disciples—that you are ordained to bring forth fruit through soul-winning, but then your fruit should remain. That is discipleship. We did Sunday morning and Sunday night.

I was in the hotel when I got a knock on my door. I opened it up, and it was the pastor. I said, "Hey, how you doing?" I thought he wanted to have coffee, talk about the Bible, or tell me how great things were. You know what he said? He said, "We are not going to be able to do any more discipleship with the church." I said, "What do you mean? What are you talking about?" He said, "Well, the deacons decided that they are not going to allow us to do that."

I said, "Okay, I have to ask you this. First off, why do the deacons have control to decide what goes on in your church? Why do they not want their church to be filled with men and women who are teaching other men and women the Word of God?" He got really quiet. He looked at me and said, "Well, the deacons' assessment is that if we get all these new people coming to our church, how are we going to control them?" There it is! I am telling you, there it is! I have seen it all through Christianity!

VII. Rules of Leadership

When I was in the army, you had two kinds of officers. Some of them were real leaders of men; others were terrible leaders. Some inspired you to be better, and some only cared about their own careers. We had one guy who was a first lieutenant. He had two tours in Vietnam. His left chest looked like an army-navy store because he had so many medals, but he was a real combat leader. We as men would follow him anywhere. He was tough, but he cared about his men. He would always lead from the front, whereas the joke was that most officers are in the rear with the gear. His philosophy was that his boots were the first boots on the field of combat and the last boots to leave. He took care of his men.

We would be on a twenty-mile hike, and they would give us a ten-minute break. All the other officers would be over there hobnobbing with the other officers, getting their drinks and all their little stuff. You know where he was? He was over there with his men, sitting down, making them take their boots off, looking at their blisters, making sure they did not get so bad that they could not walk. He was a leader. He knew how to take care of his men. He was an incredible combat leader. He inspired you to be better by his example of leadership. He did not just lead you into battle; he led you into the battle and then led you out of the battle.

He would say, "Toughness, hardness, self-discipline, and following orders—those will be the things that get you home." He was an officer, and we respected him and his rank, but he was one of us. He was a real leader of men. When we were out in public on the base or camp, we would always salute him. When we were in the field, we never did. We had our own little connection between the two of us. We would pass each other, and instead of saluting him, we would put our hands up and clasp hands. I would say, "Same mud." He would say, "Same blood."

It was here, long before I got right with God, that I can now look back and see God's hand was preparing me. It was here that God taught me the keys of leadership. It was at this point in my life, long before ministry, that I learned the **two greatest rules of leadership**:

Rule 1: Everything rises and falls on leadership.

Everything will rise and fall on leadership. Everything! I have seen pastors turn their churches belly-up and blame the people, blame this family, blame this couple, blame this person, or blame that. No, it is your church. Everything rises and falls on your leadership.

Rule 2: Leadership is not about your ability; it is about your responsibility and your accountability.

The second great lesson on leadership and you have heard me say this many, many times. Leadership is not about your ability. Good leadership is about your responsibility and your accountability. Leadership is not a popularity contest. Leadership is about making the tough calls. As a pastor, you have to make them in your church. As a father, you have to make them in your family. As a Christian, you have to make them in your life.

We had a guy here a couple of years ago—a nice guy, this is not a criticism. He left our church because we would not make him a deacon. I tried to explain to him that there was no way I could make him a deacon. His family was an absolute disaster—unsaved, out in the world, and he had lost complete control of his family. I laid out for him 1 Timothy 3:12 showing him that you have to have your family under control. Well, he left our church, went to another church, and found a pastor who was a weak pastor. He was a nice guy, but weak. When this man joined the church, the pastor did not want to lose him, so when he went to the pastor and said, "I want to be a deacon," the pastor made him a deacon, in spite of what the Bible says.

This is why I say all the time that you find too many pastors who want to pick and choose out of the Bible what they follow instead of following the whole counsel of God. But that is where we are at today.

