Messages at Calvary Chapel

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Keys to Bible Study (Psalm 119:33-40)

Thank you very much. It seems rather unusual for dear brother Damian and myself to be here at the same time. In fact, when I came in the back there and was speaking with him, the young lady went by and said, "I've never seen you two in the same room before." Well, that's my joy tonight for that to be so. So please turn in your Bibles to Psalm 119.

Psalm 119. We'll begin reading in verse 33. Psalm 119, verse 33. "Teach me, O Lord, the way of Your statutes, and I shall keep it to the end. Give me understanding, and I shall keep Your law; indeed, I shall observe it with my whole heart. Make me walk in the path of Your commandments, for I delight in it. Incline my heart to Your testimonies, and not to covetousness. Turn away my eyes from looking at worthless things, and revive me in Your way. Establish Your word to Your servant, who is devoted to fearing You. Turn away my reproach which I dread, for Your judgments are good. Behold, I long for Your precepts; revive me in Your righteousness."

I'd like to spend a little time tonight just sharing with you some keys to Bible study that have been helpful to me. Somebody has said, better than to be a preacher is to make a preacher. And I would like to adapt that tonight: better than to be a Bible student is to make a Bible student. We'd like to multiply the number. Toward that end, I'd just like to give you some simple keys, some of which you already know, no doubt, others which might be new to you.

I'd like to start off by saying that obedience is the organ of spiritual knowledge. The people who do the best in growing in the word of God are those who see what is written and have an earnest determination to do what they see. They have great faith in God. They believe His word. They say, "If God says it, that's what I want to do." Those are the people who advance the best in the things of God.

It's good in studying the word of God to know the author, isn't it? Good to know the author, to have a personal relationship with the Lord. That doesn't mean if you're not a Christian that you shouldn't read the Bible. For any who do not have assurance of salvation, there's a guarantee in the word of God. Did you know that? It's found in John 7:17. And if I could just paraphrase that verse, it says, If you really want to know, God will show it to you. I have never known that verse to fail. I've known many people who came to the Lord in desperation. They really wanted to know the truth. Some of them were on the verge of suicide. They cried out, "Oh God, if there is a God, show it to me." And they started to read the word of God, and God spoke to them through the Bible. I've never seen it fail.

So if you're in that category tonight, if you do not know the Savior, if you do not know your sins forgiven, if you don't have peace with God and are sure of a place in heaven, I take you to the word of God and say, believe it. Ask Him to speak to you. I tell you, He can speak loudly through the Scriptures. If you are a Christian, it should be your greatest joy in life to get into the word of God and hear God speaking to you, and then build your life upon that basis.

Let me give you some keys that have been helpful to me. In your study of the word of God, follow the literal interpretation of the Bible, the literal interpretation. If it says that Jesus Christ is going to reign 1,000 years on the earth, Jesus Christ is going to reign 1,000 years on the earth. It's just that simple. You say, what else could you believe? Well, there are a lot of dear Christian people who allegorize the Bible, or spiritualize the Bible, so that the millennium is taking place in your life right now: when you trusted Christ, the millennium began in your life. Or maybe the millennium is taking place in heaven. My attitude is, cream lies on the surface. And if the first sense of the Bible makes sense, don't look for any other sense. That's not hard, is it? If the first sense makes sense, don't look for any other sense.

Now, there are some passages in the Bible that you don't have to take literally because the word of God explains what they are. Revelation chapter 1:20. And this is clear on the face of it. "The mystery of the seven stars which you saw in My right hand, and the seven golden lampstands: The seven stars are the angels of the seven churches, and the seven lampstands which you saw are the seven churches." So you have many things in the Scripture that are explained by the Scripture.

And sometimes a literal interpretation of the Bible would be inconsistent with the rest of the word of God. Jesus said, if your right eye offends you, pluck it out. If your right hand offends you, cut it off. But that would be in conflict with the word of God that this body is the temple of the Holy Spirit. I'm not to desecrate this body. I'm not to mutilate this body. So that passage of Scripture, what does that mean? If your right eye offends you, it means there come times in life when you

have to take strong, resolute action when there's a temptation in your life. That's what it means. Joseph is an illustration. When that woman sought to seduce him, he put a few healthy miles between him and her. So I take a verse of Scripture like that and say, yeah, I know what that means, and I have to practice that in my life.

We all know there's one correct interpretation of a verse of Scripture, many applications. This is wonderful about the word of God. Not all the word of God was written to me. Some of it was written to Israel. Some of the promises are written to Israel, but I can extract honey from them and use it in my life.

You must study a verse of Scripture in its context. You've heard that before. Study a verse of Scripture in its context. Turn to 1 Corinthians chapter 15, and I'm going to read verses 29 through 34. 1 Corinthians chapter 15 and verses 29 to 34. And I'm looking for that expression, baptized for the dead, baptism for the dead. Verse 29: "Otherwise, what will they do who are baptized for the dead, if the dead do not rise at all? Why then are they baptized for the dead? And why do we stand in jeopardy every hour? I affirm, by the boasting in you which I have in Christ Jesus our Lord, I die daily."

Now, I ask myself, what is the context here? Well, of course, the context of the chapter is the resurrection. And incidentally, when you come to that word resurrection, it always refers to the body, never to the spirit. The word resurrection always refers to the body. This chapter has to do with the resurrection, the resurrection of Christ, the resurrection of believers. But there's another emphasis in these verses that is quite strong. And if you want to understand that expression,

baptism for the dead, whatever the interpretation of this verse, it must take into account that other background.

