

I. Review

Well, if you have your Bibles this morning, turn to Psalms chapter 40. We are going to look at the third thing today that God does for us. I told you how Psalms 40 is personally my great salvation Psalm and about my day—the day God came into my life and saved my soul—and every one of you can claim that if you so desire. And you remember how I told you and showed you that in my own personal life, I could never get over that day. I don't understand the complacency in Christianity with people who are truly saved. I don't understand getting lackadaisical in your relationship with the Lord. I think that day should have such an impact on our lives that we are never the same again.

You'll remember I showed you the three key days that are found in your Bible:

1. **The Day of the Lord**—which we know is the second coming of the Lord Jesus Christ.
2. **The Day of Jesus Christ**—sometimes called the day of Christ, that's the rapture of the church—when Christ comes for His bride.
3. **The Day of my Salvation**—the day that God saved me. On that day God performed the miracle of the new birth in my life: born again—*not of corruptible seed, but of incorruptible, by the word of God.*

I gave you the eight things that He did for me on that special day of my life:

1. *I waited patiently for the LORD*—before I was even saved, God began to work in my life because of where He wanted me to be.
2. *He inclined unto me*—I couldn't get to God by myself; He came to me.
3. *He heard my cry*—He saw me in the toils of this old world and heard me cry out.
4. *He brought me up also out of an horrible pit, out of the miry clay.*
5. *He set my feet upon a rock.*
6. *He established my goings*—on that rock.
7. *And he hath put a new song in my mouth, even praise unto our God: many shall see it, and fear, and shall trust in the LORD.*
8. Then based on everything He did for me, He gave me a witness to the world of what He had done for me.

➤ The Volume of a Book that God gave me Written about Him

Then last week, I showed you the second thing that He did—He gave me my Bible.

*Psalms 40:7. Then said I, Lo, I come: **in the volume of the book it is written of me.***

Now just as miraculous and marvelous as the day of my new birth, so was the Book that God gave me—my supernatural manna from heaven. We looked at it in Exodus 16; that supernatural food that God gave me to sustain me in my wilderness journey through my wilderness of Sin that

I have to deal with. I showed you how the devil attacked that Book from Genesis 3 right up to the day and age we live in through, *Yea, hath God said*, questioning if God really meant what He said when He said it. And in time, we pass from the greatest period of church history, Philadelphia, into Laodicea.

➤ We are in the Laodicean Church Period Today

The Bible makes it clear for those of you who want to study church history. You'll find that there are seven periods of church history. The first one starts in Acts 20 with the church at Ephesus, then it goes to Smyrna, Pergamos, Thyatira, Sardis, Philadelphia, and finally the one we are in today, Laodicea. As you look at and study that, you'll find that the Philadelphian church is the second to the last. It started around 1600 with the publication of the King James 1611 Authorized Version under James I of Scotland who was the king of England. For the next 400 years, there were only two Bibles on planet earth. One of them was the King James Bible and the other one was the Roman Catholic Douay-Rheims Bible.

The greatest period in church history—the greatest period in missionary work, the greatest period in preaching and moving of the Gospel by the Holy Spirit of God—was in the Philadelphian church period. In Revelation 3:7-8, it's called the church of the open door. The Bible says in that passage that it had the key of David which will be Psalms 119, and we'll see that when we get there. The key of David is the word of God that you have that keeps the doors open. Then we saw at the turn of the twentieth century, around 1900, the fading out of the Philadelphian church and the development of the Laodicean church period. Laodicea means "rights of the people". It's a church where the people, God's people, want their rights more than God's rights. In Revelation 3:20, the Bible says they left the word of God and now they are the church of the closed door. The church of the open door kept His word; the church of the closed door let the devil take it from them just like he did with Eve in Genesis 3. One has the sword of the Spirit (Ephesians 6:17) and the other has a butter knife for a sword which couldn't cut anything.

For me, my family, and my house, we're going to hold fast to the word of truth. I told you the very day we started this church, over 20 years ago, that my goal was to build a Philadelphian church in the midst of the Laodicean church period. To train and to build young men and young ladies, moms and dads, families, no matter what your age, to be a Philadelphian Christian in the midst of the apostasy of the Laodicean church period. We do that through a King James 1611 Authorized Version, the word of God. The greatest Book the world has ever seen. The volume of a Book that God gave me written about Him, given to man in the final universal language of God's history of man in the form of English.

➤ God Inspired and Preserved His Word

In the word of God, you will find God's hand of divine inspiration and His hand of divine preservation. I look at it in the simplest terms. What good would it do if God inspired a Bible someplace along the line, if I can't have a copy of it? If He is God enough to inspire it, then He's God enough to preserve it; and He did—in the volume of a Book about Him, and He gave it to me.

Now today, with that little introduction with where we have been so far, I want to talk to you about the third thing that He did for you and me so we could fulfill God's plan in our lives as we fulfill God's will in our lives. Not only did He preserve His word, but He also will preserve you and me as we face a hostile world with a Bible and a witness in a world who hates God and hates His word. You can see in our own country the degradation of Christianity, our society, and our government; the hatred for anything that has to do with God or anybody who tries to take a stand for the things of God.

II. God's Hand of Preservation in your Life

I want to talk today about the third thing that God would do for you, and that is His hand of preservation in your life.

