DESTROYED BY WHAT YOU LOVE?

The Challenge of Our Time

Because of the situation in the Middle East, Ruth and I were planning one proclamation, but we've decided to make a different one. We're going to pray two prayers that are found in the book of 2 Chronicles which I feel are very applicable to the present situation. The first is 2 Chronicles chapter 20 verse 6. The other is 2 Chronicles chapter 14, verse 11 and we will be praying it in the New International Version which God also listens to.

> "O LORD, God of our fathers, are you not the God who is in heaven? You rule over all the kingdoms of the earth. Power and might are in your hand and no one can withstand you."

> "LORD, there is no one like you to help the powerless against the mighty. Help us, O LORD our God, for we rely on you, and in your name we have come against this vast army. O LORD, you are our God; do not let man prevail against you." Amen.

We pray those prayers every night. We have a certain proclamation and prayer that we make every night on behalf of Israel, and those are the two closing prayers.

Now I want to give you a perspective on the present situation in the world from the prophetic Scriptures, and I'd like to begin with a Scripture that emphasizes the importance of the prophetic Scriptures. I have kind of observed that there are two main classes of Christians. There are those who are just totally immersed in prophecy and know exactly what's going to happen next month, and they're usually completely wrong. I mean, I'm not speaking from theory. I've seen it happen at least half a dozen times. Then the others that say, "Prophecy is too deep for me. I can't handle it. I just leave it on the shelf."

I know a major Christian movement, a very fine movement, which doesn't believe in teaching on prophecy because it divides people. But at least one-third of the Bible is prophecy. So if you leave out the prophecy you're just closing off one-third of the Bible. You know the greatest prophet of all? His name is Jesus.

Years ago I found— I heard a very helpful hint which I'll pass on to you before I speak. It was from a

Jewish believer who was on the General Council of the Assemblies of God in the United States before World War II. He said, "In putting the pieces of a body together, you need to know where to start." He said, "You don't start with the left finger or the toe or even the head. There's one central part of the body—which is the spine. When you get the spine in place, then you can begin to fit the other parts together into the spine." And he said, and I believe it is extremely true, "The spine of all biblical prophecy is the prophecy of Jesus Himself, which is recorded in three gospels—Matthew 24, Mark 13 and Luke 21. They are three different presentations of the same prophetic Scripture." That was one of the last great discourses, public discourses that Jesus gave before He suffered. So if you're going to immerse yourself in prophecy it's a good suggestion to start with the spine. I would love to— I could speak for two or three hours on those chapters, but that's not for today. Maybe in the Millennium we'll have more time.

Now I just want to read one passage from 2 Peter chapter 1 verse 19, which I believe is extremely relevant to the present situation. Peter says,

> We also have the prophetic word made more sure…

Now when he says *the prophetic word* he's not talking about prophecies coming by the gifts of the Holy Spirit. He's talking about the *prophetic words* that are in this Scripture. It's very important to understand there's a complete difference, because all prophecies that are given as gifts of the Holy Spirit have to be tested, whereas this book and the prophecies in it are already tested. David said in Psalm 18,

> As for God, His way is perfect. The word of the Lord is proven or tested.

So we don't have to test the Bible, but we do have to test everything else by the Bible. So Peter says,

> We have the prophetic word made more sure; [and then he goes on to say:] which you do well to heed, as a light that shines in a dark place, until the day dawns and the morning star rises in your hearts;

So, Peter says speaking to believers, "*the prophetic word is a light in a dark place."* And the world was a dark place in the time of Peter. I believe it is a much darker place today, and I believe it's extremely

important, it's urgently necessary that we give heed to this prophetic word.

I meet multitudes of Christians all around the world who really know nothing about the prophetic Scriptures and they are walking in darkness. They are saved by the grace of God, they may well end up in heaven, but at the present moment they're in the dark. There are two things about being in the dark. First of all, you don't understand what's going on round about you; secondly, you don't know where you're headed. And that is true of all Christians who have no understanding of the prophetic word of Scripture. They don't understand what's going on around them and they don't know what lies ahead of them. They're in the dark. That doesn't mean they're not saved, but they're ignorant. You try to find any Scripture in the Bible that blesses ignorance—there isn't one. There's no Scripture that blesses laziness either, and laziness and ignorance frequently go together. People are ignorant because they're lazy. They'd rather sit in front of the television set and moon the hours away than open the Bible and find out what it has to say, because it has a lot to say that's very important.

So I'm going to try out of Scripture this morning to give you a brief prophetic perspective of the condition of the world in which we are living today, and that is important for everybody. There's nobody for whom that is not an important issue. I want to turn to the second epistle of Paul to Timothy and we're going to read chapter 3 and on into chapter 4, but we're not going to read it all at once.

First of all, in the first five verses we have a general picture of what the world will be like in the last days. I believe, and I mean, countless other preachers believe the same, we are living in the last days. So this is extremely relevant. It's much more important for you to know this than to read the newspaper or turn on the television, because this is true, it's reliable, it's applicable, it's for you.

Now Paul begins with a remarkable introduction writing to his—I would say—his closest disciple. He says,

But know this…

I can't think of any other passage in the writings of Paul where he's so emphatic. "You can be absolutely sure of this." I mean you can be sure of anything that Paul says, but he wants to emphasize,

"You can be completely certain this is going to happen." And then he speaks about the last days, and he says,

> …that in the last days perilous time will come…

I've often pointed out that the word translated *perilous* occurs only in one other place in the New Testament. It's in Matthew 8 verse 28 and it's applied to demonized men who came against Jesus, and it's translated *fierce.* I believe the best picture you can have is in the last days fierce times will come. Furthermore, they'll be fierce because they're demonized. That's where we are. We're living in fierce times and they're not going to get less fierce. They're going to get much fiercer. You can be absolutely sure of that.

