

Ultimate Sacrifice - Lesson 4 of 21 - Landmarks of Prophecy

Well friends, tonight we have a very important prophecy study and I want to welcome you again to the 'Landmarks of Prophecy' Bible study series. This is a new series we've put together that combines the major landmarks of prophecy with the themes of the Gospel because they really do go together. You can't study one without the other, it just won't make sense. You know, in the Bible we read about one of the great patriarchs, his name was Abraham. And our lesson tonight is called 'The Ultimate Sacrifice' and it's based upon this Old Testament story about the Father and the Son.

Now you remember, Abraham was an old man and he hadn't had the child of promise he was supposed to have through Sarah. He tried to take things into his own hands and he had a baby with Hagar, Ishmael, and that just brought all kinds of strife into the family, but God worked a great miracle and in his old age - Sarah was ninety, he was over a hundred - they had a baby. They named him Isaac, which means laughter, and God promised Abraham that through this miraculous baby boy, all the nations of the world would be blessed because Jesus would come through the seed of Isaac.

So you can understand Abraham's amazement - how distraught he was when early one night the Lord woke him up and spoke to him in that clear voice that was undeniable - he knew it was God - and He said, 'Abraham, I want you to take your son, your only son Isaac, who you love, bring him unto the mountains of Moriah and offer him there unto Me as a burnt offering.' Well, how could that happen? Because it was through Isaac that all his promises would be realized. Everything in his life had been built up to this son Isaac and now he's a hundred and Sarah's - he's more than a hundred now; Sarah's over a hundred at this point - Isaac's probably 17 years of age, but he didn't disobey.

He had faith - it says in Hebrews that if he did this - if God needed to raise him from the dead to fulfill his promise, he had learned to trust the Word of God no matter what. So he didn't explain it all to Sarah. He woke up Isaac and said, 'Son, we're going to go offer sacrifice. Come with me.' Got some servants, got the donkeys. They went on a journey to the mountains where God directed him - the mountains of Moriah.

It was a three-day journey. They got to the base of the mountains, he told the servants to stay there, he put the wood on Isaac's back, and they went a half a day's journey up to the place of sacrifice - three and a half days. How long did Jesus minister? Three and a half years. And on the way up the mountain, Isaac thought something was peculiar because he and his father had gone to offer sacrifice many times before. By the way, you find this story in Genesis 22:19. And he said, 'Father.' There was a long silence and he knew something was different. His father looked like his heart was breaking. He didn't understand. He said, 'Father, we've got the wood and we've got what it takes to make the fire, but we're missing the lamb.' And he said, 'Where is the lamb?' Abraham said, 'My son, God will provide Himself a lamb for our sacrifice.' Those were prophetic words because God did provide himself a lamb.

So they continued on their way. They went up the mountain and at some point Abraham needed to explain to Isaac what was going on. You know, he couldn't wrestle his teenage son to the ground. He couldn't outrun him. He said, 'Son, I need to tell you what the Lord has asked me to do.' And after explaining this, the Bible tells us that Isaac is a willing sacrifice. Jesus was a willing sacrifice. Jesus had the wood placed upon his back.

They embraced each other. Isaac then was bound by his father, his trembling hands placed upon the stone altar. And just as Abraham was about to bring down the knife - he had resigned himself to do what God had told him to do - the hand of an angel stopped him and said, 'Abraham, Abraham, don't do the lad any harm, for now I know that you trust me.' Why do you think he had Abraham act that whole experience out? What greater sacrifice could be asked of anyone than to give their child? This is to illustrate the love relationship between the Heavenly Father and Jesus The Son in what they've done in giving themselves for us - because it's not just the Son that suffered, the Father suffered. The Father so

loved the world He gave the Son and this is why Jesus came.

All through the Bible you can see these allegories of salvation. It's all pointing to the time when God would come to the Earth in the form of a man. You know, there are hundreds of prophecies - this is a prophecy seminar - hundreds of prophecies in the Bible that foretold with great detail the first coming of Jesus. You know there's a prophecy written by King David a thousand years before Jesus was born that says they would pierce his hands and his feet? Psalm 22 goes on to say they would gamble and cast lots for his clothing, which happened at the cross. The Bible tells us he would be born in the town of Bethlehem hundreds of years before he was born.

The Bible says he would be betrayed by a friend - Judas. It tells us that the friend would betray him for thirty pieces of silver. It then says what would happen with the money - it would be used to buy a potter's field. I could go on and on. It tells about Jesus rising. It tells about when He was going to be born. We knew exactly, from Daniel chapter 9, when He would be baptized - the anointing of the Most Holy.

And you could go through hundreds of prophecies in the Bible including this story - not just the prophecies, the stories are there to tell us about Jesus. What do you think the Bible's saying when it talks about Joseph, this beloved son of the father who is stripped of his beautiful robe by his own brothers, sold for the price of a slave and then, years later, he becomes the king of the world and he forgives his brothers? This is what happens with the Jewish nation. They actually turned in their own Messiah but he later forgave them and they found out the one they turned in is the King of the universe.

And you know what the brothers of Joseph did to cover their sin? They presented to their father a blood-stained robe. What was the only thing Jesus left behind at the cross? A blood-stained robe - a symbol of his robe of righteousness. All these stories in the Bible - from David going up the Mount of Olives and weeping - Jesus went up the Mount of Olives and wept. Moses stood on the mountain and stretched out his hands interceding for the people and they got a victory. Jesus stretched out His hands - Sampson stretched out his hands and brought down - and he laid down his life - and he brought down the temple of the enemy.