Psalms 40:8-17

8. I delight to do thy will, O my God: yea, thy law is within my heart.

9. I have preached righteousness in the great congregation: lo, I have not refrained my lips, O Lord, thou knowest.

10. I have not hid thy righteousness within my heart; I have declared thy faithfulness and thy salvation: I have not concealed thy lovingkindness and thy truth from the great congregation.

11. Withhold not thou thy tender mercies from me, O Lord: let thy lovingkindness and thy truth continually preserve me.

12. For innumerable evils have compassed me about: mine iniquities have taken hold upon me, so that I am not able to look up; they are more than the hairs of mine head: therefore my heart faileth me.

13. Be pleased, O Lord, to deliver me: O Lord, make haste to help me.

14. Let them be ashamed and confounded together that seek after my soul to destroy it; let them be driven backward and put to shame that wish me evil.

15. Let them be desolate for a reward of their shame that say unto me, Aha, aha.

16. Let all those that seek thee rejoice and be glad in thee: let such as love thy salvation say continually, The Lord be magnified.

17. But I am poor and needy; yet the Lord thinketh upon me: thou art my help and my deliverer; make no tarrying, O my God.

Now, in this great chapter, what are the things you must understand? God doesn't care what you've done in your life. There are no sins that God cannot forgive you for. We get the idea sometimes that we commit so many grievous sins or so many terrible sins. We have this idea that there are big sins and there are little sins. But when it comes to God, all transgression of the law is sin. We look at big sins and little sins; God just sees sin.

And once you get past that, you realize that there's no sin in your life that God cannot forgive you for. There's no sin, nothing that you can do, have gotten into, did, was, became, whatever the case may be. Once a man or a woman wants to change the direction of their life and they realize the only way to be able to do that is through His death on the cross, salvation can be yours. It's just that simple.

➤ There Can be No Salvation Outside the Word of God

Now what you have here is when God saved you, He gave you His word. Your salvation is through the word of God and based on the word of God. There can be no salvation outside the word of God. Some people think salvation is in their church. That's not true. Some people think salvation is in their good works. That's not true. **Your salvation is only going to be found in the finished work of Jesus Christ and His death on Calvary's cross, found in the volume of the book written about Him.**

And you need to understand His calling in your life after you do get saved. You become now, once you understand that you have a witness, what Psalms 40:9-10 says:

*Psalms 40:9-10. **I have preached righteousness in the great congregation: lo, I have not refrained my lips, O LORD, thou knowest.***

*10. I have not hid thy righteousness within my heart; **I have declared thy faithfulness and thy salvation: I have not concealed thy lovingkindness and thy truth from the great congregation.***

Now, when you begin to do this, when you begin to take your stand, this is where you're going to find what the Bible talks about in Ephesians 6:10-18 and gives you all kinds of examples in the Bible: the spiritual warfare of the believer.

Now, let me preface what I'm going to say here by saying this. I don't care how much you love God or the word of God. You need to understand that there will be struggles in your life, and you will be tempted to faint by the wayside. And there will be times, ladies and gentlemen, where you will faint in your mind. Nobody bats a thousand. We're all going to find times in our lives where we step outside the lines. The key is don't stay outside those lines any longer than you have to. And in our text today, you will see that there are two primary causes for this.

III. Two Causes of Struggle in your Life

#1 The Flesh

Now, the first one will be found in Psalms 40:12. This is the simple one. This is our own flesh. This will be the flesh that we have that will always be our enemy and that we will always do continual battle with. If you want a passage in scripture where it really lays this out, it would be Romans 7. Paul there talks about his struggle. The greatest Christian that ever lived had his struggles just like you're going to have yours. He disobeyed God just like you and I will, and he wound up in a mess just like we will. **So, the first issue you have to deal with is you.**

*Psalms 40:12. For innumerable evils have compassed me about: **mine iniquities have taken hold upon me, so that I am not able to look up**; they are more than the hairs of mine head: therefore my heart faileth me.*

Probably everybody listening to the sound of my voice understands that part of the verse. There will be times in your life that the battle will be so intense, the battle will be so heavy, you too cannot look up. Understanding, though, that God will get you through it all. **And I learned a long time ago that what God ordains, God will sustain.**

Philippians 1:6. 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:

That means when you got saved, God has a work for you now that He wants to perform in your life, and He wants to perform it until the day of Jesus Christ.

This now will be the church militant. Remember I told you about the church triumphant and the church militant? The church triumphant is you seated in heavenly places; you already have the victory. But the church militant, that's the battle, that's the struggle, that's where you and I, as we say, the rubber meets the road: the warfare of the believer.

But you need to understand, no matter how intense the battle, whether we fail or we don't—and we're all going to fail at some point—God will deliver you not just from the world, He'll deliver you from yourself through the principles and the promises of the word of God, through the examples and the ensamples of the men and women in the Bible, that the Bible says will be *for our admonition, upon whom the ends of the world are come*.

So, He says in Psalms 40:13:

*Psalms 40:13. Be pleased, O LORD, **to deliver me**: O LORD, make haste to help me.*

And He will.

#2 Those that will Hate you for your Stand for the Book

Now, the second thing that we all are going to struggle with will be the people that will hate you for your stand for the Book, and you're seeing this more and more and more. When you take your stand for the word of God and do His work, become His witness, when you do what Psalms 40:9 says—preaching righteousness to the great congregation, not refraining your lips—when you do that, you will see very quickly the men and women who will be against you for standing on the Book. And the tragedy is, it's not only the lost world, but unfortunately, a lot of saved people too.