I hear so many people pray prayers (I didn't hear any of the here this morning) asking God to do things which He said He will never do. Or praying for things to happen which God has said will never happen. That's a waste of time, it's a waste of God's time and your time. You should know basically what God says is going to happen and lining yourself up with it, because it's going to happen whether you know it or not. But it will make a lot of difference to you if you know it.

Now this is what Paul says about the last days.

> For men will be lovers of themselves, lovers of money, boasters, proud, blasphemers, disobedient to parents, unthankful, unholy, unloving, unforgiving, slanderers, without self-control, brutal, despisers of good, traitors, headstrong, haughty, lovers of pleasure rather than lovers of God, having a form of godliness but denying its power. And from such people turn away!

If you counted that list you'd find eighteen sinful forms of conduct or moral defects which will conspicuously mark the last days. If you look for two different kinds of conduct you won't find them there. If you look for loyalty, if you look for humility, there's no mention of them in the last days. They are not the kind of conduct or character that will come forth in the last days, and yet they are two of the most important—loyalty and humility. That's why so many marriages are breaking up, because people have turned their back on the concept of loyalty. They make their vows and break them. This is something

fairly new.

I, as you know, was born a long while ago. I mean, you have to believe there were people walking on the face of earth at that time and I was one of them. I grew up in England, just a part of British society, and up to the age of twenty-five I had only met, in my life, one person who had been divorced. Isn't that amazing? I was telling the people from our Board that in the registry offices in Britain in those days (I'm not sure it's true today), where people go for a civil marriage, there's a big sign over the head of the man that conducts the marriage that says this, "According to the law of this nation, marriage is the union of one man with one woman for life, to the exclusion of all others." That's the official definition of marriage in the British law in those days. See, today we all accept divorce, maybe many regretfully, as just a fact of history. It just goes on. But it wasn't always so.

Paul speaks later, and I'll return to it, about the love of money, and basically if you analyze our society today, it's governed by the love of money. I'm amazed, and I don't follow these things closely, but they tell me, *they* tell me that President Clinton's present rating is higher than it's ever been: sixty out of a hundred. One thing it tells me is this is an amoral nation. Morals don't matter. What matters in one simple word: money. As long as our pockets are filled and our bellies are filled, we're satisfied. It wasn't always that way.

Many of you know American history much better than I do, but it has not always been that way. It wasn't that way when this nation was founded. It wasn't that way in the time of Abraham Lincoln. It's something recent. You can get so used to it, you think it's always been that way, but it hasn't. It's a feature of the last days.

There are three special "loves" that are the key to understanding this situation. Now I have to say if you've got the NIV with you, they don't really accurately translate the first word which is *lovers of self,* but they translate it "egotistic," which is all right, but it doesn't tell you that the key word is *love*. There are three loves: love of self, love of money and love of pleasure, and those dictate the entire rest of the scenario. That's why we are in the situation we're in, because of love of self, love of money and love of pleasure. And if you look at… you couldn't look anywhere more appropriate than south Florida. What do

you see? Love of self, love of money, love of pleasure in a very fragile, fragmented society. This has not always been true. We can get so used to it we think it always was like that—it was not. It's a feature of the last days.

I think of my own parents and grandparents, all of whom were British officers. My grandparents were Christians, but the kind that—you don't ever talk to anybody about your faith. My parents were not Christians until right at the end of their lives. But I say they were not governed by the love of money. They had something else, a word that's dropped out of our vocabulary today: duty. They weren't wonderful, spiritual people, but they had a sense of duty, and they did their duty. Neither my parents nor my grandparents ever bought a home with a mortgage. They didn't buy one until they had enough money to pay for it. You can't imagine people thinking like that today. I just tell you these things because I want you to understand we are living in a different period of time, an unusual one. We're so used to the unusual that we think it's usual, but it isn't.

Now let's look at these loves. Love of self—that is the source of all our problems, and I'll speak in a few moments more about what the New Testament says. The next one is love of money, and then at the end love of pleasure. Why do people want money? Because they can buy pleasure. That's their goal to have a good time.

Now what does the Bible say about love of money. This is a most revealing Scripture. In the previous epistle of Paul, 1 Timothy chapter 6 and verse 10, he says,

> For the love of money is a root of all kinds of evil, for which some have strayed from the faith in their greediness, and pierced themselves through with many sorrows.

Unfortunately, I have seen Christians do that. They have strayed from the faith through the love of money, and they have pierced themselves through with many sorrows. But just consider for a moment that statement *the love of money is a root of all kinds of evil.* You go back to the next epistle, chapter 3 and you read that awful list of evils. Where do they come from? The love of money. That's the power behind all these other evils, and as long as people are governed by the love of money, that's the kind of

society we will have and we do have, and it's not changing—at least it is, it's changing for the worse.

Now, I'm not a pessimist; I'm not here to mourn. I'm just here to acquaint you with the facts, because they are facts. They won't be changed by your not liking them. That doesn't make any difference. They're still facts. You have got to live in this kind of society, you've got to face problems of this kind. The best thing you can do is come to grips with the reality.