Can you see it? What's he talking about here? He said, "Why do we stand in jeopardy every hour?" What's that referring to? It's referring to the persecution he underwent as a servant of the Most High God. "I affirm, by the boasting which I have in Christ Jesus our Lord, I die daily." What's that referring to? It's referring to his afflictions and persecutions for the name's sake of the Lord Jesus. "If, in the manner of men, I have fought with beasts at Ephesus, what advantage is it to me? If the dead do not rise, let us eat and drink, for tomorrow we die!" He's talking about the great fight of opposition which those early Christians went through. Whatever your interpretation of baptism for the dead is, it must take that into account. That is the context of the verse.

Okay, what does the verse mean? In those days, people were crowding to Christ, and they were not only trusting Christ, they were being baptized, and that was the signal for persecution and martyrdom. Did that stop people from getting saved? Did that stop people from moving forward and taking the place of those who had been baptized? No. Today those martyrs would be laid away; their bodies would be laid away in the grave. Tomorrow a fresh group would step forward and say, "Christ for me. I am Christ's, and Christ is mine forever and ever." And they were baptized for the dead, in the place of the dead, to fill up the ranks of the dead. That's why they were baptized.

It's like an army marching into battle. I don't know whether they do this anymore with all the smart bombs they have, but there's a man out front, a flag bearer, you

know. He's marching forward with the flag of his country, and he's shot, and he falls to the ground. But the flag doesn't fall to the ground. One of the other soldiers rushes forward and grabs that flagpole and marches on with it. He's carrying it for the dead. That's what was happening in the early days of the church. Baptism was, and still is in many countries, the signal for persecution, and in Muslim countries and other countries, the signal for martyrdom. More Christians have been martyrs in recent years than in all the history of the Christian church. We don't realize it. I hope you pray for the suffering church here in Calvary Chapel. I'm sure you do.

What I'm emphasizing here is that baptism for the dead, whatever the interpretation of it is, must take into account Paul's teaching here: that those who were baptized were killed, they were martyred, and others stepped forward to be baptized for them, in their place, to fill up the ranks. Now, you know that the Mormon people baptize for the dead, but their baptism has nothing to do with persecution. It has nothing to do with martyrdom for the name of Christ.

I'll just do one more. 2 Peter 1:20. Study it in the context. 2 Peter 1:20. Verse 19: "And so we have the prophetic word confirmed, 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; knowing this first, that no prophecy of Scripture is of any private interpretation, for prophecy never came by the will of man, but holy men of God spoke as they were moved by the Holy Spirit."

Well, it's that expression, "No prophecy of Scripture is of any private interpretation." Now, whatever your interpretation of that passage is, it has to agree with the next verse, doesn't it? "For prophecy never came by the will of man, but holy men of God spoke as they were moved by the Holy Spirit." That verse is interpreted in so many different ways. Some say, first of all, you mustn't interpret any passage of Scripture without taking the rest of Scripture into account; there's no private interpretation; you can't make it stand alone. Well, I think that's kind of a good rule in general, although there's only one passage in the Old Testament dealing with the virgin birth, isn't there? It's recorded by Isaiah in his prophecy. But is that what the passage is saying? Or there are those who teach that only a particular church has the right to interpret the word of God. Is that what it's saying? No, it's not what it's saying.

What's it saying? Peter here is talking about the origin of the Scriptures, how we got the Scriptures; not how we interpret them after we got them, but how we got the Holy Scriptures. So how do you know? Because verse 21 bears it out. "Knowing this first, that no prophecy of Scripture is of any private interpretation, for prophecy never came by the will of man, but holy men of God spoke as they were moved by the Holy Spirit." It's the origin of the word of God that's in view here. In other words, God didn't say to Jeremiah, "Now, Jeremiah, you write this out as best seems to you. You give a Dan Rather interpretation of what's going on in Israel at the present time." He didn't say that. The very words that Jeremiah wrote were the words of God. So just let me say, before we go on, that when it says the

interpretation of Scripture, it's not how we interpret them, although if you want to make an application, that's all right. The interpretation has to do with how we got the Scriptures. And the way we got them was that God gave the very words to the men to write down. I hope this is clear.

Notice, in your study of the Bible, notice to whom a passage is written and about whom it's written. Notice to whom it's written and about whom it's written. Acts chapter 2. Verse 38 can be quite a difficult little verse. Acts chapter 2 and verse 38. The folks in the Church of Christ like this verse. I don't think you'll ever talk to a person in the Church of Christ, the denomination of the Church of Christ, that doesn't quote this verse. Acts 2:38: "Then Peter said to them, Repent, and let every one of you be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins; and you shall receive the gift of the Holy Spirit." Notice that: repentance first, baptism second, reception of the Holy Spirit third. Wow. Is that the gospel you preach at Calvary Chapel? I don't think so.

Well, it's basically the same gospel, but it's a different administration of the gospel. Let me explain that. I said, be careful that you see to whom the book is written. Verse 22 of that same chapter: "Men of Israel, hear these words." These words weren't spoken to Gentiles in general. They were spoken to the men of Israel. And what is God saying to them through this verse? He's saying, the nation of Israel was responsible in a very special way, not exclusive, but in a special way, for the crucifixion of the Lord of glory. "And I will not send My Holy Spirit upon you, when you repent and believe; I will not send My Holy Spirit upon you until you've been

baptized." Why? Because baptism took them off Jewish ground and put them on Christian ground. That's one. By baptism they disassociated themselves from the nation of Israel that crucified the Lord of glory. I hope that's clear.