And I just - over and over through the Bible, all these stories are telling us about Jesus. So as you read through the Old Testament, especially my Jewish friends - I just wrote a book that especially is for some of my Jewish friends to look at the Old Testament. You will see Jesus everywhere in these stories. They're all prophecies so we would recognize the main event when God came to earth in the form of a man. He didn't want us to miss that. But you need to read it. Now, our lesson tonight is going to talk about the central theme of why Jesus came, this Lamb of God.

Let's go to our first question in our lesson: 'Whom did the animal that was sacrificed in Isaac's place represent?' You remember when Isaac - when Abraham - I'm sorry - was ready to bring down the knife, the angel stopped Abraham and he directed his attention to a ram that was caught by his horns in a thorn bush - called a thicket. There's a ram with a crown of thorns. Did Jesus have a crown of thorns? And that ram was sacrificed in the place of Isaac.

Who does this lamb represent? You can read it in John - the Gospel of John, chapter 1, verse 29. When John the Baptist saw Jesus coming it says, "The next day John seeth Jesus coming unto him, and saith, Behold the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world." Jesus is that lamb. John recognized - all the lambs that they sacrificed all pointed to Jesus. The Bible says in Revelation - it talks about the Lamb slain from the foundation of the world. When Adam and Eve sinned they tried to cover their nakedness with what? Fig leaves, you remember? God said, 'That won't do.' For one thing, it says they made aprons of leaves - little mini skirts. And then it says God gave them tunics of skin. That wasn't vinyl that he bought from Walmart. Where do you think that skin came from? Something had to be sacrificed. The sacrificial system was established there to cover their nakedness as the lamb of God, Jesus, His robe

covers our sin. When the prodigal son came home the father said, 'Bring out the best robe and cover him.' He had been out in the pig pen. He was welcomed into the family because he had that robe of righteousness - that beautiful robe.

I remember hearing, years ago, in Scotland there was a man who took care of a lighthouse and it was, you know, fifty feet - sixty feet up in the air - had a little metal railing around it to protect him when he'd go out and clean the window that kept the light shining. And one day he hadn't realized that the salt air had corroded the metal railing and as he was up there cleaning off the lighthouse window at the top, the railing gave way when he leaned against it and he tumbled off down sixty feet. When he opened his eyes he was laying on his back and he saw the clouds floating by in the blue sky and he thought, 'I must have died. I'm in heaven now.' And then he thought a moment longer and he thought, 'Well, if I'm in heaven, why does my back hurt so much?' And he finally came to his senses and got up and he realized that he had fallen on top of one of the sheep that was grazing below and it broke his fall, but it died in the process. And the only way that you and I could be saved - God knew - was He had to give Himself because we broke His law.

This is our next question: number two - 'Why was it necessary for Jesus to die?' People say, 'Couldn't He have just forgiven us? Why did He have to die?' The Bible tells us - Romans chapter 3:23 - I bet most of you know this - "For all have sinned. And come short of the glory of God." We've all sinned. And you go on - why is that such a serious thing? Sin is breaking God's law.

What is the penalty? Romans chapter 6, verse 23, "For the wages of sin is death." But God doesn't want you to die. And the only way for you to be forgiven was to have a substitute. And Jesus said, 'Look, I love you so much I will take your place. I will come into the world. I will live the perfect life that I wanted you to live, but I will die the death that you deserve to die. I will give you My goodness and I'll take your badness. I'll give you My life. I will take your death. I'll give you My power. I will take your weakness.' He made an exchange with us that we receive by faith and then it becomes real - it really does. But the penalty for sin is death. That was the only way. Furthermore - Hebrews chapter 9, verse 22, the Bible says, "Without shedding of blood is no remission." And that means no forgiveness.

The Bible says the life is in the blood. All of the nutrients that go to every cell in your body - fingernails, hair, everything. It's cleansed and it's sustained by blood. Blood is the liquid of life and Jesus poured out His blood to take away the sin of the world. I just captured what I thought was an interesting fact this week that was in the news. We've been hearing a lot about the Ebola scare and there's this gentleman, William Pooley, who is a British nurse who was ministering to people in West Africa with Ebola, he contracted the disease but he survived. But because he was exposed, his body built up antibodies against it. Now he's flying to the United States to give his blood to that doctor in New York City that came down with Ebola because he has the immunities in his blood.

Who is the only person that came into this world and lived a perfect life without sin? Jesus. It's only the blood of Jesus that will give us the transfusion that we need to heal us from this deadly disease and sin is a deadly, contagious disease. 1 Corinthians 15, verse 3 - the Bible tells us "Christ died for our sins."

Now we don't like to think about it but we've all sinned. You see, when God first made man, He made us to be motivated naturally by love. But when man chose to follow the devil, we took on the nature of the devil, which is the reverse of that, it's selfishness. We fell - we were tricked - and so God said, 'Look, I want to do something to give humanity another chance at eternal life. I will give you an opportunity to choose. Do you want a heart that is motivated by selfishness, like the devil, or do you want a heart like Mine that is motivated by love? And the only way is to have that new birth and to get that new heart. We come to Jesus. He takes away our sinful natures and He gives us His own heart - His own spirit. And it's a learning process. It doesn't necessarily all happen at once. 1 Peter 3:18, "for Christ also hath once suffered for sins, the just for the unjust." See, it's that changing of places that He's made with us.