You saw this at the first coming of Christ. One of the greatest examples in John 1:11:

*John 1:11. He came unto his own, and **his own received him not**.*

We laid it out when we came through Matthew, how that in Matthew He lays out His credentials to the nation of Israel as the Messiah. But by the time He gets to chapter 11 and 12 and chapter

13, His own people, God's people, reject Him. And all down through history, men and women have hated the very idea of the Lord Jesus Christ and His word.

The Bible says in Proverbs 19:21:

Proverbs 19:21. There are many devices in a man's heart; nevertheless the counsel of the LORD, that shall stand.

And in the book of Ecclesiastes, you'll find, oh, I don't know, thirty or more philosophies, devices that man has come up with. And every one of the devices for 6,000 years of man's history has had one purpose: to get them around the word of God and around the Lord Jesus Christ. And when His word came into this world through a volume of the Book, they hated it too.

And you better see this, my dear friend. **At the first coming of Christ, this hatred came in two forms. It came from the unsaved world, the Roman Empire, but it also came from God's very own people, the nation of Israel.** And this will be the second battleground. Once you get past yourself, this one will be waiting for you. And so will it be with every one of you who decide to take your stand.

➤ He will Divide you from the World

You were told in Luke 12:51-53:

Luke 12:51-53. Suppose ye that I am come to give peace on earth? I tell you, Nay; but rather division:

52. For from henceforth there shall be five in one house divided, three against two, and two against three.

53. The father shall be divided against the son, and the son against the father; the mother against the daughter, and the daughter against the mother; the mother in law against her daughter in law, and the daughter in law against her mother in law.

When Christ came to planet earth, He didn't come to put everybody together. **The Bible clearly tells you that He came to divide.** When you start coming down through the creation in Genesis 1, you have the first time you find the word divide in the Bible. And you know what He divided? He divided the light from the darkness. And the history from that point on is simply God's word dividing the light from the darkness. And He will divide you from the world. He'll divide you from who you think are your friends. Sometimes, unfortunately, He even divides you from your own family.

Mark 6:1-4. And he went out from thence, and came into his own country; and his disciples follow him.

2. And when the sabbath day was come, he began to teach in the synagogue: and many hearing him were astonished, saying, From whence hath this man these things? and what wisdom is this which is given unto him, that even such mighty works are wrought by his hands?

*3. Is not this the carpenter, the son of Mary, the brother of James, and Joses, and of Juda, and Simon? and are not his sisters here with us? **And they were offended at him.***

4. But Jesus said unto them, A prophet is not without honour, but in his own country, and among his own kin, and in his own house.

This is an amazing thing. It's hard to wrap your head around, but **Jesus' own family, His own brothers and sisters, rejected Him.** The only one is James, who is the Lord's brother. All the rest of them walked away from Him. Can you imagine the ramifications at the Great White Throne Judgment when you were born of His family and of His lineage, and He was your brother, and you rejected Him, and now you have to go to the lake of fire? It's unbelievable.

Paul was divided from his own people and his own country. And down through history, you'll find that the Bible-believing groups like the Waldensians, the Huguenots, the Paulicians, the Albigenses, the Cathari, they too were divided from the world.

IV. The Hard Realities of Ministry and Rejection

And when you get into the ministry—and the ministry, as you well know, is people—when the Dominican kids were here, what you did for them was you ministered to them. You ministered the love of God in your heart to them. The ministry is people, and you're going to find that sometimes the ministry and dealing with people can really be hard. And I get it. You're going to find that the very people that you try to help will wind up rejecting you.

In my fifty years, I have had it happen all too many times in dealing with people. There'll be times, and many of you know exactly what I'm talking about because it has happened to you. We've had conversations about it. You'll pour yourself into somebody. You'll walk through the tough times with them. Many times, you'll win them to Christ and disciple them. You'll give them of yourself 150%. You'll spend time helping them. You'll invest in them. In most cases, you'll have given them the right Bible and set them on the right path. You'll care about them. You'll get your emotions involved with them because you love them. You'll sacrifice time with your own family or things that you want to do to meet with them to help them when they need you. And then they will simply walk out of your life. They'll walk out of church. They'll walk away from the Bible and the Lord. And in some cases, most cases, they'll now turn against you.

It's unbelievable. They wouldn't even be going to heaven if God hadn't used you in their lives. They probably wouldn't have the right Bible; they got it from you. And now they won't even speak to you. They'll slander you. They'll post lies about you on Facebook, or the internet, or MySpace, or in your face, or one of those things. They'll blame you for their problems. They'll lie about you. And that can be very disheartening for you. It can be a very defeating thing for you if you don't keep the right perspective.

I already told you it happened to the Lord. He came unto His own, and His own received Him not. They wound up crucifying Him. He faced rejection by His own people. Now, to be in the ministry truly, you must love people. I love people. I have given fifty-plus years of my life, over half a century, to helping people with the Bible, trying to get them wherever they need to be. But

I want you to understand, throughout the years, I've learned some things. **I've learned some key things over the years that never let me get defeated when they reject you.** And you better learn this. I've seen too many of God's people quit and give up because they got burned. And you got burned to the point where you said, "What's the point? I'm not going to get burned again."

Well, let me tell you something. If a Waldensian, an Albigensian, and a Huguenot can get burned at the stake, you can get burned a little bit. I just thought of that. That's really good. Sometimes, even at my age, I amaze myself. I can't find my car keys, garage door opener, or wallet, but I'm pretty amazing at other times in my life.