There are four different communities of believers in the book of Acts, and the order of the reception of the Holy Spirit is different in each one. First of all, you have Israel here. You have the Samaritans in Acts chapter 8. You have the Gentiles, and that's where we come in. That's where most of us here tonight come in. And what was the order there? Believe, receive the Holy Spirit, and be baptized. And then, of course, you have John's disciples later on in the book of Acts, and they had to have the apostles' hands laid on them. Let me say that again. There are four communities of believers in the book of Acts, and the order of reception of the Holy Spirit was different in each case. What does it say? It says to me, God is sovereign. But He has a good reason for each of those, and I've tried to show you what the reason here is.

Later in this same chapter, Peter said to the men of Israel, "Save yourselves from this perverse generation." What perverse generation? The generation that had the blood of Christ on their hands. How could they save themselves from that perverse generation? By believing on Christ, the Messiah, and by being baptized in Christian baptism. Does that mean that baptism had the power to save? No, it didn't have the power to save. Only Christ has the power to save. But that took them, as I say, off Jewish ground and put them on Christian ground. To whom a passage is written.

Okay, about whom? Notice carefully, when you're studying the word of God, about whom the author is writing. Ephesians 2:1: "And you He made alive, who were dead in trespasses and sins, in which you once walked according to the course of this world, according to the prince of the power of the air, the spirit who now works in the sons of disobedience, among whom also we all once conducted ourselves in the lusts of our flesh, fulfilling the desires of the flesh and of the mind, and were by nature children of wrath, just as the others."

Notice, in verse 1, "you." In verse 3, "we." There's a change in pronoun there. Is it accidental? There's nothing accidental in the Bible. The Holy Spirit writes with special care. What is the thought here? Well, he's speaking to Gentiles. The letter was written to the Ephesians. They were Gentiles before they were saved. And he says, you Gentiles He made alive, who were dead in trespasses and sins, among whom we also, we of Jewish background. It helps you in your understanding of the word of God if you watch for those pronouns and watch about whom Paul is speaking.

Another key to understanding the word of God: the law of agency. I call this the law of agency. Sometimes a person is said to do something when it's actually one of his agents who does it. That's not difficult. We say that today. Actually, when the President of the United States signs a bill, he's really signing it for you and for me. He's an agent for you and for me. And you have that in the word of God, the law of agency. Turn to Deuteronomy chapter 27:14. Deuteronomy 27:14. And this is about the pronouncing of the curses on Mount Ebal, how the children of Israel had the curses pronounced on Mount Ebal and the blessings on Mount Gerizim. Deuteronomy

27:14: "And the Levites shall speak with a loud voice and say to all the men of Israel: Cursed is the one..." And it goes on to list a whole group of curses there. But notice, the Levites shall speak with a loud voice. Okay, now turn to Joshua 8:35. Joshua 8:35: "There was not a word of all that Moses had commanded which Joshua did not read before all the assembly of Israel, with the women, the little ones, and the strangers who were living among them." Joshua was there renewing the covenant. Who read them, the Levites or Joshua? Well, Joshua. Joshua was an agent, wasn't he? He was the agent of God for the Levites in reading to the people from the mount. The law of agency.

The law of prior mention. This is interesting to me. Sometimes things are mentioned in the Bible that weren't in existence until afterwards. Have you ever noticed that? It's really quite exciting. For example, in Psalm 5:7, David speaks about the temple. But the temple didn't come into existence until the time of Solomon. David had passed off the scene. Solomon built the temple. And here David, long before that, talks about the temple. The law of prior mention. This past week I was studying in Isaiah. And you know, God calls Cyrus, the king of the Persians, king of the Medo-Persians, He calls him by name 150 to 200 years before the man ever appeared on the scene. I tell you, the liberals and the modernists don't like this. No, they don't. They try to assign a late date to Isaiah. He couldn't have known. He did know. And all through the book of Isaiah, God is appealing to the fact that fulfilled prophecy is one of the great proofs of His deity. And it is. Fulfilled prophecy is one of the great proofs of the deity of God, the true God. And He contrasts Himself with idols who can't predict

the future. I'll say they can't. And He pours scorn on those idols. Here are men looking to a piece of wood. They've carved it out themselves. They carry the idol. God carries His people, but they carry their god. And they have all these shavings, you know, and sawdust from the making of the idol, and they use some of it to bake bread and some of it to roast meat and some of it to warm themselves by the fire. Scorn, God pouring scorn upon it. So He is the God of prophecy. A great proportion of the Bible is devoted to prophetic Scriptures.

The law of first mention. That's another law. The law of first mention means that oftentimes you get something of the meaning of a word by the way it's used first in the Bible. I like that. The law of first mention. It's not the same as the law of prior mention. Prior means before the thing ever happened. First mention means the first time. The first time the word worship appears in the Bible is when Abraham is going to Mount Moriah with his son to offer him up as a burnt sacrifice to God. And he said to the young men that were traveling with him, look, you and the donkey stay here, and the lad and I will go yonder and worship, and come back to you. That's wonderful. "Come back to you." He was going to offer his son as a burnt offering. "Come back to you." That's faith. What did worship mean for Abraham that day? "I and the lad will go yonder and worship, and come back to you." What did it mean? Worship to Abraham that day meant offering that which was dearest to his heart to God. That's what it meant. It's lovely, isn't it? What did it mean to Isaac? Because he didn't struggle. He allowed his father to bind him and place

him up there on the altar. It meant giving the Lord his heart, his life, his all.

That's worship. I think it's John MacArthur that says that offering ourselves as a living sacrifice to God is the purest form of Christian worship. I think that's true. "I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that you present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable to God, which is your reasonable service. And do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind, that you may prove what is that good and acceptable and perfect will of God." I love that. Think of that father and son going up there, and their hearts were filled with worship already. "Naught that I have my own I call; I hold it for the Giver." That's what they were saying.