Now let me say, "the love of money is a root of all evils," but it's not the soil. What soil does the root grow in? Love of self. And that is really the basic problem—love of self. Love of self has no place in the life of a Christian who follows the New Testament. It has a place in the lives of many professing Christians, but it has no place in the life of Christians who follow the teaching of Jesus. I want to turn to Matthew chapter 16 briefly, Matthew 16 verses 24 and 25:

Then Jesus said to His disciples, "If anyone desires to come after Me…"

There were a lot of people thronging around Jesus, but He wasn't interested in them. He was interested in the ones who would come after Him, follow Him. Then He said you have to do two things. And it's *if anyone*—there are no exceptions. What's the first thing? *Let him deny himself.* What's the second thing? *Take up His cross.* You cannot follow Jesus until you have done those two things. And denying yourself is saying "no" to self-love. It's removing the soil from which the root of the love of money grows. You can be a member of almost any church. I don't know of any church that I've ever entered where you cannot be a member because you love yourself, but you cannot be a follower of Jesus.

We have to bear in mind the fact that Jesus never told His apostles to make church members. He said, "Make disciples." These are the first two steps in becoming a disciple: deny yourself, take up your cross.

Then Jesus goes on in the next verse:

> "For whoever desires to save his life [but the Greek says *soul*, the soulish element in us, the ego]— whoever desires to save his life [or soul] will lose it, but whoever loses his life for My sake will find it."

So you have two options: you can hold onto yourself and lose your life, you can let yourself go and

find your life, but you can't do both at the same time. They're mutually exclusive. So every one of us here this morning, including myself, has a decision to make. Am I going to be governed by the love of self? Is my life going to revolve around me and what I think, and what I want, and my pleasure, and my satisfaction? Or am I going to lay all that down and say, "My aim is to please God"? Every one of us is faced with that choice. You cannot avoid it. When you go out of here this morning you will have make a choice. Making no choice is making a choice. It's just voting for the status quo.

So those are the issues and that's the diagnosis of our present problems. I'm so grateful for the Bible that it gives us the diagnosis. It explains why things are the way they are—because of human sinfulness, human selfishness, the degradations of human character. I can give you a recipe for having a miserable life if you want it. Just be self-centered, that's all. I can give you a recipe that will make any marriage difficult—just be self-centered. That's the key to unhappiness is being self-centered.

So, now we come to this fact that the root problem of society is not the government, it's not some criminal, it's not immoral people, it's selfish people. That's our root problem. That's what all the rest of this grows out of. And to become a Christian you have to say "no" to self. Self says, "I want, I think, I feel," you say, "What you want isn't important. What you think isn't important. What you feel isn't important." What matters is what God wants. That's the decisive issue, and making that decision has a technical spiritual name—it's called repentance.

In the Bible, the New Testament, it never speaks of faith without speaking of repentance. Any professing faith that is not part with repentance is a bogus faith, and it produces bogus Christians, and churches are full of them. But they're not the real thing, because they've never repented.

Let me give you my definition of repentance. I say this out of personal experience, because in 1991, when I was very close to death, Jesus, in a way that I cannot describe today, showed me I had to repent. Oh, I was a preacher, I spoke in tongues, I preached a whole lot of messages. (I'm embarrassed to think how many messages I'd preached.) I was accepted by the body of Christ, I was accepted by my fellow preachers. There was just one person I really didn't please. You know who that was—Jesus. And He was very, very gracious. I was complaining to Him. I said, "I've always prayed for the sick. They've been

healed. I preached divine healing, why am I not being healed?" And He gave me a little visual perspective of the kind of life I'd been leading in previous years. It was all respectable, but it was very self-seeking, carnal and materialistic.

I mean, I want you to know I was an accepted preacher. I don't think anyone ever took issue with me on those bases, and I saw I had to repent. I think I was about five yards away from a precipice. I put on my brakes, stopped, did a U-turn, and I've been traveling in the opposite direction ever since. That's repentance. It's making a U-turn. If you've never made a U-turn you've never repented. And if you've never repented, you can't have real faith. Why is it our churches are full of people who call themselves Christians but don't produce the fruit? The answer is because they haven't the faith that produces the fruit. They've got a substitute, a religious substitute.

Now I want to point out something else which is also significant. Corruption, whether it's moral, spiritual, physical or natural, is irreversible. It cannot be turned back. Take something in the natural. You take this beautiful piece of fruit, maybe a peach. You have this beautiful peach. You just leave it on the kitchen table or wherever. You don't have to make anything happen, but it is corruptible, and after a while it begins to wither, loses its bloom, shrivels. After a while it's a very ugly thing. So you say, "Well, I'll put it in the refrigerator." And if you do, you'll prolong its life substantially, but the refrigerator does not reverse corruption. It'll get— its corruption will still take its course; it will take a little longer. I think a lot of religion is like a refrigerator in more ways than one, because it doesn't change corruption, it just slows it down a little. But in the long run, this whole world system that we know is corrupt and it's on the way out. Any kind of prayer or program that seeks to prolong the world system is doomed to disaster. It will not happen, because God has pronounced His judgment. On the world as it is today, He's not going to repair it, He's not going to mend it, He's going to abolish it. God's system is not improve or modify or repair. God's system is make something totally new.