➤ You Have to Know the People You're Working With

You better learn what I'm about to say. I'm going to give you five things that deal with God, not only preserving His word, but preserving you. The key, first of all, is that you have to know the people you're working with. **You do this by investing and getting into their life.** Unfortunately, for most pastors, their people are just a number on a giving record. They never get into their world. They never understand them. The Bible says in Proverbs 27:23:

*Proverbs 27:23. Be thou diligent to **know the state of thy flocks, and look well to thy herds.***

And when you do that, one of the things you begin to see, maybe six months, eight months before they ever pull the trigger, is a change in their life. You begin to see something different now going on. You begin to see that there's something wrong. You will ask them and they'll tell you that everything is just peachy keen, but it's not. You'll find that as time goes on, you begin to see the things that they used to really be part of and enjoy, they don't enjoy anymore. And it's a thing where you can see the change begin to happen.

Now, I got to tell you this: in most of these cases, there's nothing you can do about it. Whatever is about to manifest itself outwardly has been brewing inwardly now for Lord knows how long. And one of the things that would help is if they would be honest with you about it. But they'll never be honest about it. And that tells me from my experience that they really don't want to fix what's wrong, that they're looking to go their own way. But you see it coming.

You and I, some of you, we've lost people here that you worked with and that we all loved and knew, and you and I would have conversations about it. And we would say to each other, "They won't be around in three to six months. They're on their way out." And you can see it happen. And you can see it beginning to build. They'll start missing quite a bit, and then they'll show up one Thursday night. Now to me, that always tells me that this is now going to be the grand exit. And they'll sit out there. See, I'm not the brightest light bulb in the box, but I am the fastest one in the slow class. And I know what I'm dealing with. So I get this is going to be my last shot at you. So I'm going to take it, and I will say some things, do some things that hopefully will be the last lifeline I can throw you.

And then after Bible study, we're walking around and I see him or her or them standing outside my office, and I'm saying to myself, "Here it comes." And then I get this: "Hey, Bob, could we talk to you?" I say, "Sure, come on in." Now, once I get into this scenario, what I want to say,

because I want to show them how elegantly I can figure this out, I want to say, "Well, I guess you're going to tell me you want to leave the church." But I don't. I have learned the best way to be in ministry when you're dealing with people, even when you know that, is to be stupid. Playing dumb, I am really good at. I've had practice all my life. So I go in there and I sit down, and they always start this way. Oh, I guess if I had a dollar for every time that I heard this, I could pay for every kid going to camp for two weeks. They start out like this: "Well, we want you to know we really love you." Here it comes. Here it comes. And then they drop the bomb. And it's a thing where, Hey, you should see it coming. It doesn't matter at this point how many of you have helped them. In a couple of cases that I think of, they got saved. You won them to Christ. You disciplined them. You were there for them. You did everything. And then something happens. It's the ministry. I'm sorry.

➤ We are in a War

You are in a war. Probably all of you, other than Gary back here and maybe one or two others, have never been in a real war. You know what America is upset about? Iraq and everything that's going on over there and all those things. They're upset about the fact that we're in a war to keep somebody from getting an atom bomb who would definitely drop it on Israel, who every day of their life have rallies chanting death to America. We go in there to stop it, and they say, "This is a terrible, terrible, terrible war. We have had seven of our servicemen killed." Are you kidding me? On D-Day, 3,000 of our boys lost their lives in one day. Iwo Jima, 2,800 in one day. You see what we want today? We want a war where nobody gets killed. We want to be like the Germans: "In case of rain, the war will be held in the auditorium." And that's the way Christians are today. Christians are following that same mindset.

You're in a war, and people are going to become casualties. In combat, the hardest day of your life will be when you lose your good buddy. After a while when they got new guys coming in as replacements, you didn't want to know their name. You didn't want to know anything about them. They'd come up and say, "Hey, I'm so-and-so." "Fine." "Where are you from?" "Don't worry about it." And those guys will look at that and say, "Wow, man, this is cold." No, no, no, no. They have been in combat now for eight months, a year, two years, and they saw too many of their good friends die screaming on the ground with their guts hanging out. They don't want to know who you are because they can't stand losing anybody else they're close to. I get it.

I'm telling you guys, this is a real war we're in, and **they may not get killed physically, but they definitely are going to get splattered spiritually.** And many times, they were your friends. Many times, they were your buddies you played ball with. Many times, you gals went to lunch with them. They worked at camp. And then suddenly one day, a casualty. And if you've invested your life and are close to them, it can affect you if you don't have these five things down. I realized that as much as **I would like everybody to come home, you're going to have some people who are going to die in combat, spiritual combat.** I get that. I get that.

➤ God will be Good to you when Everybody Else is Not

And I have learned, and I give you this. Here's where it starts with me: God will be good to you when everybody else is not. That's all I need to get jump-started. You invest your life in Him;

He'll always treat you good. He'll never treat you like some of the people will treat you that you've invested your life in. That's where it starts for me. That's not the first one, though. I just threw that in.