It was in those times, watching that lieutenant, that I learned you lead from the top down. I learned you do not ask people to do what you won't do yourself. I learned you lead by example, and you learn to make people better through your leadership. You develop them, you delegate to them, you train them, and you build them. I have learned that leaders do not take from their people; rather, you give to them and help them to be better.

The pastor may hold his people accountable to the Word of God, but he must also be accountable to the people God gives him through the Word of God. By example, a church should be filled to the top with men and women who have a servant's heart. But it has to start at the top. By example, the pastor must have a servant's heart toward his people before he can ever get his people to have a servant's heart toward other people.

➤ A Leader Must Set the Example in Four Areas:

I have learned through some great leaders in my life. I do not classify myself as a great leader, but I do classify myself as somebody who has no excuses. I have had some great leaders in my life.

I had a man put his arm around me when I was preparing to go into the ministry, and he said, "Bob, a pastor has to be a leader, and **a leader must set the example in four areas**, because everything rises and falls on leadership."

1.) First you are going to have to be an example in the Bible itself.

The Word of God has to be number one in your life, or it will never be number one in somebody else's life. That Bible has to be the premier thing that your life is built around, that you invest your life in, before you can ever ask somebody else to do it. You have to take the attitude that you yourself are going to be a pastor who does not just know a lot of things about the Bible, but you are going to be a pastor who knows his Bible and then you are going to produce people who know their Bible. He said, "Bob, when it comes to the Bible, **a pastor-leader has to focus his investment on only two things, because they are the only two things that are going to last for eternity: one, the Word of God and two, the souls of men.**"

2.) You need to understand that a pastor has to be a steward of the things that God gives him.

In the Bible, there are seven stewardships that every pastor should be a steward of. You have the books of 1 Timothy and 2 Timothy, where Paul lays out all the instructions, breaking it down chapter by chapter as to what a pastor should be. Titus—do you know what the theme of Titus is? Stewardship. You know what Philemon is? Philemon is a pastor who has a runaway slave, and in Philemon, you learn about being a servant. He said, "Bob, there are seven stewardships that you have to be a steward of to be a good leader and a good pastor, and most pastors do not even know what they are."

3.) The ministry. He gave me 2 Corinthians 4:1-2.

*1. Therefore seeing we have this ministry, as we have received mercy, we faint not;
2. But have renounced the hidden things of dishonesty, not walking in craftiness, nor handling the word of God deceitfully; **but by manifestation of the truth commending ourselves to every man's conscience in the sight of God.***

The ministry is the manifestation of truth, commending ourselves to every man's conscience in the sight of God.

4.) Building people. The ministry is going to be people.

He said, "Bob, you need to learn right now as a pastor, you do not build a church building; you build people. One person at a time, one couple at a time, one family at a time." He said the greatest treasure of your church, outside of the Word of God, will be the people.

He said a pastor always has to stay at the forefront of the battle. Then he digressed and said, "Do you know where David got into trouble, Bob?" I said, "No, where?" He said, "It was in 2 Samuel 11:1." I said, "Really?" He said, "Look at it." I flipped it over. You know what it says? It says there was a day when the kings went to war, but David stayed home. David's fatal furlough.

*And it came to pass, after the year was expired, at the time when kings go forth to battle, that David sent Joab, and his servants with him, and all Israel; and they destroyed the children of Ammon, and besieged Rabbah. **But David tarried still at Jerusalem.** 2Samuel 11:1*

He said, "As a pastor, as a leader, you have to be out front. You have to lead the way for others to follow."

Today, when a pastor develops a self-righteous attitude toward his people, he is no longer effective, and his people will suffer. That is the tragedy. All of this comes down to our understanding of who we really are and, most importantly, what we really are.

➤ The Illusion of Higher Education

The Bible tells us in 1 Corinthians 8:1 that "knowledge puffeth up." Today, I see it all through Christianity. I have seen it for years; I even know when it started. When a man gets his higher education, he goes off to Bible college, and he gets his degree. Now he is a BA, an MA, a PhD, a ThD, a doctor. He now thinks he is smarter and better than the common man.