Here's a key to understanding: God is often said in the Bible to do what He only permits to be done. You know, this has solved some difficult problems for me in the Bible. God is often said in the Bible to do things that He only permits to be done. A good illustration, of course, is found in 1 Samuel 16:14. 1 Samuel 16:14 says, "But the Spirit of the Lord departed from Saul, and a distressing spirit from the Lord troubled him." But I think in the King James Version it says an evil spirit from the Lord troubled him. Does anybody have the King James here tonight? It says an evil spirit. Thank you. An evil spirit from the Lord. Dear friends, I don't believe anything evil comes from the Lord. Do you? I don't believe anything evil. I don't think sickness, tragedy, sorrow, I don't think they come from the Lord. They're often said to come from the Lord because He allows it. This is an illustration of that.

Another illustration is found in Job chapter 1 and verse 21. Verse 20: "Then Job arose, tore his robe, and shaved his head; and he fell to the ground and worshiped. And he said: Naked I came from my mother's womb, and naked shall I return there. The Lord gave, and the Lord has taken away; blessed be the name of the Lord." Who took away? The devil took away. But God permitted it. And God is here said to do what He only permits to be done. You with me? I think that's very, very helpful.

Sometimes a verse in the Bible states a truth, but there may be exceptions to it. There may be exceptions to it. In Ephesians 6:1-3, it says, "Honor your father and mother, which is the first commandment with promise: that it may be well with you and you may live long on the earth." I've known some wonderful fellows and girls who lived for the Lord and who died young. I talked to Ed McCully's father. Ed McCully was one of the martyrs of Ecuador, and after they had been killed, his father said to me, "Bill, Ed was a son that never caused his parents a moment of anxiety." He was a fellow that honored his father and his mother. And yet he died young for the cause of Christ down in Ecuador. Oftentimes there are statements in the word of God, and they allow for exceptions. "Train up a child in the way he should go, and he will not depart from it." But how do you explain the fact of two boys brought up in the same home, and they had the same training from their parents? A godly home. And one of them does well; he goes on for the Lord. And the other one is blotto as far as the things of God are concerned.

Accurate definitions are terribly important in Scripture. Accurate definitions. There was a theologian years ago, his name was Bengel, and he had a list of 20 words, and

he said, if you know the definition of these 20 Biblical words, you're well on your way to becoming a Bible scholar. I've never found his 20 words, so I made 20 of my own. And I'll read them to you. I'll read the words.

Atonement. It's a difficult word to define. I'm serious. A difficult word to define. Atonement. Election. Faith. You know, we use them all the time. We should have an accurate definition of them. Foreknowledge. Forgiveness. Glory. That word glory has, I don't know how many different meanings to it. I wrote a few down: radiance, bright shining; honor; God's perfection; moral glory, et cetera. Gospel. Well, we know what gospel means. It means good news. Grace. Grace, undeserved favor to those who deserve the very opposite. Justify. Be careful. Justify. Justify doesn't mean to make just. It doesn't mean to make righteous. It means to reckon it to be so. It's important. It's a courtroom word. The law, the Ten Commandments. Predestination. Propitiation. Reconciliation. Redeem, to buy back. Repentance. There's a difference of opinion among evangelicals today about that word repentance. Some think it means to change your mind about God and Christ. Others, that it means to change your mind about sin: to be walking toward sin one day with God at your back, and to turn around, to walk toward God with sin left behind you. I like the second one. Thomas Watson, one of the great old Puritans, said that repentance is the vomit of the soul. That's kind of crude, but it's good just the same. It is. It's good. Repentance is the vomit of the soul. Doesn't that say something to you? It does to me. Sanctify. Sanctify doesn't mean to make holy. It means to set apart. Jesus sanctified Himself. He says in John 17, "For their sakes I sanctify Myself." He didn't make Himself

holy. He's always been holy and couldn't be anything else but holy. But He could set Himself apart for the work at Calvary's cross. So be careful of your definitions. Sin. What is sin? Well, basically it's missing the mark, but there's a lot more to it than that.

If I were to give you two keys to the right understanding of the New Testament, I would say, one of them I've already given you: adopt a literal interpretation of the word of God. The second is: distinguish between Israel and the church. We hear so much today that the church is just a continuation of Israel in the Old Testament. It's not. The church was a secret, hidden in God before the foundation of the earth, and was not revealed until the apostles and prophets of the New Testament period gave it to us. Absolutely new. It's a new society that never existed before the church. That'll help you in your understanding of the Scripture if you keep that in mind.

Be familiar with figures of speech. This almost sounds like back in school once again, but never mind. Simile: one thing compared to another using the words like or as. "His face was like steel." A metaphor doesn't use the word like or as: "His face was steel." And yet when you use that figure of speech, nobody thinks his face was metallic, do they? Hard, stiff, unbending. Metonymy: the container is used for the thing it contains. Jesus said, "This cup is the new testament in My blood. Drink ye all of it." Drink a cup? You don't drink the cup. Metonymy: you drink the contents of the cup. But we know what that meant. Nobody ever stumbled over that, did they? We know that when the Lord said, "Drink ye all of it," He didn't expect us to be drinking cups. Anthropomorphism. This is interesting, where God is said to have human qualities. He has His eyes; His eyes search among the

sons of men. Beautiful. I tell you, if you get into the study of figures of speech, it gives you a new love for the word of God, I think. A parable is a short narrative with a meaning underneath the surface. Matthew 13 has seven parables. You read the parable, it's a story in itself, but you can tell when you're reading it that there's something under the surface there that's telling you something. An allegory is an extended parable. John Bunyan's Pilgrim's Progress is an allegory. You read that beautiful story, a Christian on his way to the Celestial City, and you say, "Oh yeah, I can see what Bunyan was getting at here." And so you can.