I remember reading one time - I was in the Philippines a few years ago - I've been there a couple of times now. I went to visit a very large prison, and I heard a story - and the prison, it was amazing, the prisoners were all able to, you know, they have their own little huts and they cook their food and - but they're carefully guarded on the outside. There were two brothers in Manilla and they were twins - identical twins. One chose to be a Christian and he gave up his wild living. He and his brother used to both drink and smoke, but he met a Christian girl, and that changed everything because he fell in love. And he accepted Jesus and he gave up and he - just a complete, converted Christian - gave up his old ways. His brother did not.

His brother drove a Jeepney - one of the Filipino taxis - was drinking one night, hit someone and killed them - put in prison for many years. His brother would go visit him and he felt so sorry for his brother he said, 'You know, I'm a Christian and you need to find a wife. You need to find Jesus.' He said, 'I tell you what, we look just like each other' - he went to visit him, gave him his visitor's pass, he put on his brother's clothes, he gave - he put on his brother's prison garments, they traded places. His brother went out of prison. Now, I'm not recommending that, I'm just saying that he really said, 'I'm willing to suffer in your place.' And this is what Jesus did - the just for the unjust.

Number three - 'What is this great plan of salvation called?' It tells us in Revelation chapter 14, verse 6, "Having the everlasting" - what is it? - "Gospel to preach unto them that dwell on the earth." The word 'Gospel' means what? Good news. Good news. I mean, why is it good news? Because before Jesus you know where your life is going - you're heading to the grave. We're on a conveyor belt to oblivion without Christ. We were dead but now we're alive. We were sick but now we're well. We were lost but now we're found. That's good news. Everything changes when we really learn about Jesus and we accept Him into our lives.

Number four: 'Why did God make such a fantastic sacrifice for us? Answer - you all know this one - John chapter 3, verse 16, "For God so loved the world, that He gave His only begotten Son." The only time that God was ever begotten as a man was in Jesus. God, the Son, became a man to show us how to live. Three reasons Jesus came: show us what the Father's like, to be an example for you and I - how we ought to live, and then to be our substitute - to die on the cross - and look at how He suffered. That's what we all deserve for our sins. But He doesn't want us to suffer. He said, 'I will take it for you in your place.' I think sometimes we don't appreciate that word 'so.' 'For God so loved the world.' He desperately loves us.

I remember one time, a pastor sharing a story that he was reading the paper and he scanned the obituaries and he began to cry. And his wife came over and said, 'What is it dear?' And she put her hand on his shoulder. He said, 'I just read this tragic story that happened this week. This family bought their four-year-old boy a little red radio flyer wagon for his birthday - first day, on his birthday he was trying it out and their driveway sloped into the street and he didn't turn it in time and he careened out into the street and a truck hit him. And right after he told her that their phone rang and it was the family. He was a local pastor and they said, 'Would you be willing to do our son's service - memorial service?' And he said, 'By all means.' And when he went to the service, the thing that stood out - he saw the, you know, small, white coffin - all the mourners came in - but when the family got there - and I've seen this happen myself - the mother and the father got ahold of the casket and they couldn't pry their hands off. And they just said, 'We loved you so. We loved you so.' And the pastor that told us that story, he said, 'I could never read John 3:16 without thinking about that two-letter word, so. God so loved the world - it's not just He loved it, He so loved it He gave His son and that's how He loves us - a love we can't even comprehend.

Number five: 'What must I do to benefit from Jesus' sacrificial death?' It is true that Jesus died for the sins of the whole world, but will the whole world be saved? No, why? You must do something about it. It says - it tells us in the Bible what it is we need to do. Acts 16, verse 31 - and you can say this - it's at the

first word - ready? "Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved." By the way, the word 'believe' does not simply mean to acknowledge that He existed. Some people say, 'Oh, I'm going to heaven because I believe in Jesus.' But their life is just like everyone else in the world. And you say, 'Well, what makes you different?' 'Well, I believe.' Well, are you showing that you believe by your life? See, in the Bible, when it says 'believe' it means 'be live' in the Lord Jesus Christ. If you believe then you respond accordingly. If you say, 'Lord, Lord' and you don't do anything He says, do you believe?

You know, the Bible says there are devils that believe He exists. The devils actually believe better than us because they've been around Him for millions of years or thousands of years before they fell. So it's more than just acknowledging He exists or even acknowledging He died on the cross, it's surrendering your life to Him and saying, 'Lord, I'm willing to serve You. I want to live for You. That's what it means to believe. It starts with believing here but then that belief needs to go into the heart and then that belief will then go from the heart into the life, right? That's the complete belief.

Also, it tells us in John 3:14 and 15, Jesus said - similar verse to John 3:16 - "And as Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, even so must the Son of Man be lifted up. That whosoever believeth in Him should not perish, but have eternal life." Jesus says that twice - whoever believes in Him - He said, 'As Moses lifted up the serpent.' Some of you might remember that story in the Bible where the children of Israel began to complain about God's manna and when we stop appreciating the Word of God, we get into trouble. You know when Eve got into trouble, the devil said, 'Hath God said? You can't really believe what God says.' As soon as she began to question the Word of God we all fell along with Adam as well.