There is an illusion that getting a higher education about the Bible from men is better than what the Holy Spirit of God will give you in God's established authority, the New Testament church. That is the problem—the illusion that getting an education makes you closer to God.

I want to say something: it is not you getting smarter that gets you closer to God, it is staying dumber, to the place where you just believe whatever God tells you. If you are not careful, you will see men develop that "God-syndrome" mindset. You look at yourself as a king. You hold others to a different set of standards than you hold yourself to. You do not fellowship with the people God gave you anymore; instead, you go off to the fellowship meeting down in Springfield or wherever they go. I have been there, where the "good old boys' club" gets together.

In Psalms 39, this is what we have to see. We see David, who had gotten himself into that mindset. He actually thought being king made him better. He actually thought he did not have to go to war anymore. He actually thought he was better than the people because, at his word, heads would roll. Now we see David coming back to himself and to the reality of who he really is and what he really is. This is where we all should be.

VIII. LORD, make me to know mine end, and the measure of my days, what it is; that I may know how frail I am (Verse 4)

Look at Psalms 39:4. If you want to keep from being self-righteous, if you want to keep from being what David was or what you see in Christianity today, look at what he says:

"LORD, make me to know mine end, and the measure of my days, what it is; that I may know how frail I am."

There are three things that you need to keep before you all the time:

❖ 1.) The End of Your Life:

We all get saved, and then we go through a journey called life. Nobody's life is going to be perfect. We are all going to have some stumbling times. We are all going to make some mistakes in life; that is just human nature. I wish it were not that way. I know we have the Word of God and the Holy Spirit of God, but we all deal with this flesh. I understand what he is saying because, at the end of the day, it is not how you ran the race as much as it is: did you finish the race? **How do you finish at the end of your life?** Everybody is going to stumble, and everybody is going to fall, we are all going to make mistakes. At the end of your life—how did you end it?

❖ 2.) How Do You Measure Yourself?

There are seven stages of spiritual growth found in the New Testament. We have talked about them many times—God's yardstick to measure our spiritual growth. If you had to answer at this moment right now—and I would not do this to you, but ask yourself—what is the standard of measurement of where you are at with the Lord today? Because where your measurement is, the yardstick you are using is directly going to affect how you end.

❖ 3.) Do We Really Know How frail We Are?

So many pastors, so many of God's people, never know what their limitations are. They never know what their weaknesses are. I have seen God's people sit down when they have problems in their lives, and you show them what their weakness is and say, "Here is what you need to do." You know what they do? They go to work on something else in their life that does not really need work, but they never actually attack the problem, the weakness.

I like the way this is laid out here, because if you look down at Psalms 39:5, you have the word "Selah." As I have told you before, the word "Selah" means rest. Every time you find that key word in your Bible, in Psalms and one or two other books, it always sets the context for the Second Coming of Christ. So, the end of your life, how you measure yourself, and how frail you are, are all set up against the day the Lord comes back.

IX. Every man at his best state is altogether vanity (Verse 5)

Now we come to the key verse in this chapter. Everything I have set up has been to get us to this point—the key to you and me staying where God wants us to be. This is a verse you can never forget. It should be on every refrigerator in America and on your mirror in the morning so that you see it when you first get up. It is the reality of the end of your life, the measure of a man, and how frail we really are. Look at Psalms 39:5:

*"Behold, thou hast made my days as an handbreadth; and mine age is as nothing before thee: verily **every man at his best state is altogether vanity**. Selah."*

There it is! There we are!

If you think I have been unjust or cruel in some of the things I have said about the brethren out there, the leadership, the Bible colleges, and all of that, you can apologize to me right after church this morning. Because here it is Psalms 39:5 tells you that all men at their best state are altogether vanity.

The only Bible on planet Earth, in the universe, in the galaxy, that has that verse in it exactly like that is the King James Authorized Version. All the scholars, all the elitists, all the kings, all the Bible colleges, all the seminaries, all the puffed-up men with their degrees—the kings of Christianity—with their NIV, TLB, RSV, ESV, and other translations, they just cannot leave the word "vanity" in.