Hyperbole. I like this, because the Bible has hyperbole in it. What does that mean? It means an exaggeration, but it's so clearly an exaggeration that nobody is stumbled by it. Jesus said, you strain out a gnat and you swallow a camel. That's beautiful. That's lovely, isn't it? Did He mean you swallow a camel? No, it doesn't mean that. It means that you're punctilious about the little things in life, the little trivia in life, but you miss the important things like mercy and grace, compassion shown to others. That's what He meant. But once you hear it, you never forget it, do you? You never forget it. Imagine a camel going down past your Adam's apple. It's ridiculous.

Irony. Well, the Bible has a lot of irony in it. Just let me show you one passage, 2 Corinthians 11:8. I already gave you an illustration where God was using irony with regard to the idols. 2 Corinthians 11:8. Paul says here, "I robbed other churches, taking wages from them to minister to you." I robbed other churches. The great apostle Paul. We know what that means. He was supported elsewhere when he was working among the

Corinthians. And he's using irony. They were doubting his apostleship. They weren't receiving him as they should have received him. And so he wasn't depending upon them for his support. He got it elsewhere. And so he says, I tell you, that has a bite to it. Imagine when this letter was read in the church in Corinth: "I robbed other churches, taking wages from them to minister to you." Ouch. I hope they felt the force of it.

The Bible often uses the language of human appearance. This is good, too. The Bible often uses the language of human appearance. "From the rising of the sun to the going down of the same, the name of the Lord is to be praised." Good. We all know what that means. People say, well, the Bible has scientific inaccuracies. Really? You say, no, the sun doesn't move. The sun's always in the same place. It's the earth that moves in relation to the sun. Of course, that's true. That's true. But if you go to the Chronicle tomorrow, it'll tell you what time the sun rises and what time it sets. The Bible isn't inaccurate. It's the language of human appearance. It seems that way to us. We watch that globe dip down in the west there, and it seems that the sun is setting. The sun is still in the same place. People shouldn't have trouble with these things. They make mountains out of molehills.

Learn to recognize types in the word of God. Typology is a great study, as long as you don't carry it too far. Noah's Ark is a beautiful type. The whole way of salvation is given there. Melchizedek is a beautiful type of the Lord Jesus. Moses, a type of the prophet that would come. The Passover, the priests, the Levites, the offerings, the veil of the temple, the tabernacle; and some of this is brought out in Hebrews. The manna, the

rock, the serpent, Joseph, Joseph the son of Jacob. There are over 100 correspondences between the life of Joseph and the life of the Lord Jesus, and yet he's never spoken of as being a type of Jesus. I think that's beautiful. Joseph is my favorite Old Testament character because he makes me think of Jesus. You can't read his story without that.

Recognize symbols in the Bible. Land speaks of Israel. The sea often speaks of Gentiles. Egypt speaks of the world. And Canaan speaks of our present position in Christ in heavenly places. It's marvelous to me that numbers have meanings in the Scripture. Numbers have meaning. Not always. Don't press these things too far. But they do have meaning. Number one: exclusiveness and supremacy. One God. Two: confirming a testimony. In the mouth of two or three witnesses shall every word be established. Three: well, three has to do with the Trinity, and it also has to do with resurrection. He rose on the third day from the tomb. Four: universality, the four corners of the earth, the four winds that cover the earth. Four beasts comprise Gentile world domination. And so it goes. Six, the number of man. The Antichrist will be 666, the number of man. And six is one less than seven. Man has fallen short. Seven is the number of perfection. Six is short of perfection. All have sinned and come short of the glory of God. Eight: new beginning, the first day of the week, new beginning, the Lord's day. And so forty, a number of testing. So we could go on.

Colors have spiritual meaning, too. You know, here are men, I think of over 40 men that have written Scriptures, and they never got together at a convention or a men's retreat to decide about these things. And yet all of them, down through the years, they follow these

patterns that I'm talking to you about in the Bible. Colors. Purple is the color of royalty. The kings of Midian were robed in purple. Scarlet: sin. "Though your sins be as scarlet, they shall be white as snow; though they be red like crimson, they shall be as wool." White: purity and righteousness. Clothed in white garments, which are the righteousness of the saints, it says. Blue, the heavenly color.

Of course, the names in Scripture have a meaning too. And I think this is lovely. Israel means prince with God. I love Jesus, the sweetest name that ever reached my ears. Jesus: Jehovah is the Savior. Turn to Luke 1. My time is getting away from me, but it hasn't gone yet. Luke chapter 1. I think I'll just close with this, the names here. First of all, you have the name Zacharias here. Verse 5. Zacharias. That means the Lord remembers. Elisabeth, mentioned here too, married Zacharias. Her name means the oath of God. And they had a boy, and his name was John. It means the favor or grace of Jehovah. Look: God remembers His oath or covenant, and a boy is born, the favor of God. I think that's lovely.

I think I'll just stop there. We could say much more, but these are just some of the little keys that have been helpful to me in studying the word of God. And I tell you, the more you see things like this in the Scripture, the more you stand in awe of the word of God. Really do. There's no book like the Bible. A lot of the books we devote our attention to these days will have no significance in heaven at all. But anything you learn about the Bible today is an investment for eternity. May the Lord make us diligent students of the word of God.