And when they began to say they didn't want the manna anymore, a plague of serpents came in among them and began to bite them - deadly serpents - and they finally turned back to Moses and said, 'We are being overwhelmed by the serpent.' When we don't appreciate the Word of God, the serpent overwhelms us because it was the Word of God Jesus used to fight the devil, right? And Moses was told by God, take a - make a bronze serpent and put it up on a pole and whoever looks at that serpent lifted up on that pole, he will be healed and forgiven. And Jesus said, 'As Moses lifted up the serpent, even so The Son of man must be lifted up that whoever believes in him might not perish but have everlasting life.' God wants you and I to have that experience. It's a look of faith.

You know, they were a nation of shepherds and big problems with shepherds is when your sheep get bit by snakes and it was frequently seen that when they killed a snake - you don't pick up a dead snake or wounded snake with your hand, they'd pick it up with a stick. I told you I lived up in a cave in the mountains - I had a snake stick and I - you pick it up with a stick and you carry off and you bury it where it won't get dug up and hurt one of your animals. So for that nation, seeing the serpent up on a pole represented a defeated serpent and Jesus hanging on the cross represented that the devil would be defeated. His blood is the anti-venom for the problem of sin, amen? John 1:12, "But as many as received Him, to them gave He power to become the sons of God."

You and I, when we accept Jesus, He gives you a power. It wasn't without the power of God I could quit drinking. I smoked for years - I couldn't quit smoking, not without the power of God. I had a terrible vocabulary and it's only the power of God in my life that was able to change me. And He releases His power in your life and you become the sons and the daughters of God.

Question number six: 'How, then, am I forgiven and cleansed?' Now if we understand everything about prophecy and we miss the main point of prophecy - that Jesus is coming - then you've missed it all. We really want to know 'How does this all affect me?' All these prophecies in Revelation talk about the Gospel.

People come to these seminars and they say, 'Pastor Doug, I don't want to hear about Jesus but tell me about the beast. I want to know about the antichrist.' By the way, the word 'antichrist' does not appear in Revelation, did you know that? It's in the letters of John. They say, 'I want to know about

Armageddon.' And 'I want to know...' Well, what's the book of Revelation called? The - first words - the Revelation of Jesus. So you can't teach prophecy and separate it from Jesus, friends, amen? How then am I to be cleansed and forgiven - or forgiven and cleansed? Acts chapter 3, it says, "Repent ye therefore, and be converted," - that's a change of heart - "that your sins may be blotted out."

Now what does repentance mean? Repentance is a sorrow for sin and a willingness to turn away from it. And you can't even repent without the Holy Spirit. It's God's Spirit that gives us the ability to repent. When Peter was preaching at Pentecost he said, 'Repent.' When John the Baptist began preaching, you know what the first words were out of his mouth? You don't hear too many preachers say this anymore on TV - a lot of it's just sort of feel good stuff. The first thing John said was 'Repent for the Kingdom of Heaven is at hand.' Then after Jesus was baptized and Christ began His ministry, what was the first word out of Jesus' mouth when He began to preach? It says, 'Christ then began to preach 'Repent for the Kingdom of God is at hand.'

What does 'repent' mean? You've got to look in the mirror and come to terms with you've got a problem. God cannot save you, cleanse you, heal you from your problem until you acknowledge it. You have to humble yourself and then He can lift you up. And you come before the Lord and say, 'Lord, I'm a sinner.' And the next part of that - let's get to the next verse - it says in 1 John 1, verse 9 - in connection with repentance there's sort of a stereo part of that - it says, "If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from some unrighteousness?" Did you catch that? To cleanse us from how much unrighteousness? All. All unrighteousness. So part of being sorry is then verbalize it to the Lord. Get off by yourself.

You know, I recommend - even if you've been a Christian for years - if you've never done this, this will bless you. Find some time alone, say, 'Lord, I want to have a new beginning with You.' Get yourself, maybe, a pad of paper - don't put it on your computer because sometimes people can hack in there and you don't want this to get away. And say, 'Lord, search me, try me, see if there be any wicked way in me. Show me what my sins are.' Now, I doubt anybody here remembers all of their sins. I don't remember all of mine. But start with the Ten Commandments as a category and say, 'Have I worshiped other Gods? Have other things been supreme in my life besides You? Have I ever talked bad about people? Taken God's name in vain? Have I ever stolen anything? I've never committed adultery but have I thought impure thoughts?' Jesus said it's not just the act, it's the attitude.

A man or woman can look on the opposite sex and lust and it can begin there. And say, 'Lord, I'm a liar. I've never committed murder.' Jesus said, 'if you're angry with your brother without a cause, you're guilty of murder.' Some of us have committed homicide in our hearts. Make that list and say, 'Lord,' - and the Holy Spirit may remind you of things you've never thought of before and say, 'I'm, so sorry.' All of a sudden you'll be sitting there going down - writing down - and the Holy Spirit will say, 'You know that rake that you borrowed from your neighbor next door five years ago that's still in your garage? You know, when you borrow things that long it's called stealing.' 'Oh, Lord, I'm sorry. Please forgive me.' And the Holy Spirit will say, 'yeah, take it back.' That's part of it, right?