The character of God is such that He will never compromise with sin in any form. He's not going to tolerate anything that is corrupted or stained or defiled by sin, so He's going to make something new. There are three Scriptures which are worth looking at in this context. First of all, 2 Corinthians 5:17:

If any man is in Christ he is a new creation…

Not a patched up job, not a reformed person, but a totally new creation.

And then 2 Peter chapter 3 he says:

But we look for a new heaven and a new earth.

God is not going to preserve the present earth and heaven because they're stained by man's sin. There's coming a time when they're going to pass away, Peter says, with a loud noise. But we're not worried. Or are we? We're not worried because we're looking for a new heaven and a new earth.

And then in Revelation 21 verse 5, the Lord Himself makes the most extraordinary statement. He says:

"Behold, I make all things new…"

Nothing is going to stay the way it was. And then He says to John, He says:

"Write, for these words are true and faithful."

I have this picture that John the Revelator just gasped for a moment. *All things new?* The Lord said, "Yes, you can write it down. It's going to happen."

So don't be satisfied with a repair job. A lot of people are trying to patch themselves up, make themselves a little better. Wait till New Year's comes and make some resolutions. That is not God's remedy. God's remedy is a new creation.

Now let's go on in 2 Timothy chapter 3. Incidentally, I want to point out Paul is pretty ruthless in some of the things he said. He says about the people who are lovers of pleasure more than lovers of God. He says:

"they have a form of godliness but deny its power. From such people turn away!"

Paul was not writing about non-religious people. As I understand it, he would not have used the word "godliness" of people who didn't profess to be Christians. He said they have a form of godliness but they're not applying its power. What is the power? The cross: "If any man will come after Me, let him deny himself and take up his cross." A lot of the Pentecostals (and I've been a Pentecostal longer than most of you have been born) a lot of Pentecostals will say it's speaking in tongues. No, it's not, because lots of people who speak in tongues are very self-centered. In fact, they run around in an endless circuit, going to conventions to get blessed—and some of you are doing that yourselves. I'm not saying don't go to a convention, but if all you're doing is get something for yourself, you have never been delivered from the love of self. But the _____ of such people, turn away. Paul says, "Don't waste time on such people." That's a very important word for people in the ministry. Do not spend a lot of time on selfish, self-centered people, because if they will not change, you're wasting your time. Just concentrate on the people that are willing to change.

One of my principles is, I never willingly minister to people who I know will not change. Sometimes one doesn't know, but if I cannot change people, I'm not interested in ministering to them. I do it, but I don't do it intentionally. So bear in mind, being Charismatic—speaking in tongues, knowing all the best preachers, being able to quote a few Scriptures—doesn't mean you passed the test. The test is love of self. That's the power of the gospel.

When we were in India, Ruth and I were given two beautiful ornamental crosses which we wore yesterday just to prove we can wear a cross, but we don't normally do that. But you see, what is the symbol of Christianity for all people, Christians and non-Christians? What is it? One word? The cross, that's right. You leave the cross out, you don't have Christianity.

I was preaching about a year ago in Switzerland. You know the Swiss flag, a beautiful flag, a red flag with a white cross. I said to the Swiss people, "Listen: if you took that white cross out of that flag all you'd have is a piece of red cloth." And it's the same with Christianity. If we take the cross out, we've just got a religion, and there are enough religions in the world without making one more.

Now I want to pursue this further, because we get a further picture of the last times in the rest of this

chapter and the beginning verses of the next chapter. We'll not read it all, but we'll go on to verses 8 and 9:

> Now as Jannes and Jambres resisted Moses, so do these also resist the truth: men of corrupt minds, disapproved concerning the faith; but they will progress no further for their folly will be manifest to all, as theirs [that's Jannes and Jambres] was.

Now, you may not know, but Jannes and Jambres apparently were the names of the magicians of Egypt. When Moses went to Pharaoh with his message to let God's people go, Pharaoh trotted out his magicians, and there was a kind of contest between Moses and Aaron and these magicians. This is something extremely important you need to bear in mind. Three of the supernatural signs that Moses did, the magicians could do. So ability to perform something supernatural is not a guarantee that it's from the Lord. This is so important. Moses could turn his rod into a snake. That would impress most of us today. I mean, we'd listen to a preacher who could throw his rod down on the pulpit and make it a snake. But the magicians could do the same. Moses could turn water into blood, so could the magicians. Moses could call up frogs out of the river, so could the magicians. When he got to the next stage, they couldn't. They said, "This is the finger of God. We're out of our depth now." But bear this in mind. It's very important. The magicians could do, by the power of Satan, three supernatural things that Moses could do by the power of God.

What do we need? We need discernment. We need to be on our guard. We can't be taken in merely by supernatural signs. Satan, in a way, is a master of the supernatural. It says, "The antichrist will be distinguished by mighty signs and wonders," but he's not the true Christ—he's the antichrist. I'm so concerned about Charismatics, because I think most Charismatics will follow anything supernatural convinced that it's of God. It doesn't have to be from God. It can be from the opposite source. You say, "Lord, that really isn't fair." Shall I tell you something? **God isn't always fair**. God puts us to tests. He wants to find out what's really in us. He confronts us with the counterfeit and says, "Did you notice the difference?" It's happening all through the Western world at the present time. The church is being flooded with the counterfeit. You say, "God, it isn't fair." God says, "I'm expecting you to use discernment. I

require it of you."