An Overview of the Song of Solomon

Well, thank you very much for a very warm welcome. I must say I feel very much at home here. This is not my first visit, actually. I love you all because you love my Savior and because you love the word of God. I really appreciate the emphasis on the Scriptures that you have in this fellowship. That's what we want to look into tonight. I brought along a friend with me, a friend and brother. His name is Eric Shorkin. He's been serving the Lord down in Brazil for the last nine years. Eric, would you just rise, please, and let the folks see who you are. I know you won't have to make him feel at home, because I think he already feels at home here, as I do. I just wish Damian could be here and that I could sit and listen to him. Last time I was here, he was speaking about the lost sheep. If you'd like to hear more about the lost sheep, I'd like to hear the message; he could give it to you over again.

Would you turn in your Bibles tonight to the Song of Solomon? We're going to be just giving an overview. I know you're studying in the Old Testament. I know you're in the Psalms. I didn't want to interrupt that, so I thought I'd just move ahead a little to the Song of Solomon and we could think of it together. Wonderful to hear the rustle of the leaves of the Bible. Song of Solomon, chapter 1 and verse 1.

"The song of songs, which is Solomon's. Let him kiss me with the kisses of his mouth: for thy love is better than wine. Because of the savour of thy good ointments thy name is as ointment poured forth, therefore do the virgins love thee. Draw me, we will run after thee: the

king hath brought me into his chambers: we will be glad and rejoice in thee, we will remember thy love more than wine: the upright love thee. I am black, but comely, O ye daughters of Jerusalem, as the tents of Kedar, as the curtains of Solomon. Look not upon me, because I am black, because the sun hath looked upon me: my mother's children were angry with me; they made me the keeper of the vineyards; but mine own vineyard have I not kept. Tell me, O thou whom my soul loveth, where thou feedest, where thou makest thy flock to rest at noon: for why should I be as one that turneth aside by the flocks of thy companions? If thou know not, O thou fairest among women, go thy way forth by the footsteps of the flock, and feed thy kids beside the shepherds' tents."

I think you know that the usual interpretation of the Song of Solomon is that it pictures the love of Christ for the church, and vice versa, the church for Christ. I have problems with that. The problem is that the truth of the church is not found in the Old Testament. The truth of the church was a secret hidden in the mind of God from ages past, but then was revealed by the apostles and prophets of the New Testament period. But the Song of Solomon is found in the Old Testament in a cluster of books dealing with the nation of Israel. And so I would suggest to you that the major interpretation of the Song of Solomon has to do with the nation of Israel, not the church. That doesn't mean that we can't get applications from it. Of course we can. Not all the Bible was written directly to us, but we can get good out of all the word of God. Every word of God is pure.

I would like to suggest to you that there are four main characters, or groups of characters, in the book. There's

the Shulamite maiden. We've been listening to her talking tonight in this first chapter. There is Solomon in the book. There's the daughters of Jerusalem. And there's a fourth person whom I call her shepherd lover. Just let's keep those four in mind and see if we can pick them out as we go along: the Shulamite woman, Solomon, the daughters of Jerusalem, and the Shulamite's shepherd lover.

Also at the beginning, let us realize that in the original language of the Old Testament, if you knew it (I don't), but if you knew it, you could tell whether it's singular, whether one person is speaking or whether several are speaking, or whether it's a male who is speaking or a female who's speaking. And that's why in some of the modern versions of the Bible, I think if you have the New King James Version here tonight, you'll find that they've tried to break it up. Is that right? Anybody have the New King James here? Do they have "Shulamite" or "Daughters of Jerusalem" or "He" written in? So they've tried to break it up and show you. What they don't distinguish is between Solomon and the shepherd lover. They don't distinguish between them. As we go through, I think you'll find that when Solomon is in view, the conversation is all about the splendor and majesty of the palace. There's a lot said about gold and silver and wealth. But when the shepherd lover is in view, you don't have that at all. You have some very rural scenes. You have agricultural talk. You have a pastoral landscape. And we'll see that too as we go along.

I would suggest to you that the major theme of the book of the Song of Solomon is a protest against unfaithfulness in the marriage relationship. Solomon, you know, had many wives, many concubines. And in this

book, he tries to win another to his harem, the Shulamite maiden. But the marvelous thing about this book is this girl has a heart that beats true to her lover. And even the advances of a king, a wealthy king and a wise king, even his advances fail to move her. You wonder what kind of a paragon of virtue she is. You wonder how many still exist in the world today, when you hear all the statistics about divorce and breakups of homes and of marriages. Well, let's look at it with that in mind and see if we can get the drift. It's a protest against unfaithfulness in the marriage relationship.

Why is that? Well, because God had married the nation of Israel. The nation of Israel was in a very close relationship with God, with Jehovah. But Israel turned her back on God, and she went after other gods. Really, it's unthinkable. She went after idols, with all of the immorality and loose living that goes with idolatry. Idolatry and immorality are closely linked, you know, in life as well as in the Scriptures. And so here's a woman that's a protest against that. And you'll find the key verse in the book, as we go through, is what she says to the daughters of Jerusalem: "I charge you that ye stir not up, nor awake love, until it please." Not "my love, till he please," but "that ye awake not love." In other words, Solomon was coming by artificial means, and he was trying to awaken love in her, but he utterly failed.

With that in mind, let's look at the Scriptures. In verse 2, she's thinking about her shepherd. She actually talks to him. Well, that's kind of real life, isn't it? When a person's really in love, a lot of the things that happen in this book happen in life, too. Her mind is always on her own lover, the one who is nearest and dearest to her. And she says, "Let him kiss me with the kisses of his

mouth: for thy love is better than wine." First of all "him," and now "thy love is better than wine." You say, well, it's not very logical English. Well, love isn't always logical, is it? It's romantic. And anyway, this is poetry, and it's beautiful poetry at that. "Because of the savour of thy good ointments thy name is as ointment poured forth, therefore do the virgins love thee. Draw me, we will run after thee."