So repentance is not only a sorrow for sin, there might be people you need to pick up the phone and call them and say, 'You know, I'm sorry for the way I treated you.' You might need to write a letter to your parents or your children and say, 'You know, God's been speaking to my heart and I did some things. I'm sorry. I hope you'll forgive me.' Even if they don't forgive you, you've done the right thing, right? This is what real repentance and real salvation is about. Inviting God to empower you to be a new person. You take the first steps and draw near to God and it will give you such a refreshing and a peace that comes afterward. You know, new things don't sprout until there's been a rain and sometimes the new birth comes after tears and pain and that's what repentance is.

Number seven: 'What is this wonderful conversion experience called in the Bible?' You find the answer in John 3, verse 7. It said, "Ye must be born again." God wants us to have a new birth and we can't do that

without His help. You and I need to have a fresh beginning. You know, I couldn't share with you some of the things I share about my past except I really believe I'm a different person now. And anybody who knew me back then that knows me now, they say, 'What in the world happened?' 'Old things are passed away. All things are made new.' Little babies are so beautiful and they're so innocent and they represent purity and God wants us to have that new beginning. You ever wished you could live your life over again? But, you know, there's a little trick to that. You wish you could live your life over again still knowing what you know now, right? So you don't make the same mistakes.

Number eight: 'Who enters the heart of each born-again Christian?' The Bible tells us in John 14, verse 17, "Even the Spirit of truth;...ye know Him; for He dwelleth with you, and shall be" - what? - "in you." God is real and Jesus said, 'Look, I'm going that I might send the Comforter. I'm going to send the Holy Spirit. I can be with you physically, but He will be in you.' And I can't tell you how many times I've just known that the Holy Spirit was in me and prompting me. Sometimes He prompts me to say something. Sometimes He prompts me not to say something. Sometimes the Holy Spirit directs me to, you know, an action or to do something for someone.

I was driving up the street the other day here in town and I saw one of those people standing on the corner and he had an unusual sign. He said, 'I've lost everything but my faith.' And, you know, I used to panhandle and I sized him up and, you know, he looked like he was sober and maybe he really was having a hard time and, you know, I didn't know. So I stopped and I gave him a little bit and I gave him an invitation to the meeting. And I knew the Holy Spirit told me to do that. Well, I then went on my errand to the store right around the corner and, you know, I found out he really was hungry because I saw him coming out of the store with food. So I said, 'Thank you, Lord, for impressing me.' But the Holy Spirit will talk to you in just these little affairs of life.

Number nine: 'When Jesus lives in my heart through the Holy Spirit, what will I do?' Things change. It tells us in Philippians 2, verse 13, "Both to will and to do of his good pleasure." You notice it's not just a willingness, it's a doing. Let me talk to you about that two-letter word for just a moment. There's a lot of Christianity that has become the laughingstock of the world we're in today because it's big on talk and it's very small on action. It's all external. It's all fanfare and a lot of glitz, but when it comes to practical Christian living there's not a lot of that. The Bible says, 'It's not everyone that says, 'Lord, Lord,' but they that do the will of My father.' Jesus said, 'The wise man builds on the rock. The foolish man builds on the sand.' What's the difference between the wise man and the fool? The Bible tells us the wise man builds a house, the fool builds a house. The wise man hears the words of Jesus, the fool hears the words of Jesus. Storm comes to the wise man. Storm comes to the foolish man. Storm's coming, friends, to everybody. But it says, 'the wise man is the one who hears my words and does them.' the Lord not only wants us to be hearers but doers of His Word and then he can really bless us. There's a blessing that comes in obedience.

Well, I can tell you so many stories where I struggled with the Lord over something - I finally surrendered - and I thought, 'Why did I wait so long? It is so much better now.' I remember when I smoked for years and I struggled with it - my mother smoked and my father smoked, I mean, it was just - I grew up surrounded with it and started when I was a teenager going to school, stealing my mother's cigarettes and I was addicted. And I knew God wanted me to stop. After I accepted Jesus I read the Bible and, I mean, I know the Lord was working in my life, but I said, 'Lord, it's not a big deal and I argued with God and I said, 'It's not what goes in my mouth that defiles me - see, I got a Scripture - it's what comes out of my mouth.' And the Lord said, 'Yeah, well it is coming out of your mouth.' And, you know, I just had all these rationalizations and the Lord, I realized, was not going to make me do anything. You're free to do what you want. He won't force you.

So I'd be driving down the road, head of my cigarette fell off into my lap - I nearly wrecked my car and killed myself. I got so bad I'd spend my last five dollars on a can of rolling tobacco rather than food and I

kissed a girl - she told me it smelled like licking an ashtray. I just said, 'Oh, maybe I'm not having that much fun. And I finally quit. Praise the Lord, it's been thirty-something years ago - thirty-seven - eight years ago and I am so glad. I've got good lungs. I can hold my breath for a long time. I wish I had done it sooner but I am so - do you know how much money I've saved now? Just add that up. I just wish I'd put it all in the bank.

To do His good pleasure - number ten: 'Why should I be confident that my new-birth experience will be successful?' It says in Philippians 1, verse 6, "He which hath begun a good work in you will perform it until the day of Christ." You can be confident - if you come to Jesus on a daily basis, surrender your life to Him, He will finish the work that He starts in your life. People say, 'Oh, Lord, but I may fall.' You probably will. Don't get discouraged.

I mean, Peter said, 'Lord, I want to walk on the water and come to you.' Jesus said, 'Come.' He took his eyes off Jesus - he was walking on the water fine as long as he kept his eyes on Jesus. Took his eyes off Jesus, Peter started to sink. He said, 'Lord, save me!' Jesus pulled him back up again. We all sometimes get distracted and we make mistakes and we'll fall, but He that began a good work in you will be the author and the finisher of your faith. He will finish what He started if you continue to surrender yourself to Him because what'll happen is either sin'll keep you from the Bible or the Bible will keep you from sin.