So, we'll go on further. Now comes the part which makes everybody say "Hallelujah." Going to verse 10:

> But you [Timothy] have carefully followed my doctrine, manner of life, purpose, faith, longsuffering, love, perseverance, persecutions, afflictions, which happened to me at Antioch, at Iconium, [and] Lystra—what persecutions I endured. And out of them all the Lord delivered me.

Paul was writing to his closest associate. He said, "You know all I've been through, all the way from Antioch onwards. You know the kind of opposition I've had, the kind of persecutions I've endured." Then comes a verse which very few people say "Amen" to. Verse 12:

> Yes, and all who desire to live godly in Christ Jesus will suffer persecution.

Amen? Well you can say amen now, but it's going to happen. You cannot change that. I heard an interesting little anecdote from the wife of the grandson that's going to be welcoming us in Clearwater, who pastors a church. They had a Sunday school class for the children and one little boy brought his friend who wasn't really part of the class. Steven's wife was teaching about the broad road and the narrow road and saying, "Only the narrow road will get you to heaven." And this little boy put up his hand and said, "Well, why don't you make the road wider?" You can laugh, but a lot of people are doing that. They're widening the narrow road. But when you get on a wide narrow road, it doesn't take you to its destination. All right, we'll go on—verse 13.

> But evil men and impostors will grow worse and worse, deceiving and being deceived.

Now where it says *imposters*—this is just interesting—the Greek word means "wailers, enchanters, practitioners of the occult." You'll notice the powerful emphasis on the occult—the magicians, the wailers. We are surrounded today in our contemporary culture by the occult. It comes in by every way that it can. We have to learn to recognize it and deal with it.

I've written a little book—not a little book—a book on deliverance from demons, which will be

coming out, God helping us, next April. I've got a number of testimonies in it, people who've actually been delivered from demons. One of them was a woman who was an office manager for a senator in Washington and she describes how she was delivered from many different demons. But she said, at the beginning, she said, "I used to have the idea that if I left the devil alone, he'd leave me alone. I didn't want to get involved with the demons and ghosts and things like that." That doesn't work. The devil doesn't play fair. You can leave him alone, but he won't leave you alone. You've got to face these issues.

All right. Now we come to the really important part of this passage. What is our remedy? Where do we have security? In view of all the evil forces that are being unleashed and will multiply and increase, where can we turn for security? I thank God, there's a clear simple practical answer—it's in verse 14 and 15:

> But you must continue in the things which you have learned and been assured of, knowing from whom you have learned them, and that from childhood you have known the Holy Scriptures, which are able to make you wise for salvation through faith which is in Christ Jesus.

What's the remedy? What's our source? The Scripture.

Now I want to say, the Scripture. I'm so glad that Paul said "the Scripture," because God has spoken lots of words, but these words are words which were recorded in writing for our benefit. They are a very special set of God's words. I want to tell you, God has given us a written guarantee. It's in the next verse:

> All Scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness.

ALL Scripture. Every single word in this blessed book is given by inspiration of God. You can trust it. You can build your life on it.

In 1944 when I was still a soldier in the British Army the Lord specifically gave me my calling in these words. He said, "I have called thee to be a teacher of the Scriptures in truth and faith and love which are in Christ Jesus for many." If God had tried to show me at that time how many it would be, I wouldn't have been able to believe it. But He has been faithful. And that is my primary calling—is to be a teacher

of the Scriptures—and as long as I am doing that, I am safe. In fact, any other development of my ministry comes out of that. If you can't let me teach, I really can't help you. But if I teach I can move into other things. But that's my basic calling. I so praise God!

Now listen. I hear words spoken about "extra-biblical revelation." I tell you one thing, there's no guarantee offered with that. This has a written guarantee. God says it's awe-inspired. You can absolutely trust it. But when you come to other kinds of revelation, how do you know what to believe? How do you know what's trustworthy? I don't understand people who are looking for extra-biblical revelations. Have they found out everything that's in the Bible? Have they exhausted everything that's in the Bible? Well, Brothers and Sisters, I've studied the Bible for fifty-eight years. I started as an unbelieving philosopher convinced that it was my philosophic duty to find out what the Bible had to say, and I found it a very dreary, unattractive book. But after about nine months, I met the author in one night and that totally change my whole attitude and perspective on the Bible forever. The next day when I opened the Bible—and I was somewhere in the book of Job, which is as far as I'd got—when I opened it, it was like there were just two persons in the universe: God and me. And the Bible was God speaking to me. And it's been like that ever since, and I feel like I've only just paddled in the margin of a vast ocean of revelation, which I haven't assimilated yet. I don't want any extra-biblical revelations. I want to know more of the biblical revelations.

I have to say, frankly, in my opinion, such revelation is not trustworthy. I could say more but I probably shouldn't. But I want to warn you. Be very careful what you open your ears and your heart to. I think that's one thing with me—and Ruth bear me witness. For some reason, perhaps because of my background, my academic background, I am very, very careful what I let into my mind. I never read a book unless I feel God wants me to read that book. There's something in it I need. I'm one of those people that if it's in my mind, it will come out of my mouth sooner or later. I don't have a double life. What's in my mind comes out of my mouth.