Do you know what that verse does? Psalms 39:5 puts us all in the same boat. It puts us all in the same mud with the same blood. That verse says every man on earth, in the best condition he pretends to be in, with all his knowledge and things he amasses in his life to make you think how spiritual he is—with his degrees, his Greek and Hebrew lexicons, his PhD, his doctorate degree. At the end of his life, by the measuring stick of God's Word, he is still one hundred percent worthless. Vanity fills his life.

- **David:** A man after God's own heart, as the book of Acts tells us. Yet David, at his best state, had to have four wives to satisfy his fleshly desires. He got puffed up and prideful as the king and numbered the people. Then he got out of fellowship with God, was chased by other kings, and scrambled at the gate like he was mad.
- **Soloman:** The wisest man who ever lived, who wrote three of your wisdom books. Solomon, at his best state, had a thousand wives and concubines to take care of his fleshly desires.
- **Paul:** He loved the nation of Israel enough to die and go to hell for them, he said. Yet Paul, at his best state, disobeyed God in three places—Acts 20:22, Acts 21:2, and Acts 21:4—and went to Jerusalem in stark contrast to what God told him to do, which ended his life and ended his ministry.
- **Job:** The man the Bible says feared God and eschewed evil. Yet at his best state, when he was attacked by his friends—he got self-righteous and tried to justify himself.

- **Daniel:** The Bible says Daniel purposed in his heart that he would not defile himself with the king's meat. What an example! Yet Daniel, at his best state, let a king bow down and worship him and then got thrown into the lions' den.
- **Abraham:** The father of the Jews. Yet at his best state, he took Hagar and got the wrong son because he could not trust God. Abraham, the friend of God.
- **Jacob:** Whose name was changed to Israel, who brought the twelve tribes into the world. At his best state, he schemed to get everything in life—the birthright and the blessing. He worked for Laban, saw Rachel, and fell in love. He said, "If you give me Rachel as my wife, I will work for you for seven years." Laban said, "You got a deal." The seven years were up, and that wedding night, the moon was bright, the stars were twinkling, and he pulled back the tent flap. But it was Leah, not Rachel! The schemer got schemed in his own scheme. Jacob, at his best state, when he knew it was Leah and not Rachel, went ahead, went in unto her, and knew her anyway, and did not complain about it until the morning.

The Bible is filled with these examples. The list is endless from Genesis to Revelation. Don't forget to add you and me to that list. Man at his best state—the best you think you are, as spiritual as you think you are, as puffed up as you get yourself to be—you are not a king.

I heard a great preacher talk about soul-winning at a fellowship conference. He had all these big-time pastors there who had all their programs on soul-winning, and everybody was selling their books and tapes. You know what he said? He said, "Guys, I have seen all of that out there, and that is all good stuff. But let me tell you, soul-winning is nothing more than one beggar telling another beggar where to get bread."

When it comes to Psalms 39:4-5, there are no exceptions to the rules. Man's best state, apart from the regenerating work of the Holy Spirit of God indwelling him, is absolutely worthless. When you do not see that and do not understand that, you wind up being a scribe, a Pharisee, or a Sadducee, just like they were in Jesus' time. And they are alive and well today!

You are worthless before you are saved, according to Isaiah 64:6 and Romans 3:10-13, and you are equally worthless after you are saved. In your flesh, there dwelleth no good thing.

But we are all as an unclean thing, and all our righteousnesses are as filthy rags; and we all do fade as a leaf; and our iniquities, like the wind, have taken us away. Isaiah 64:6

➤ Man Looketh on the Outward Appearance; God Looketh on the Heart

What I am about to say, I am not fighting this. I really am not. I want to preface that. I received an email sometime last year from a sincere person. I am not mad at all; it is not a criticism. This person said, "I follow you on your website, and I really like what you teach. I have never found anybody who lays the Bible out as simply as you do, and I have really learned a lot from it. But brother, I must tell you that one of the things that hinders me from really embracing what you teach is the way you dress on Sunday morning. You should wear a suit. You show up in a t-shirt and slacks, and it really is a stumbling block to me."