You keep praying, you keep reading the Bible, you'll be so miserable with your sin you'll have to give up God or you'll give up your sin. But the two will be incompatible. You just keep coming to Him and He'll finish what He started. Do you believe that? Some people get discouraged and they throw their hands in the air. You keep pleading with Jesus. You keep praying. He will transform you. And it's a growing experience so don't get discouraged. I mean, do babies fall when they start to grow? You know, for a baby to grow it's got to do three things, really. It's got to breathe - if you're a born-again Christian you've got to pray.

Prayer is the breath of the soul. Baby has to eat - you need to eat the Word of God. That's why it says in the Lord's prayer, 'Give us this day our daily bread.' Every day we need the Word of God. You need to exercise your faith - share your faith with others. And babies, of course, need an occasional cleansing at both ends, but - and we'll need that cleansing too from God's Spirit.

But the baby, does he ever worry about growing? If you're feeding your soul the Word of God, if you're praying, if you're doing what you can to practice your faith, you will grow. What worries me sometimes is I meet people that have been in the church for years and they're not any different years later than they were when they came in. You want to grow. The idea of a Christian is to be like Christ. Even the disciples - don't get discouraged - three and a half years of following Jesus - in the upper room they're arguing about who's the greatest.

That kind of gives you hope that maybe you can make it because if they were doing that, they became apostles and they wrote a part of the Bible. The Bible says Elijah was a man subject to like passions as us. He prayed and fire came down from Heaven. He prayed and rain came down from Heaven - like us - yes, you can make it. The Bible says we can become saints of God through His power. He has begun a good work in you will perform it, just stay with God, amen?

Number eleven - oh, I pressed the wrong button - 'Why do some people fail in their Christian experience? Well, they do the opposite of what I've just described. They get discouraged. They fall down and they stay down. This man was walking by a dock one day, he saw a fisherman sitting there by the dock fishing - the man looked off the edge of the dock - he was a tourist - he said to the fisherman, 'if I should fall in here would I drown?' And the fisherman thought, 'That's an odd way of asking how deep the water is.' He said, 'Sonny, falling in doesn't drown anybody. Staying under is what does that.'

So we may fall, just don't stay under. Isaiah 53, verse 6, it says, "We have turned every one to his own way." You know, the biggest battle that we'll all face is the one that Jesus faced in the Garden of

Gethsemane when, just before He went to the cross, He fully resigned Himself to his fate and it says He prayed that prayer, Luke 22, verse 42, "Not My will, but Yours, be done." And that's the big struggle for me. Every day I say, 'Lord, not what I want but what You want.' Be careful about ever telling the Lord 'Lord, I'd never want to be there. I'd never want to do this. I'd never want to go there.' I never dreamed I'd be a preacher. And my wife said that she gave the Lord a list of things that she didn't want when it came to finding a husband and one on the list was 'Don't marry a pastor.' So be careful about the lists that you give God. 2 Peter chapter 3, verse 2, "Be mindful of...the commandment of us the apostles of the Lord and Savior." Think about what God has commanded us to do. Keep that ever in your minds and he will bless you. Don't forget where the Lord has led you.

Alright, question number 12: 'How can I know that Jesus accepts me and that I'm called His child?' Well, because the Bible makes some promises and the Bible tells us in Titus 1, verse 2, "God, that cannot lie, promised." Some things God can't do. One thing He can't do is He can't lie. God also cannot find a sinner that He doesn't love. There are several things that God cannot do. He cannot devise a better way to save you than the one that He's devised.

'How shall we escape if we neglect so great a salvation?' What more can He give than His son? God has promised that if we follow His conditions that He will give you eternal life. Think about it. Would you give your son - would you pay so much to save somebody that couldn't be saved? I know I used to think, 'Oh Lord, well, I know You created this plan of salvation for people but I've gone too far.' And God wants us to know 'I wouldn't have gone through everything I went through if it wasn't possible for you to make it.' Matthew chapter 7, verse 7, it says, "Ask, and it shall be given you." What's the most important thing we can ask for? Jesus said if you have a son and he comes to you - Matthew chapter 7 - and says, "Can I have a loaf of bread?' Would you give him a stone?' That'd be kind of a cruel joke if they're hungry. Or if he says, 'Can I have a fish?' Would you give him a scorpion? If he asks for an egg would you give him a serpent?'

Luke adds one more. He then says, 'If you then, being evil, know how to give good gifts unto your children, how much more will your Father in Heaven give the Holy Spirit to those that ask Him? He just wants us to ask. Every day ask and what happens? Ask and you shall receive. I can tell you stories like that all night. I know God is real and I know prayer works. God has thousands of miracles for you that you never receive because you didn't ask. And He wants to do things for you but you've got to ask.

Number thirteen: 'How will true conversion change a life?' Now we're going to give you a spectrum of answers here. It says in John 13:35, "By this shall all men know that ye are My disciples, if ye have love one to another." God'll do something in your heart - believe it or not - you'll not only be able to love the people that you live with, you'll be able to love your enemies. God can change your heart. He can give the ability to forgive. And some of us need the Spirit of God to forgive ourselves because we feel so guilty.