So I don't let the wrong thing into my mind, because I don't want the wrong thing to come out of my mouth. That, in a way, is asceticism—if you know what asceticism is. It's denying yourself. I don't, I

mean I… please don't think I'm trying to tell you… I don't watch television. I'm the kind of mind if I see things moving in front of my eyes, I get excited. I can't help watching them. You're not like that, I know. So I can get along without it. We have our ways to get news, but it's much simpler and it doesn't waste a lot of time, and it doesn't expose us to so much that's ungodly. Honestly, any Christian family that has a television set and uses it has to be very, very watchful. If you're not, you'll be poisoned. Understand, I'm not saying don't have a television set. We do in Jerusalem, but we only have it for one reason. If there's an emergency, the television will tell us what to do, as far as human beings can do that. We never turn it on. We keep it in a cupboard. I just want you to know I'm not saying everybody has to be like us. Probably two of us is enough.

But I want to say this: the Scriptures are unique. There's nothing to be compared to them, and in my opinion they're inexhaustible. You never come to the end. Ruth and I, we read the Bible together morning and evening. And again, not everybody has to do that. But the other day we were reading Exodus 15 verse 26:

> "If you diligently heed the voice of the LORD your God and do what is right in His sight, give ear to His commandments and keep all His statutes, I will put none of the diseases on you which I have brought on the Egyptians. For I am the LORD who heals you.

Well I've known that Scripture ever since I've been a Christian, but it was like it was totally new that morning. It was a new revelation. And I want to say, really, you can't get the fullness of the Bible except by revelation. There has to the revelation of the Holy Spirit. You know, even the genealogies are inspired. Did you know that? We never pass them by. We're right in the middle of them right now. I'll tell you something. I didn't mean to do this, but, 1 Chronicles chapter 4, it says in the midst of the genealogies—understand, just these two verses, you could easily pass them by. But 1 Chronicles chapter 4 verses 9 and 10:

> Now Jabez was more honorable than his brothers, and his mother called his name Jabez, saying, "Because I bore him in pain." And Jabez called on the God of Israel saying, "Oh, that You would bless me indeed, and enlarge my territory, that Your hand would be with me, and that You would keep me from evil, that I may not cause Pain!" So God granted him what he requested.

Well, round about 1951, I read those words and I said, "I'm going to pray that prayer, the same prayer that Jabez prayed." And now forty-seven years later I have to say God has answered it. I would have missed an awful lot if I had skipped over the fourth chapter of 1 Chronicles. You never know where the jewels are, because they're like literal jewels—they're hidden away in places that you wouldn't expect them.

All right, we have to go on now. Where am I going to go next?

Now we come to the application, especially to preachers, but not confined to them. Now we come to chapter 4 verses 1 and 2:

> I charge you therefore before God and the Lord Jesus Christ, who will judge the living and the dead at His appearing and His kingdom:

This is a very solemn charge. It's given in the presence of God and Jesus Christ, and in the light of the fact that Jesus is coming back as Judge. We have to bear in mind that we will all stand before the judgment seat of Christ. That's one of the appointments you'll not miss. You can miss a lot of appointments in this life, but there's one or two appointments you will never miss. "It is appointed unto men once to die, and after this the judgment." That's another, and not a one of us will be missing at those appointments. In the light of that, Paul gives advice primarily to ministers, servants:

> I charge you therefore before God and the Lord Jesus Christ, who will judge the living and the dead at His appearing and His kingdom: Preach the word!

That's what I say to everybody who is involved in any form of ministry: *Preach the word!* Don't give people your ideas, don't focus attention on yourself, **Preach the Word**! As far I know myself, I have always aimed to get people directed to the Word of God, not to Derek Prince. I've always tried to step back and get the ultimate focus on the Word of God, because that's what people need. Then it says:

> Be ready in season and out of season. Convince, rebuke, exhort, with all longsuffering and teaching.

When you preach the Word you need to convince people, you need to rebuke people, you need to exhort people. Not everybody comes to church expecting to be rebuked, but it's in the program. Don't miss it out, because people don't like it. And then it goes on:

> For the time will come when they will not endure sound doctrine [sound teaching], but according to their own desires , because they have itching ears, they will heap up for themselves teachers;

People with itching ears who just want their ears scratched. Honestly, I have to say, I think that applies to a lot of people who are involved in extra-biblical revelation. It's accommodating people with itching ears. I don't say it's all that way, but much of it is, and there's lots of other things.

We've had in the last twenty years, we've had at least three or four well-known figures in the church make exact prediction as to the day when Jesus will return. They've all been wrong, because the Bible says "No one knows, not even Jesus." The only one that knows is God the Father, and He hasn't revealed it to these preachers, and they've upset the faith of a lot. But if you know your Bible, you'll never believe anybody who tells you that because it's unbiblical. I've had members of my own family believe one of these. He said Jesus was coming October the 28th sometime. Well, Jesus didn't come. "Well," he said, "I got the year wrong. It will be next year." He didn't come next year, and then people discovered he'd been making so much money on his books that he'd built himself a tremendous institution. Why would he need that if Jesus was coming? See, the love of money is the root of all evil, including prophetic evils.

Now there are four things that Paul says to the servants of the Lord. They're all found in verse 5, but I'll just summarize them. Be watchful, endure, evangelize, and finish the job. We have to be watchful. We cannot go to sleep. We have to endure. There will be times of testing, times of pressure, times when things seem to be going against us. It so happens that Ruth and I are at one of those times at the moment, but we've made up our minds not to give up. Evangelize. Now I don't believe that Timothy was an evangelist. I believe he was an apostle and a pastor, but that doesn't mean that he wasn't responsible to evangelize. Every Christian is responsible to give the gospel. I'm not an evangelist, but I have given the

gospel and seen hundreds of people saved. I will never do it if there's somebody else there to do it better. But when no one else is there, I'm happy to do it. And finally finish. Finish the job.