I take no offense to that because I totally understand. It is hard on YouTube; we do not have a very good camera, so it is hard for you to see that the t-shirts I wear are the very best that Walmart has to offer!

I know pastors who, when you go preach at their churches, want you to wear a suit. I have no problem with that. I have pastor friends where, when I go to their churches, I will wear a suit. To me, it is not about being a rebel without a cause—I am kind of a rebel with a cause—but it is not a big deal. What I object to is you thinking that because you encase this flesh in a three-hundred-dollar suit, you are somehow spiritual. That bothers me.

I read that email and thought about it. This poses a problem for me. I grew up in this. I am not somebody who just fell off the turnip truck; I bought the turnip truck years ago. I have been in churches where the pastor required everybody to wear a suit, and when he mowed his grass at home, he wore a shirt and tie so his neighbors would know how spiritual he was. We were good friends, and I would kid him about it.

This is the same pastor—and I loved him, preached at his church many times, and wore a suit every time I preached. But this is the same guy who went skiing in Colorado with a bunch of pastors and wore a three-piece suit under his snowsuit! I called him on it. I said, "Let me ask you a question. I heard this about you. Did you really do that?" He looked at me and said, "Yeah, Bob, I am as boring as puke. Yeah, I did. I did." I don't care. If it is your preference, I am okay with that. My problem is thinking that putting a suit over this flesh makes you spiritual.

I believe that when a person comes to church, you dress to praise the Lord. I had a guy email me once and say, "Well, brother, do you have women in your church who wear slacks?" I said, "Yeah, we do." He said, "Well, the Bible says back there in the Old Testament that a woman should never wear clothes pertaining to a man." I said, "Let's think about this. Do you really want to go toe-to-toe with me on the Bible on this? Because this is like you bringing a little knife to a big gunfight. We are going to take what you say. The Bible says a woman should never wear that which pertaineth to a man. Okay. Back in the Old Testament, every man wore a short skirt. So if the women in your church are wearing skirts, they are wearing what pertaineth to a man from the Bible." I never heard from him after that.

I have preached in Africa where they show up in a loincloth and a tattered t-shirt, but they love God more than most of God's people do in America. I am okay with it.

I looked at this and thought, "Okay, if I wear a suit, now I will be Christian." Then I was watching the news. There was Congress, the Senate, and the president—some of the biggest fornicators, drug addicts, boozehounds, chasing women all over the place, power-hungry, money-hungry—and they are all wearing suits! So I guess I emailed back and said, "I need to know the Christian maker for the right suits, because I am seeing a whole unsaved world wearing suits, and I do not want to identify with them. So I am not wearing a suit. I want to identify with the common, ordinary man out there, so I am going to wear the best Walmart has to offer."

Do you know what the Bible says in 1 Samuel 16:7?

*7. But the LORD said unto Samuel, Look not on his countenance, or on the height of his stature; because I have refused him: for the LORD seeth not as man seeth; **for man looketh on the outward appearance, but the LORD looketh on the heart.** 1 Samuel 16:7*

I think you want to look nice and dress well, but do you know why the Baptist churches are dead today? I grew up in them. I grew up in them when the Baptist churches—Akron Baptist Temple, Canton Baptist Temple, Lima Baptist Temple—were running five, six, seven, eight, ten thousand people on Sunday. What are they running now, if they are even in existence? Hardly anything. Why? Because times changed. People came in with hair that was too long or clothes that did not match what the deacons thought they should match, and they were met at the door and told, "You cannot come here." They were scribes, Pharisees, and Sadducees who turned away the common man, so they went somewhere else. This is the problem we have.

One time, the Pharisees came to Jesus and said, "Your disciples are eating with unwashed hands." Jesus said, "Let me ask you a question. What is worse: eating with unwashed hands, or what you do with an unwashed heart?" He didn't say that, but he would have.