I don't know about you, but there's places in my past I don't want to go. Whenever I think about what I said or what I did, I just cringe. And then I remember that Jesus has forgiven me so what right do I have to be a higher court than God? If He's forgiven me, then that must good for me too, amen? He'll help us have love for Him and love for one another.

Now I'm going through, kind of, the alphabetical answers here. Answer B - this is in a series that falls under that question - 2 Corinthians 5:17, "If any man be in Christ, he is a" - what? - "new creature." Old things are passed away, all things are made new. We - you become transformed and things are all different. Things that you once loved, you now hate. I used to - the first few times I went to church, I'll be perfectly honest with you, I grew up with the music of the world - my mother was a songwriter and great composers came to our house. And I love music, but church music, oh. They're so slow. I'd go to church and I'd look at the hymn that they picked in the bulletin and it would say - if it had more than three verses, I went to the bathroom until they got done singing. The things I once loved I hated and the things

I hated I once loved. Now I hear those songs and it just brings tears to my eyes because I think about the words and what they mean. Places I used to love to go, I hate now. Things I used to love to do, I don't want to do and things I used to hate, I want to do. I mean, God just changes you - makes you a whole new creature.

Answer C: 1 John 3:22, "We keep His commandments and do" - there's that word again - "those things that are pleasing in His sight." This is what the Bible teaches. He makes you a new creature and you want to be a doer of the word. God'll just totally transform your life.

Answer D: it says, "Be not conformed to this world: but be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind," what transforms us? We are changed by what we look at. That's very important to remember. That's why the Bible says, 'If I am lifted up, all men will be drawn unto Me.' As we behold Christ we're transformed. It's like our souls are a photographic plate and we become like what we look at.

After church one day, Karen and I went to someone's house for dinner - they had some other guests there - and this one man was there and, quite frankly, he looked a little like an old version of Elvis Presley - hair, clothes, everything. And we came to find out during the meal that's what he used to do, he was a Presley impersonator. And he told us a story. He said, 'I was a teenager when Elvis was first becoming, you know, a rising star and' - he said - 'I went to one of his concerts and I saw the girls screaming and throwing their clothes and he thought, 'I want to be Elvis.' - He was trying to find himself. He said - "I want to be like that.' And so he got a guitar, he learned to play, dyed his hair black, got all the Elvis Presley records - they were the records back then - he'd play them over and over again. He'd look in the mirror and try and - he'd go to the Elvis Presley movies.

Any of you remember when you could go to a movie and sit there all day and they'd just keep playing it over and over again? And he'd sit through - I mean, Elvis was not much of an actor. You know my mom used to write songs for Elvis Presley. So I met him a couple times. But - nice guy but he wasn't much of an actor. But he'd go watch Elvis movies all day long. Wallpapered his wall with Elvis Presley posters - and he did this for twenty years - idolized him. And he said 'When Elvis died I was doing a gig in Vegas and I did some Elvis Presley impersonations and they hired me.' - He said, 'Then other people started coming because I was the first Elvis Presley impersonator.' And people that saw him said, 'He talks just like him, he sings just like him, he looks just like him.' And he said, 'It came from spending my whole life just looking at somebody.' And then he said, 'Now I don't know who I am.' - He said - 'I realize I can't do this forever.' At that point he was a portly -year-old Elvis - and he said - you know, he was still getting ten thousand dollars for a concert in Japan. But he said, 'I can't do this.' - He said - 'I used to be a Christian. I'm trying to find my way back.'

And I thought, when I heard Joe's story, 'What would the church be like today if we did with Jesus what he did with Elvis? If we would fix our eyes on Jesus - if we would focus on Jesus and look at His life.' He's the representation of God. He said, 'If you've seen me, you've seen the Father. He wants us to have that relationship. 'That we might prove' - here's the rest of that verse - "that ye may prove what is that good and acceptable, and perfect, will of God." He wants us to know what His will is.

Answer E: It says, "Ye shall be witnesses unto Me." Then we let our light shine. We show others what Jesus is like.

Answer F: In Ephesians 6, verse 18, "praying" - how often? - "Always, with all prayer and supplication and spirit." You don't just pray when you kneel down in the morning. You don't just pray with your food, though those are both important. I pray while I'm preaching, right now. I pray before. I pray afterward. You walk with the Lord. He's with you. You know that song, 'He walks with me and He talks with me?' He wants you to have a living, vital relationship where you're aware that God is present with you through His spirit.

Number fourteen: 'What wonderful promises come with Christian life?' Oh, a number of other

wonderful promises. A - we'll do these quickly, okay? Philippians 4:13, "I can do" - how much? - "all things through Christ who strengthens me."

Answer B: Philippians 4:19 - The Bible says, "God shall supply all your needs." He will take care of you. He'll give you everything you need to prosper, as a parent would. Mark chapter 10, verse 27, don't forget this one: "With God all things are possible."

Answer D: John 15, verse 11 - it says, "That your joy" - is the Christian life a sad experience or is the Gospel good news? Christians ought to be the happiest people in the world. We have eternal life. It begins now. We become citizens in His kingdom. God will transform your life and give you a purpose. John 10:10 - it says, "That they might have life...more abundantly." Jesus doesn't come to take away your life, He wants you to have an abundant life. Christians should have full, exciting lives. I have a lot of fun. You can ask John Lomacang, Jëan Ross - my friends here that know me - that the Christian life can be exciting. It's full of purpose and meaning. Hebrews 13, verse 5, "I will" - Jesus promises - "I will never leave thee, nor forsake thee." He says, wherever you go He's with you. He'll watch over you.