She says, "The king hath brought me into his chambers." That's what happened. The king was out there one day, traveling along in his entourage, and he saw this beautiful maiden working in the vineyards. And he said, "Stop the chariot." And he came, and he sought to bring her into the palace and to woo her with all kinds of offers: "Follow me and you'll be wearing pearls," that sort of thing. She says, "The king hath brought me into his chambers: we will be glad and rejoice in thee." In thee; not in the king, no, no, in the shepherd. "We will remember thy love more than wine: the upright love thee."

Then she goes on to give a little explanation. She says, you know, my brothers put me to work out there in the vineyard, and that's why I'm swarthy. You know, in those days... it's wonderful today for a young lady to have a tan, isn't it? I mean, people pay great sums of money for that, to have a tan. But it wasn't considered the greatest in that day, and so she's apologizing for that tan that she has. "I am black, but comely, O ye daughters of Jerusalem, as the tents of Kedar." The tents of Kedar: Kedar was a place famous for its black goats, and you can just picture the goatskins from which they made the tents. They went together. "As the curtains of Solomon. Look not upon me, because I am black, because the sun

hath looked upon me." She became sunburned and then heavily tanned. "My mother's children," that is, her brothers, "were angry with me; they made me the keeper of the vineyards; but mine own vineyard have I not kept." The expression "my own vineyard" there is a figure of speech for her own personal appearance. Her own personal appearance. She said, they put me to work out in the vineyard, but my own vineyard have I not kept. Well, you know, you can think of all kinds of applications for this. We can be so busy in the work of the Lord, for instance, that we neglect our own family. Something like that. "Mine own vineyard have I not kept." We can make those applications of it.

"Tell me, O thou whom my soul loveth, where thou feedest, where thou makest thy flock to rest at noon." Solomon? No, Solomon didn't have a flock. He had thousands of them, probably, but I mean, he wasn't out there in the fields tending his flock, was he? He was in the palace ruling over Israel. She says, "For why should I be as one that turneth aside by the flocks of thy companions?" Well, the daughters of Jerusalem step in here, and they say, well, if you don't know where he is, "go thy way forth by the footsteps of the flock, and feed thy kids beside the shepherds' tents."

Solomon appears on the scene, and Solomon really has a gift for great language, especially when he's trying to impress a young woman. He says, "I have compared thee, O my love, to a company of horses in Pharaoh's chariots." Well, don't tell that to a girl today. She won't be exactly flattered by it. Whatever the meaning of that is, it was beautiful, let me tell you. We don't know exactly all that was involved in that, but you know very well that it was beautiful, because his language is lovely.

"Thy cheeks are comely with rows of jewels, thy neck with chains of gold. We will make thee borders of gold with studs of silver." He pictures her with all the jewelry that he can put upon her, you know. And he could put plenty upon her. And this is his way of trying to win her heart to himself.

Listen to what she says: "While the king sitteth at his table, my spikenard sendeth forth the smell thereof." I have my own lover. I'm not swayed by him. Isn't it great to find a young woman like that? I think it is. I think it is. "A bundle of myrrh is my wellbeloved unto me; he shall lie all night betwixt my breasts"; that is, the bundle of myrrh, a little keepsake fragrant with herbs of the field, reminding her of her beloved. "My beloved is unto me as a cluster of camphire in the vineyards of En-gedi." Notice that when she's speaking about her lover, it's all rural, isn't it? It's all in the great out-of-doors, nothing about the splendor of a palace or anything like that.

Solomon appears in the scene again, and he says, "Behold, thou art fair, my love; behold, thou art fair; thou hast doves' eyes." And she says, "Behold, thou art fair, my beloved." Her beloved, not Solomon. "Behold, thou art fair, my beloved, yea, pleasant: also our bed is green." Well, you say, what does that mean, "our bed is green"? Well, once again she's out of doors, and they've been out together, and they're sitting on the grass under a tree. That's it. That's it. "Our bed is green. The beams of our house are cedar." In other words, they're under a cedar tree, sitting on the grass under a cedar tree, "and our rafters of fir." So it's a rural scene. It's a country scene. And she's out there. She's reminded of times when she was out there with her beloved.

Now, in verse 1 of chapter 2, it's still the Shulamite who's speaking. It's still feminine. And she says, "I am the rose of Sharon, and the lily of the valleys." Now, just let me say something. We have lovely hymns: "He's the Lily of the Valley, the Bright and Morning Star; He's the fairest of ten thousand to my soul." Don't let anybody rob you of that. That's okay. You can make that application. You can take that verse and apply it to the Lord Jesus, and it's ever so true. But in the context, it's the Shulamite maiden who's speaking in verse 1 of chapter 2. And what is she saying? Incidentally, when you think of a rose of Sharon or the lily of the valley, you think of flowers that you might buy down in the local flower shop, right? That's not it. She's speaking about wildflowers, wild anemones that grow in profusion on the hillsides of Israel. And she's saying, I'm just an ordinary wildflower. That's all she's saying. She's just taking that place of humility. And Solomon says, "As the lily among thorns, so is my love among the daughters." He doesn't give up easily, does he? But I tell you, he's met his match when he meets her.