As a child of God, we can never lose our perspective of who and what we really are and the pit that God dug us out of. That is why, at the time of salvation, God had to separate your soul from your flesh called spiritual circumcision, Colossians 2:11.

In whom also ye are circumcised with the circumcision made without hands, in putting off the body of the sins of the flesh by the circumcision of Christ: Colossians 2:11

The good work He now performs in us, according to Philippians 1:6, can only be done by the Holy Spirit of God and our yielding to Him.

Being confident of this very thing, that he which hath begun a good work in you will perform it until the day of Jesus Christ: Philippians 1:6

When we get into the book of Leviticus, I am going to show you in the opening five chapters that they have five things they are told to do. The first three are voluntary, and the last two are mandatory. Wait till you will see what those voluntary feasts represent in your life and my life. The Holy Spirit of God will do the right work and provide the right fruit. You and I are worthless; it is "Christ in you, the hope of glory."

At the time of salvation, you received the indwelling Holy Spirit of God, never to leave. But on a daily basis, you must have that infilling—being filled with the Spirit of God. When you lose your biblical perspective, you too will become a self-righteous Pharisee.

In the Bible, you read a lot about being humble and having humility. We have lost those definitions today because we have lost the Bible. Most people today think that means being very passive, very weak, and never offending anybody with your message. They think of a pastor as someone whose hand you shake at the door and it feels like grabbing a dead fish. That is not the case. In the Bible, humbleness and humility will be the absolute power of God in your life under the control of the Holy Spirit of God in your life.

Our flesh will say, "I read through the Bible last year a hundred times, brother, praise Jesus!" But the humble will say, "How many times did the Word of God go through you last year?" That is the key. The key, as always, will be biblical principles. The more you grow, the more those principles will keep you honest about yourself. Always staying **focused on those three areas: the end of man, the measure of man, and the frailty of man.**

Most pastors and deacons will try to control everything. The Bible says in 1 Corinthians 3 that we are laborers together. The key to being a good leader is knowing your limitations. I may not be a great leader, but I definitely know my limitations, and I understand that the first thing I have done all my life is put people in positions around me who could do things better than I could. That is what makes it work. We are laborers together—same mud and same blood.

Years after I got out of the army—I enlisted in 1968, long before most of you were born, when I was just a nineteen-year-old kid—it changed my life. It set me on a course of structure, self-discipline, focus, and understanding what a good leader was. I am a classic example of how you can get the boy out of the army, but you can never get the army out of the boy.

Somebody asked me once if I missed being in the army. I said, "Well, not really. I just changed armies. I went from Uncle Sam's army to God's army." I understand that better, because of the spiritual warfare of the believer in Ephesians 6, as a soldier. That Jesus Christ is the captain of my salvation, according to Hebrews 2:10, and He has called me to be a soldier in 2 Timothy 2:3—I am enduring a hardness as a good soldier of Jesus Christ.

*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.** Hebrews 2:10*

Thou therefore endure hardness, as a good soldier of Jesus Christ. 2Timothy 2:3

➤ We happy few, we band of brothers, fight the fight and hold the line!

Here at this church, I think every parent ought to sit down with their children and watch two miniseries. The first one is Band of Brothers, and the second is The Pacific. I do not know of two miniseries that graphically show your children why they are not speaking German and Japanese today. The sacrifices that were made break your heart to see that generation, which in my mind was the greatest generation—what they sacrificed so that you and I could have what we have, and what this country is doing with it today.

Many Americans, politicians, and people in power are downplaying two hundred and fifty years of America's greatness. Band of Brothers got its name in the movie from Easy Company of the 506th Parachute Infantry Regiment. The series followed them all the way from Toccoa, Georgia to Zell am See in Austria at the end of the war, and then their lives afterward. That title has always meant something to me.