And then, you can also read in Hebrews chapter 13, verse 6 - you don't have to be afraid of anything. Some people live in fear. It says, "I will not fear what man shall do unto me." You know, if you have God in your life you don't have to be afraid of anything. If you're fearing God, you don't have to fear anything else. If you do not fear God, you're going to end up fearing everything else. People having panic attacks - a lot of people live in fear. Some are afraid to leave their houses. They're taking medications and, I'm not a doctor but I think a lot of these things could be resolved by having faith in God. He gives you - that's the last one - John 14:27, He says, "My peace I give unto you." Jesus could sleep through a storm because He knew His Father was always with Him and Jesus will always be with you.

So what's the sum of what I'm saying, friends? That there's only one way for you to really have peace and power and purpose in your life and it's to accept the sacrifice of God's Son. You know, this took on new meaning for me. I used to read that verse all the time - 'God so loved the world He gave His Son.' And then a few years ago I was doing some evangelistic meetings in the Philippines and while I was there I thought, 'I'm going to call my firstborn son, Micah, and just see how he's doing. They had this new technology called 'Skype.' It had a different name back then and I wanted to make a cheap phone call on my computer. So I called him up. We talked a little bit as a father and son, just 'What you doing? Oh, I wish you were here with me.' We talked and just before I hung up I thought about saying, 'You know, I love you son.' But, you know, he's a tough kid and you go to hug him, 'Oh, come on Dad. You're getting mushy.' So I said, 'Love you. I'll see you when I get back.'

That next morning I got a phone call - he was a contractor - twenty-three years old - had a fatal construction accident and when you get the word, as a parent, that you've lost your child, you would do anything to bring him back to life. Death is such a terrible permanent situation and I cannot read that verse anymore where it says, 'For God so loved the world He gave His Son' the same way, because I know how much it broke my heart and our family when we got the news about Micah. And I'm looking forward to the resurrection and getting other people ready and that's the purpose for life. He wants you to be ready but he won't force you, friends.

You need to make the decision. You know, I'd like to invite you who are here and those who are watching, I'd like to invite you to do something about what we've heard tonight. It's one thing to hear it, it's another thing to do something. We're going to ask our ushers to pass out a card. I'm going to have John come out and Jaime and they're going to sing and play and when you get your card, I'd like to ask you to fill this out.

We have them both in Spanish and in English and, as you get that, you should have pens. You at home, you can do it online. Go to the Landmarks of Prophecy site - you can fill this card out online and we will be sending you a free gift called 'Three Steps to Heaven' if you fill this out online. And we just want to

encourage you to make a decision tonight about what you've heard and you'll see a new power come into your life.

Jesus keep me near the cross,

There a precious fountain,

Free to all a healing stream

That flows from Calvary's mountain.

Near the cross, near the cross,

Be my glory ever; till my ransomed soul shall find

Rest beyond the river.

At this point you should have your cards and I want you to simply answer - all you have to do is put your name down - we want to pray for you. Just answer these questions. Number one: I believe that salvation comes only by grace through faith in Jesus Christ. You can make a decision right now, just say 'Yes.' Check that. Question number two: perhaps you once knew Jesus but you've drifted away and tonight you want to recommit your life to Jesus. Why don't you check that spot? You may feel a struggle going on in your heart right now. It's a struggle between will you live for yourself or will you live for love and for God? You know how the other's going to end. Why not give it all to God? Number three: I choose to surrender my life to Jesus and I desire to live my life according to His Word.

Some of you who are watching or here, you've never made that decision before, don't worry about what someone around you might be doing, God is speaking to your heart right now. He's shown His love for you. He gave everything He could give in giving his life. Would you like to say, 'Lord, I want to give my life to You?' Check that now. Be praying please.

Those who are watching, you can make that decision. Number four: I believe the Bible is truth and I want to follow its teachings.' If you believe that, friends, you can mark that down. We'll be studying the Word of God in this seminar. And then, finally, we want to know how to pray for you. You might have a special, particular need that you'd like us to pray about - a struggle you're going through - we have a team connected with this seminar - we spend time in prayer.

You can write down your prayer requests. If you have a special prayer you might have to summarize it there on your card. You can even e-mail your prayer requests at the Landmarks of Prophecy website. And we would like to see you get a new beginning. Those of you who are here, after you fill out your cards you can pass them on to the aisle. The ushers will have buckets for you. Those that are - if you don't have a chance to do that, there may be some ushers with buckets there at the door. You can click and send your decision to us - those who are watching online. I'd like to invite John to sing another verse and then we're going to go off the air with prayer.

Near the cross I watch and pray

Hoping, trusting ever.

Till I reach that golden strand

Just beyond the river.

How many of you know the words to this song? Let's sing the chorus together.

In the cross, in the cross,

Be my glory ever.

Till my ransomed soul shall find

Rest beyond the river.

Father in Heaven, we just pray that the decisions that are made tonight will make a difference in eternity. Bless these people with your spirit and your power. Bring us back together again to study Your sacred word. We thank You and ask in Jesus' name, amen.

God bless you, friends. Tomorrow night we'll be talking about the devil's dungeon. We hope to see you then. Take care. Thank you.