V. Five Principles for Enduring Rejection in Ministry

The first thing I realized is, and this is where you've got to get a perspective on it:

1. **You can't make somebody do right that doesn't want to.** I spent the first half of my ministry chasing people who didn't want to get caught. And I have learned that you cannot make somebody do right that doesn't want to. If I have learned anything in my fifty-plus years, I've learned that life will be about the choices we make. And I understand for you, as much as I love you and would do anything for you, my job fundamentally that I have to stay focused on is to give you the word of God, to be there for you, to help you, to train you, to be your friend, to give you everything I can for you to make good choices in life. That is my job. Your job is to take what I give you and make those good choices. Some will, and some won't.
2. **You can't want them to do right more than they want to.** This is what you really must be careful of. This is where you can overstep the line. You can't make somebody do right that doesn't want to, but you can't want them to do right more than they want to because then you become vulnerable. Did you know when you look at the Lord Jesus Christ and His ministry to the nation of Israel, and even Paul—Paul loved the nation of Israel so much he was willing to die and go to hell for them. Jesus did die and go to hell for them. He was in the garden overlooking Jerusalem, and He's weeping because of the indifference of His own people. But you know what? He never wanted them to do right more than they did, and He never violated His own principles to try to get them to do the right thing. You do the right thing because it's the right thing to do. Never allow your emotions to override the biblical principles of the Word of God when you're dealing with people. You've got to keep your perspective.
3. **They did not reject you; they rejected God.** This is probably one of the greatest principles that if you keep it in your heart, I know what it has done for me. It's found in 1 Samuel chapter 8. Israel wanted a king. Samuel is the prophet. God wanted to give them David. So Samuel goes to the people, the leaders of Israel, and he says God wants to give you a king after His own heart. They say to Samuel, "That's not the kind of king we want. We want a king like all the other nations have." Samuel says, "Hey, boys, you're not supposed to be like all the other nations. God has got a king for you." "We don't want him." He listed all the terrible things that king was going to do to them. They didn't care. They said, "We want a king like all the other nations." That's a picture of you and me trying to help somebody who just has to have it their way. You lay out the destruction: "This isn't going to work. This is a dead-end street. You marry that bozo, and it's going to be this, it's going to be that. If you go do this, it's going to be a terrible disaster." "We don't care." See? So Samuel, like so many of us, takes it personally. He's moping around, probably not eating. He meets with the Lord for their daily briefing, and the Lord says, "What's the matter?" Samuel says, "Oh, I'm really down in the dumps, Lord. I'm really depressed. I'm having a tough time." "Well, what's the matter with you?" "Well, I gave them your message about the king, and they don't want your king. They rejected everything I told them, and I'm really down in the dumps because they're

not listening to what I say. And it has really defeated me." God says, "No, no, no, you've got it wrong, Samuel. They did not reject you; they rejected me." You'd better get it. You may pour your heart into it. You may pour your world into it. You may give it your all, but you've got to ask yourself at the end of the day: who are you working for, yourself or the Lord? They didn't reject you. They didn't walk away from you. It may look like that, and if you don't have it in balance, it may feel that way. I'm telling you right now, you had nothing to do with it. You were just the messenger, like Samuel was.

4. **Learn not to take things personally.** I learned the fourth thing based on that. I learned not to take things personally. It isn't about me. I'm doing God's work, not my own. And their problem is with the Lord, not me. They can't get to Him, so they take it out on me. I get that. And I give you this—when I think about this, and you better think about this too—at the first coming of Christ, when they're taking the Lord to be crucified, the cross was really heavy, probably 300 or 400 pounds. He's dragging it along. He's already weakened. And in Luke 23:26, the Bible says, *And as they led him away, they laid hold upon one Simon, a Cyrenian, coming out of the country, and on him they laid the cross, that he might bear it after Jesus.* Now, you've got to imagine: he's walking down a path probably no wider than this, lined with people who are throwing things, cursing, spitting, reaching out, hitting him with sticks, throwing rocks at him. And Jesus falls. And they throw Simon into the mix. This poor guy was in the wrong place at the wrong time, and he has to help carry that cross for the Lord. And you know what? A hundred yards down the road, they didn't separate Simon from the Lord Jesus Christ. They spit on him. They beat him. My point is this: anytime you help the Lord bear His cross, you're going to get clobbered. It's just that simple. They're not going to make the distinction: "Oh, that's Simon the Cyrenian, don't hit him." In the fury of their hatred for God, the word of God, and His church, they see Christ in you. That's where the problem is. You've got to learn these things; otherwise, you'll quit too. You'll let it stop you. At the second coming of Christ, He separates the tares from the wheat. And in your Christian life, with the people you work with, there are going to be tares within the wheat. You've got to learn to separate it.
5. **Time is your greatest defense.** The fifth thing, and I've learned this great truth. It doesn't bother me what they say because, you see, if you just look at the moment... There have been people who have posted all kinds of stuff about me on Facebook. I mean, just ripped me up one side and down the other—but if you only look at the moment, see, that can affect you. But if you have the context and the perspective, you never just look at the moment. You look at the big picture. And the big picture for me is simply this: somebody may attack you right now, say things against you. You can try to defend yourself, but it just becomes whatever. Let me tell you the greatest defense you have, and that will be time. Because when nothing else tells the truth, when nothing else reveals what is real and what is wrong, and what is right and what is not right, it will be time. You see, you can't fake true spirituality. And sooner or later, it's going to catch up to you. They leave, blame you, blame the church, blame the pastor, pretend they're all so spiritual. Just wait two or three or maybe four years down the road someplace. I have seen it. Just see where you're at and where they're at. One of these days, I'm going to write a book that's going to be called *Where Are They Now?* And as somebody once said, "If you sit by the river long enough, the body of your enemy will float by." Oh,

I've seen that so many times. I'm just telling you, time proves everything. You've just got to let God prove it out. And that's another great thing that I've learned in life: you're better off when God proves it out than when you try to prove it out. I've had young guys leave and go start a church. I've told them, "You're not ready to do it. You're making some really bad choices here." By this time, they're unteachable. They know more about it than I do. Okay. And you know what? In every case, it was a disaster. It was a disaster because of one Bible principle, and you can carry this to the bank in everything in your life: when it starts wrong, it's going to end wrong. It's that simple. And now you'll have a church of four or five people, and, "Oh, we really know what we're doing." Five or six years from now, you'll still be running the same four or five people. Why? How can that be? Because when it starts wrong, it ends wrong, or nothing at all. And you'll be done. You'll be done. Nothing will prove who's right and who's wrong better than time.