I've been so impacted by the words of Jesus in John 4:34. In fact, I tell people, "I have a new diet." You know what He says?

"My food is to do the will of Him who sent Me, and to finish His work."

For me personally, at my age in life, that's where the emphasis is—finish His work

Now I want to say one more thing, at least one more thing. I want to speak for a moment about "signs" in quotes, or manifestations. Things where things happen in the church (or wherever you are) that you can see or hear or feel. Signs or manifestations affect human senses, and people get very excited about them. I don't blame them. I get excited. But we have to be very circumspect. My Christian life started with signs. I mean, I spent I don't know how long, on the floor of an army barrack room, first of all crying, and then laughing. Nobody preached me into that. And it changed my life. So I believe in powerful physical manifestations that change people's lives. But I want the right ones not the wrong ones, and there are a lot of the wrong ones going around.

In this book that I've just completed, which is coming out, I have a little letter from a pastor in Durban in South Africa describing some of the extraordinary things that people began to do in his church because they thought it was the Holy Spirit. Let me tell you something about the Holy Spirit. He's holy. Anything that doesn't promote holiness is not from the Holy Spirit. I spent the hours on the floor but I was a changed person. I was made a new creation. The tree is known by its fruit. Don't go for a tree that produces bad fruit.

And let me say this too. We almost inevitably will have some bad fruit. We're not to be blamed for that, but we're responsible for what we do about it. Now it's not enough to sweep it under the carpet and say, "Well, let's not say anything more about that." It's not enough to get rid of the bad fruit, because bad fruit comes from a bad tree. What do we have to do? Cut the bad tree down so that it doesn't go on producing more fruit. That is something I don't see happening in the body of Christ. Some people are

against the bad fruit, some people are in favor of the good fruit. And I preached a sermon about five years ago which I have to say has been totally proved correct. I spoke about mixture in the church and I quoted Leviticus 19:19 (which you don't need to turn to), where God takes a stand against mixture—mixed seed, mixed clothing, mixing animals. God is opposed to it. It's wrong.

Our churches are full of mixture. We are not to be blamed for that. We are to be blamed if we don't do anything about it. What I said was this: If you get mixture of the right and the wrong, the right spirit and the wrong spirit, there'll be two results. First of all, it will produce confusion. Secondly, it will produce division. Why would it produce division? Because people will line up on two sides. Some people will see what's right and good and say, "Well, I'm for that." Other people will see in the same movement what's bad and say, "I'm against that." So some are for the movement and some are against it, and the church is divided.

That's exactly where the church is today. I said that five years ago. It's inevitable. If you tolerate mixture you will get division. Can you say "amen" to that? You people in Good News, can you say "amen" to that?

So we're not to tolerate mixture. We're to deal with it. We're not to be blamed if mixture is there. We are to be blamed if we don't deal with it. That's where the problem lies. And I would have to say, it takes guts to do it. You'll go against some people's feelings. You'll upset some people. So what? It's better to upset them now then let them be upset in eternity. I have a passionate concern for the destiny of men and women, and I'm prepared to be unpopular if I can save somebody from a spiritual disaster. Now some of you don't know what I'm talking about and some of you do, and I do.

Now I want to tell you there is a safeguard. We can protect ourselves. It is those three words—Preach the Word. First of all, Hebrews 12:4 says:

The of word of God is alive and powerful, and a discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart.

If you really preach the word faithfully under the anointing of the Holy Spirit, it will begin to discern. Some people will get upset. That's the discerning of the Word. But if you don't preach the Word, you

have nothing to go by. Who knows? And as I study the New Testament I find that in the providence of God signs are given to confirm the Word. If there's no Word to confirm, what signs would you get? You can get anything. The safeguard is the Word, the Word, the Word. Preach it; teach it. The biggest problems with contemporary Christians in this country is most of them are abysmally ignorant of the Scriptures. There are a few wonderful exceptions. Have you ever studied the prophet Jeremiah? That would open your eyes. Have you ever read the book of Lamentation? That would show you what can happen when people turn their backs on God. We need to know. We need to be warned. We don't need to tickle people's ears. We need to warn them.

Now let me give you just a list of Scriptures that prove my point. My point is: signs are to confirm the Word. If there's no Word, then there's nothing to know what the signs are for. Let's turn to Mark 16, Mark 16:20. Jesus told them to go out into "all the world and preach the gospel to every creature." Incidentally, that is still an order. You know that? How many of you are doing that in any way, shape or form? Thank God. You don't have to… just ask yourself.

I was in a very happy, Charismatic church once and they were singing, "Get all excited, go tell everybody Jesus Christ is King." And of those, probably two hundred people, I question there were ten percent that ever did what they were singing about. It sounds good to sing it, doesn't it? But it doesn't change anything. What changes things is doing it. Anyhow, Mark 16:20:

> And they [the apostles, disciples] went out and preached everywhere, the Lord working with them and confirming the word through the accompanying signs.

What was the purpose of the signs? To confirm the Word. And it's very necessary. It's extremely important, but not if we don't have the Word.

And then in Acts 4:29 and 30. This is a prayer of the early church when they were forbidden anymore to mention the name of Jesus. And incidentally, the situation in Israel is pretty close to that today, or could be if they passed their new law. Now this is what they prayed, Acts 4:29 and 30:

> "Now, Lord, look on their threats, and grant to Your servants that with all boldness they may preach Your word, by stretching out Your hand to heal, and that signs and wonders may be done through the name of Your holy servant, Jesus.