The phrase "band of brothers" came from Henry V of England in 1415, during the Hundred Years' War with France. Later, Shakespeare put it into one of his plays. The night before the battle, when they were greatly outnumbered, Henry V addressed his soldiers to encourage them for the battle the next day. He said, "We band of brothers. We few, we happy few, for you who sheds his blood with me this day, shall be my brother."

Our motto is: same mud, Adam was created from the dust of the ground; mud stands for the humanity of man whom we are to labor to reach with the gospel of Jesus Christ. Same mud, same blood—the blood of Christ that saved us and gave us the message to a lost world. Together, we happy few, we band of brothers, fight the fight and hold the line, and we too are greatly outnumbered.

In Zechariah 4:6, God told Zerubbabel:

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

Did you ever notice that today we have radio, television, the internet, chat rooms, cell phones, YouTube, lasers, microwaves, satellites, GPS, and we can fly around the world in a matter of hours. Right now, you can text somebody in India or Africa, and they will get it a second later. There are people watching this service from all over the country and all over the world in different time zones.

Yet, with all of the extensive technology we have today, look at what we did last year around Christmas time: sixty thousand Bibles in four days. Back in the book of Acts, they had to copy them by hand. Yet, with all of our advancement in technology, today we are getting less done than they got done in the book of Acts in reaching the world, when all they had was the Holy Spirit of God.

The only way God can use us—use you and use me—the way He wants to is for us to never forget who we really are: that man at his best state is altogether vanity.

X. Summary

I taught you Song of Solomon on a New Year's Eve about ten, twelve, or fourteen years ago. We went verse-by-verse. It is on the website. In chapter five, I told you how that is a chapter on my Jesus. The Bible says He is "altogether lovely." The Bible says in this chapter that he is pure, so he is white. His head is like fine gold, His eyes are as the eyes of doves, His cheeks are as a bed of spices, His hands are as gold rings, His legs are as pillars of marble, His mouth is most sweet—He is my altogether lovely.

Then there is you and me. Our heart is deceitfully wicked above all things. Our mouth is an open sepulchre. Our feet are swift running into mischief. Our hands to shed innocent blood. Our mind holds vain imaginations that have to be cast down. Our eyes to the ends of the earth are never satisfied. The lust of the eyes. Where Jesus is altogether lovely, you and I are altogether vanity.

The greatest model of this is the Lord Jesus Christ Himself. He was God, yet He became a man, and as a man, He took on the form of a servant, Philippians 2:5-10:

5. *Let this mind be in you, which was also in Christ Jesus:*
6. *Who, being in the form of God, thought it not robbery to be equal with God:*
7. *But made himself of no reputation, and **took upon him the form of a servant**, and was made in the likeness of men:*
8. *And being found in fashion as a man, he humbled himself, and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross.*
9. *Wherefore God also highly exalted him, and given him a name which is above every name:*
10. *That at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, of things in heaven, and things in earth, and things under the earth;*

Look at verse five: "*Let this mind be in you, which was also in Christ Jesus.*" We use that verse all the time in a general sense—that the Bible is the mind of Christ and we are to let His mind be in us which also in Christ Jesus and getting His mind. But within the context, look at the rest of the passage. The mind we should get into us, yes, is about the word of God. But the mind we should get into us is the mind of a servant, just like He was. Notice two key words: He humbled Himself, and He was obedient. Those are the two keys to being a good servant. It is the power of God in Christ, who was equal to God, yet that power was channeled through the Holy Spirit of God to be a servant for God to men.

Psalms 38 and Psalms 39 are two great chapters. Chapter 38 shows you exactly the mess we will get into when we allow sin to run free in our lives. Chapter 39 shows you how you get back, how you stay back, and how you make sure that the end of man, the measure of man, and the frailty of man never slip through your grasp. **That you end the right way, measure yourself the right way, and know not only who you are, but what you are.**

This is what makes a church work. This is what God looks for in a church—not a building. Not an eighty-million-dollar building or an eight-hundred-thousand-dollar sound system, but you sitting in this church, yielding yourself to be God's servant, realizing that we are nothing, but in Him, we are everything.