VI. God's Hand of Preservation

Now, here's what you need to see today out of Psalms chapter 40. The third thing God does for you that will keep it all in the proper perspective and context will be God's hand of preservation in your life—the life of His children that do His will. He preserved the Book for me. And if you love it, obey it, preach it, take your stand on it, He'll also preserve you, your family, and your ministry. And in time, you'll see who made the good choices and who made the bad choices. In life, everybody in time will define who they really are.

I've had young men that I trained in the ministry forty years ago that went out to start churches that are disasters today. The guys don't even believe the Book anymore. The guys have completely lost their minds; well, they lost God's mind. And it's a thing where somebody says, "How is that? Why does that happen?" Because, you see, when you're under a pastor or a teacher and you're under his control where you have to give the right answers, then everything is good. You won't really know what anybody really is in the ministry until they get out there on their own and time passes. Because when nobody else or nothing else tells, time will tell. You've got to know these things. You've got to understand these things. And it's a thing where this is how it works.

VII. God's Judgment on Those Who Oppose His Servants

In Isaiah 54:17, the Bible tells us:

Isaiah 54:17. No weapon that is formed against thee shall prosper; and every tongue that shall rise against thee in judgment thou shalt condemn. This is the heritage of the servants of the LORD, and their righteousness is of me, saith the LORD.

Now, you see that? God is your righteousness. And when somebody attacks you for your stand, they're not attacking you; they're attacking Him. You're His righteousness. And just as God's hand of preservation will keep you, His hand of judgment will be against them.

Now look at verse 14 in our text here today:

*Psalms 40:14. Let them be **ashamed and confounded** together that seek after my soul to destroy it; let them be **driven backward** and put to shame that wish me evil.*

Now, I want you to look at three things that will take place in their lives when somebody goes against the servants of God. I don't care who it is.

► Three Things that Take Place when Someone goes against the Servants of God

1. Let them be ashamed

Now, I want you to know this: **this shame may not be in this life**. You'll find people who get an attitude and leave on bad terms, walk away from God. And yet, when it blows up in their face and their bad choices are so obvious and now clear to them, they still don't want to get right with God. You know why? Because of their pride. They think somebody is going to say, "I told you so." Well, only a couple of times. But their pride will not let them say, "I blew it. You were right. He was right. The pastor was right. I should have listened." They won't do that. When it all blows up and they won't acknowledge it, their pride gets involved, and now we see the compounding effect enter into it, which leads to more bad choices. And they go through life prideful. They go through life arrogant. They have an unteachable spirit right up to the judgment seat of Christ.

And this is where Revelation 3:18 says, *I counsel thee to buy of me gold tried in the fire, that thou mayest be rich; and white raiment, that thou mayest be clothed, and **that the shame of thy nakedness do not appear**; and anoint thine eyes with eyesalve, that thou mayest see.* There's where the shame comes in. You may play the game and blow it off and be prideful and not take responsibility for the stupid choices you make, but **there's a day coming when your shame will appear at the judgment seat of Christ**. And that's the shame He's talking about. You stand naked before God. You've lost everything that He had for you. 1 Corinthians 3:11-15 and 2 Corinthians 5:10, Revelation 3:18, you walked away from all God gave you through the church He gave you. And now, 2 John 1:8, you've lost your full reward, and the shame of your nakedness does appear.

2. They are confounded

You see, when you reach this stage of your Christian life, nothing is going to go your way. That compounding effect—**the path of life is now clouded with bad choices and bad attitudes**. Now, this is where you're going to start to have issues in your marriage. This is where your personal life is going to begin to disintegrate. This is now where you're going to begin to see issues with your kids, and it will all come back to the issues you have with God. And God's hand will now be against you. I showed you when we went through the book of Leviticus chapter 13 how leprosy was a picture of sin in our life. It starts in your flesh, then goes to your garments, and then it's in your house. And you'll see the great contrast of Leviticus chapter 26, where the first half of the chapter, he talked about the blessings of God if you do what's right, and the last half of the chapter, he talked about the curses of God in your life if you don't do what's right.

3. Let them be driven backwards

You see, the Christian life, you hear me talk about this all the time, is one of moving forward. Paul told us in Philippians 3:14, *I press toward the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus*. We're to be moving forward, onward and upward. **When there's no spiritual growth in your life, now you go backward, not forward**. We call this backsliding, see.

Right up the road here at Fort Leavenworth, not only do they have the federal prisons, which most people are aware of, but they have a command college for army officers from all around the world. Majors, lieutenant colonels, colonels, and so forth. That war college teaches them the art of war, what we have learned in all our time to make combat successful. And one of the things that they will teach you there is that if you're a combat commander and you're in charge of a battalion, a company, a division, is that you never pay for the same ground twice. When you attack, you take the ground, and you hold the ground that you've won. Falling back and retreating means that you must pay for it all over again, and you'll lose more people.