What was the purpose of the signs and the wonders? To confirm the Word, to give them boldness. Because if there's no Word to confirm, what would the signs and wonders be doing?

And then in Acts 14 verse 3, and this is part of the journey of Paul and Barnabas, and just speaks about a certain place, Iconium, and it says in verse 3 of Acts 14:

> Therefore they stayed there a long time [that's in Iconium], speaking boldly in the Lord, who was bearing witness to the word of His grace, granting signs and wonders to be done by their hands.

What was the purpose of the signs and the wonders? Bearing testimony to His Word. No Word, so what do we have? Who knows what the meaning of the signs are.

And then Hebrews chapter 2, Hebrews 2 verses 3 and 4:

> How shall we escape if we neglect so great a salvation, which at the first began to be spoken by the Lord, and was confirmed to us by those who heard Him. God also bearing witness both with signs and wonders, with various miracles, and gifts of the Holy Spirit

Then you've got the whole gambit of the supernatural: signs, wonders, miracles and gifts of the Holy Spirit. What were they given for? To bear testimony to the word of salvation. You take that away and you're left with nothing; you're left in confusion. You have no understanding of what is saying what.

Now let me say something else to you who are, may be preachers. Don't preach to make things happen. Let God make the things happen. He will, sooner or later. He may test you. You may preach for a time and see nothing happen. God is testing you. "Is he preaching because he sees things happen or is he preaching because he's obeying My word?" In the long run, God bears testimony to His Word with signs, wonders, miracles and gifts of the Holy Spirit. Take the Word out, and you're left without a compass. You're in an uncharted sea with rocks and shoals and no compass. You will end in shipwreck. That's guaranteed. It doesn't make any difference what denomination you belong to. It's just a fact of the spiritual life.

Now I want to give you one more thought. I don't know how long I've been going, but—yes, the first two verses of Luke's gospel. This is one of those passages which God quickened to me. I'd read it countless times and then God showed me something new. Luke chapter 1 verses 1 and 2. Luke says:

> Inasmuch as many have taken in hand to set in order a narrative of those things which have been fulfilled among us, just as those who from the beginning were eyewitnesses and ministers of the word delivered them to us,

So the source of Luke's information was eyewitnesses and people who were ministers of the Word. But the word "minister," unfortunately, does not accurately represent. I was preaching in France and I understand French, and I said that's the right _____ (in French) *servants of the word*. That impacted me. What am I? Am I a preacher? Or am I a servant of the word? What am I serving?

Now, I told you how God called me fifty-three years ago, fifty-four years ago, and I think I know I've had many weaknesses. I've failed many times. But I think I really can say, basically, I have always been a servant of the Word. I'm not the master; I don't give directions. I'm not out to promote myself. I'm a servant of the Word of God. What about you? Are you a minister or a servant?

Now I say that because when Ruth and I went to Pakistan years ago, we knew it was a little difficult for Christian ministers to get in, so I was trying to be very circumspect. The man in the immigration asked me in English what I am. So I thought and I said, "I'm a minister." I noticed after that he began to treat me with extraordinary respect. I thought, *Is that because I'm a Christian minister and he's a Muslim?* And then I realized he misunderstood me. He thought I was telling him I was a minister of the United States government.

Now which kind of minister are you? Are you truly a servant of the Word? That's my question—primarily addressed to those in leadership, but it can be addressed to anybody to whom it applies. I would like to face you with this question. Are you willing to be a servant of the Word? Not dictating to the Word, not getting the Word to do what you want it to do, not demanding that the Word produce certain signs and wonders and if it doesn't you're not much interested.

Are you a servant of the Word? Do you intend to be a servant of the Word? Will you commit yourself

to be a servant of the Word? I want you to think that over for a moment.

Now, please don't respond unless you're sincere, because it will only add to your condemnation. But if you really see— "Brother Prince, I see what you've been saying today. I realize we've often put the wrong thing in the first place. The first thing is the Word. I realize that God is not looking for ministers; He's looking for servants—servants of the Word. And, God, I feel you're speaking to me this morning saying, 'Will you be a servant of the Word?'"

If you really feel in your heart this is the commitment that God is asking from you, and I would like— No, I won't, second thoughts. Anybody here this morning that says, "Brother Prince, before God I've seen what you say, I agree that it's true, and I really want to be a servant of the Word," would you just stand to your feet as an indication that that's your decision. Please be careful! I hope you've understood me. This is not a picnic; it's not a way to a happy life; it's not even a guarantee that you'll be popular. You may be much more unpopular after you've become a servant of the Word than you were before. Do you really mean it? Well, I have to believe you do. Thank God if you do. Amen, thank God.

I think I'm going to let you formulate your own prayer. We who are on the platform will pray for you and then just remain standing long enough to pray your own prayer between you and God. When you've prayed it, sit down.

Lord Jesus Christ, You are Head over all things to the church which is Your body. We pray this morning for these who are standing. Lord, I pray that You'll do a real work in each heart and life, You grant clarity, You grant an awareness for the issues and how crucial they are. And we pray, Lord, that each one standing will respond to You in the way that You want out of a sincere and humble heart, for Your glory, Lord Jesus. For Your glory, for You are the Head over all things to the church, which is Your body. Amen.

Now just feel to pray whatever you feel is in your heart.