That's good advice, but I give it to you in the Christian life: never give up the ground that you've won. Don't pay for it twice. Don't backslide and retreat. **Stay and hold the ground that God has given you**. But in this state, you lose ground and are driven backwards by God, who confounds you, and you've got shame coming up at the judgment seat of Christ.

VIII. The Threefold Blessing of Standing Firm

Now, contrast. Let me show you three things that He does for you if you stay with what God wants you to be and take your stand. Look at verse 16:

*Psalms 40:16. Let all those that seek thee **rejoice** and be **glad** in thee: let such as love thy salvation say continually, **The LORD be magnified**.*

Three things. Contrast. **Great key: contrast.**

► Three Things God Does for Someone who Stays with God & Takes a Stand

1. Rejoicing

First thing He says: there's rejoicing. I often think of Psalms 137 when I think of people who are in the first crowd that we talked about. I don't know if you ever saw this or not, but this always comes to mind when I see somebody that gets into trouble and gets out of where they should be. He says in Psalms 137:1-4, and this is where Israel has been taken captive by Nebuchadnezzar:

*Psalms 137:1-4. By the rivers of Babylon, **there we sat down, yea, we wept**, when we remembered Zion. 2. We hanged our harps upon the willows in the midst thereof. 3. For there they that carried us away captive required of us a song; and **they that wasted us required of us mirth**, saying, Sing us one of the songs of Zion. 4. How shall we sing the LORD'S song in a strange land?*

Here are the Jews now, taken captive out of the land, sitting down by the river. In fact, when Ezekiel starts writing his book, he writes it by the river Chebar. He's at the very same river. And they're all sitting around, and they're weeping. They know now what they had, and through the captivity, what they've lost. Watch, and this is a great principle. "*We hanged our harps upon the willows in the midst thereof.*" Now, if you don't know this, willows are called weeping willows. You know why? Right here: the weeping willow. For they that carried us away captive—that's Babylon—required of us a song. And they that—oh, I love this—wasted us. Now, that's what the world will do. **When you walk away from God, the church, the Bible, that's what the world of Babylon will do: it'll waste you.** You're wasted. But they that wasted us required of us mirth, saying, "Sing us one of the songs of Zion."

Oh, I can just see it. They're all down there in Babylon: "Hey, sing us one of them songs. Sing that song I heard you guys sing in church: *I've got the joy, joy, joy, joy down in my heart.*" "I like that song. Sing it for me." They just look at you. "Sing this one: *Amazing grace, how sweet the sound.*" "I want to hear that one. I don't believe it, but I like the way you sing it." Look at what they say. Here's where you'll wind up: "How shall we sing the LORD'S song in a strange land?"

When you're in a backslidden state, you have nothing to rejoice over. You can't sing the songs of Zion. **You can't sing the Lord's songs because you're in a strange land.** There is no rejoicing for that person. But for me, for you, who hold the line, stay in the Book, there is rejoicing evermore. You rejoice in how God will use you to reach the world. You who have invested in this work, invested in this church, invested in the word of God, and are part of this ministry—do you realize that God is using you to reach the world? Do you realize that there are eighteen people that went back to the Dominican Republic and because of you their lives will never be the same. And you're going to see that all over the world; where you guys help be part of what we're doing. **Rejoice evermore that God is using you to reach the world, to touch the lives of so many people, all through the witness that He gave you.** You know, in the Bible, up in heaven there are seven things they rejoice over. They ought to be the same seven things that you and I rejoice over, but most of God's people have no idea what they are.

2. Gladness

Second thing, then there's gladness. You see, we as God's people not only have so much to rejoice over, but we have also so much to be glad over. First off, I'm so glad that I'm saved and on my way to heaven. Second, you ought to be so glad for your own family. I watch, and I've tried from the get-go to hold the example and put it out there that the key to any church is families ministering together. I've said it before. You'll notice I don't bring anybody in whose family is not dialed in ministry with them. I think that sets the right example for all of you.

And I have seen you young couples now that your kids are teenagers and they're actually serving with you in the ministry by your side. I know that you've got some of you who have younger kids and you're facing some challenges. When we get through some things and have some time, we're going to go through the child training thing and help you put that together.

But you ought to be glad for your own family—the second and third and fourth generation—that they're all serving God by your side. Your grandkids serving in the ministry with you, all because

of the volume of a Book. **The gladness of the joy that comes from serving God and allowing Him to use us in spite of ourselves.** Glad for the preserving hand of God in our lives, that nothing or no one can stop us because of the volume of the Book.

3. God Will Be Magnified

Then the third thing: through your life and what people try to do to you, God will be magnified. I told you that the first time you find division in the Bible is in Genesis: He divided the light from the darkness. And you know what? The light was contrasted to the darkness, and the light will always magnify something where the darkness won't. **You see, God will define you through the light, and He'll define them through the darkness. And the way that He does this is by contrast.** Obviously, you've heard me say it is one of the great learning tools in the Bible, but also the key to the witness of your life. God will get the honor and glory out of your stand, and God will get the honor and glory out of their destruction. God will contrast your life and their life, and in time, everybody will see it. Contrast.

➤ You see it in the Lives of Men & Women all Down Through Church History

You see this in the lives of men and women all down through church history. It's hard to find today. Last week, we talked about Savonarola, and I showed you how he contrasted with the Roman Catholic Church. Paul contrasted with the scribes, Pharisees, and Sadducees. John the Baptist contrasted with Herod. Martin Luther contrasted with the Roman Catholic Church. John Knox contrasted with Bloody Mary. He's the only man in church history that ever pointed his finger in the face of Bloody Mary, preached the Bible, and lived to tell about it.

And there was the Archbishop of Canterbury in England—Thomas Cranmer—about 1556. When Bloody Mary took over, she required everybody who was King James and Bible believing to denounce that and brought back in the Roman Catholic Church. They had to sign a decree. Thomas Cranmer signed that decree. God tore his heart up so badly that one day when he stood up in the pulpit, he just let it all fly. Boy, did he preach it. And he was condemned to death. That morning when they brought him out to be burned at the stake, the fire and wood were all lined up. They were going to tie him to the stake, and the fire over there was burning that they were going to light it with. And they went to take him, and he asked for just a moment to pray. And they laughed and said, "Pray to your God." You know what he did? He went over to that fire, fell on his knees in prayer, and stuck his hand in that fire. He held that hand in that fire while he prayed. And when he pulled that hand out, it was nothing but a blackened, smoking stump. And the executioner looked at him, and the Catholic priests looked at him aghast, and asked him what he did. And he held that in their faces and said, "This is the hand that denied Jesus Christ." Separated. Contrast. Try that. You know, we're going to have to stand at the judgment seat of Christ with that old boy.

What about Billy Sunday? Prohibition came in, oh, I don't know, in the twenties. It took all the alcohol out of the country, and it was a dry country. It lasted for about eleven years, and then they brought it back. But you know how Prohibition came in? Through one man's preaching: Billy Sunday. He preached on alcohol and drunkenness. Why, most of the Baptist churches that I know of today say it's okay to drink. Poor Billy Sunday; he didn't have the light that they had, I

guess. How about J. Frank Norris? He was contrasted to the Southern Baptist Convention. Took the whole convention on.

And God was manifested through their lives by the stand that they took and contrasted to their enemies. There are many more; time would not permit it. **They paid the price for bearing the cross, but look how God took care of them.** Listen, when you take your stand for God, people are going to take their stand against you. Praise the Lord! Wear it as a badge of honor.

IX. Summary

Now, I leave you with this passage of scripture. It has meant a lot to me over the years of my battle and my stand. And you're going to find that if you take your stand, there are going to be people who love you, and there are going to be people who just love to hate you. But for me, Jeremiah 1:4-10 has always been special:

Jeremiah 1:4-10. Then the word of the LORD came unto me, saying,

5. Before I formed thee in the belly I knew thee; and before thou camest forth out of the womb I sanctified thee, and I ordained thee a prophet unto the nations.

6. Then said I (Jeremiah), Ah, Lord GOD! behold, I cannot speak: for I am a child (he's afraid).

7. But the LORD said unto me, Say not, I am a child: for thou shalt go to all that I shall send thee, and whatsoever I command thee thou shalt speak.

8. Be not afraid of their faces: for I am with thee to deliver thee, saith the LORD (Ah! Here it comes. Here's where you're at; here's where I'm at!).

9. Then the LORD put forth his hand, and touched my mouth. And the LORD said unto me, Behold, I have put my words in thy mouth.

*10. See, I have this day set thee over the nations and over the kingdoms, **to root out,** and **to pull down,** and **to destroy,** and **to throw down,** **to build,** and **to plant.***

I want you to see that. **I want you to see that before you ever build or plant anything, you've got to root out some things out of your life. You've got to pull down some things out of your life. You've got to destroy some things out of your life. And you've got to throw down some things; then you can build and plant.** Boy, those first four things, people can get quite upset with you.

Hey, when God calls you and you answer the call, and you're willing to pay the price for bearing His cross, then you understand what He means in Romans 12:1-2 of becoming a living sacrifice:

*Romans 12:1-2. I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, ***that ye present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God, which is your reasonable service.****

2. And be not conformed to this world: but be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind, that ye may prove what is that good, and acceptable, and perfect, will of God.

To so many of God's people, that verse is just words on a page. They have no understanding of counting the cost. **But I'll tell you a dying truth: paying the price and serving Him will be so much better than paying the price for not serving Him.** The contrast of a life bearing His cross is much better than you just bearing your own.

Putting the last three weeks' messages together of Psalms 40—talking about the day God saved you, the volume of a book, and today God's hand of preservation in you—**He will in time do three things for you:**

1. You'll get God's passion.

- And when you fall in love, you don't care what anybody thinks. So many people got the wrong wife or the wrong husband because they fell in love and somebody said, "You don't want to marry that person. That person is not for you." And you were so starstruck in love, you couldn't see it, and you didn't listen. When you get His passion and you fall in love with Him, nobody is going to talk you out of it.

2. You'll get His purpose.

- Now once you get His passion and it gets into you, then you're going to get His purpose in your life. And when you get His purpose in your life, then you're not going to care what anybody thinks because you're going to begin to see the day He saved you, the reason He saved you, and all those things we've talked about in the last three weeks.

3. You'll get His perspective.

- Then the third thing: you'll get His passion, you'll get His purpose, but then you'll get His perspective. You'll see life as it really is, not as it appears. You'll see people as they really are, not as they want you to see them. And you'll understand that you're doing His work, not your own. And this is the job that He has called you to do, and you'll stay on task. You'll never get defeated. You'll never faint because you realize that greater is He that is in you than he that is in the world. And He'll get you home when nothing else will, through the volume of a book.