Now notice, she says in verse 3, "As the apple tree among the trees of the wood, so is my beloved among the sons. I sat down under his shadow with great delight, and his fruit was sweet to my taste." Now there's a verse that we can apply, not interpret, apply to us today. "I sat down under his shadow with great delight." When I think of that verse, I think of the shadow of the cross, don't you? "Beneath the cross of Jesus I fain would take my stand, the shadow of a mighty rock within a weary land." But once again, I want to emphasize, it's out of doors. We're out of doors.

"He brought me to the banqueting house, and his banner over me was love. Stay me with flagons, comfort me with apples: for I am sick of love." That's beautiful. "I am sick of love." You know what she's saying? She's saying, I'm so full of love for that dear shepherd fellow that if I had any more, I'd burst. That's what she's saying. This is wonderful, really, really wonderful. In the book of Ecclesiastes, all the world is not big enough to fill the human heart. But in the Song of Solomon, the human heart is not big enough to hold the love of the Lord. The very opposite. And they're placed right beside each other in the sacred Scriptures.

"His left hand is under my head, and his right hand doth embrace me." And then she strikes the keynote of the book to the daughters of Jerusalem: "I charge you, O ye daughters of Jerusalem, by the roes, and by the hinds of the field, that ye stir not up, nor awake my love, till he please." That's what Solomon was trying to do with his blarney, with his soft-soap talk, with his flattery. He was trying to awaken love artificially. Let God awaken it, and then it will stick.

Then she says, and once again it doesn't fit Solomon when she's speaking here, "The voice of my beloved! behold, he cometh leaping upon the mountains, skipping upon the hills." Now, that doesn't fit Solomon. Can you picture Solomon the king skipping over the hills? I can't. But I can picture the shepherd doing that. It fits perfectly into the picture. "My beloved spake, and said unto me," and then you have what he said: "Rise up, my love, my fair one, and come away. For, lo, the winter is past, the rain is over and gone; the flowers appear on the earth; the time of the singing of birds is come, and the voice of the turtle is heard in our land." Everything

has to do with trees and flowers and herbs and the fragrance of the great outdoors. "The fig tree putteth forth her green figs, and the vines with the tender grape give a good smell. Arise, my love, my fair one, and come away." He says, why don't we just go off and get married? That's what he's saying, really. And she's saying, the time hasn't come. She's saying, yes, but later, in the rest of this chapter.

"O my dove," he says, "that art in the clefts of the rock, in the secret places of the stairs, let me see thy countenance, let me hear thy voice; for sweet is thy voice, and thy countenance is comely." And in verse 15, the brothers... I think she's there, and she's kind of lost in a world of love for her beloved shepherd. And they say, hey, you, you'd better get to work. They say in 15, "Take us the foxes, the little foxes, that spoil the vines: for our vines have tender grapes." She hasn't been tending to her job up there. She's been distracted, and they get after her and tell her to get to work. She says, "My beloved is mine, and I am his: he feedeth among the lilies."

Now, in the first part of chapter 3, she's speaking, and she's telling probably about a dream, and about a rendezvous that she had with her lover. Is that unusual for a person who's madly in love, to dream about her lover at night? It's not unusual. And that's what you have in the first four verses of chapter 3. And then again in verse 5, she charges the daughters of Jerusalem, by the roes and by the hinds of the field, that they stir not up nor awake love until it please.

Now, in verse 6 of chapter 3, notice the picture changes completely now. It's no longer agricultural, it's not rural,

it's not pastoral, it doesn't have to do so much with the outdoors. It's a scene of splendor. What is it? Well, it's a parade, and Solomon is coming along in his throne-car, and everything speaks of majesty, everything speaks of wealth, everything speaks of luxury. "Who is this that cometh out of the wilderness like pillars of smoke, perfumed with myrrh and frankincense, with all powders of the merchant?" I guess there were men there, incense bearers, as the parade moved along. Imagine. And Solomon is riding in his chariot. "Behold his bed, which is Solomon's"; and the bed there doesn't mean a bed as we think of it; it means where he sat in the chariot. "Threescore valiant men are about it, of the valiant of Israel." That's his bodyguard, right? His bodyguard. He wouldn't travel without that. "They all hold swords." Of course, they needed swords. "Being expert in war: every man hath his sword upon his thigh because of fear in the night. King Solomon made himself a chariot of the wood of Lebanon." That's what he's riding in. "He made the pillars thereof of silver, the bottom thereof of gold, the covering of it of purple, the midst thereof being paved with love, for the daughters of Jerusalem. Go forth, O ye daughters of Zion, and behold king Solomon with the crown wherewith his mother crowned him in the day of his espousals, and in the day of the gladness of his heart." Pretty fantastic, isn't it? Can you imagine a girl refusing somebody like that? Yeah, I can. Her name was the Shulamite.

Makes me think of Ruskin the poet. Ruskin the poet was not a believer, and he fell in love with a girl who was a Christian, fell madly in love with her, and he proposed to her. He asked for her hand in marriage. Do you know what she said to him? She said, "Do you love me more

than you love Jesus Christ?" He said, "I would have to say that I do." She said, "I couldn't marry you." And you know, she was smitten with tuberculosis, and it was terminal. They didn't have the drugs that we have today. And he still loved her, and one day he sent word in to her that he would like to have a visit with her. And she sent out word. She said, "Do you still love me more than you love Jesus Christ?" And he sent back word, "Yes, I do." And she said, "No good could come from an interview." And she went home to be with the Lord. I tell you, that's great, isn't it? That's great.

Men here tonight, if you have a wife who loves you, who loves Jesus Christ more than she loves you, you've got the right kind of a wife. And wives, if you have a husband who loves the Savior more than he loves you, that's the kind of a man to have. And I think that's part of the message of the book of the Song of Solomon.

Well, Solomon has come by in his chariot, and he sees her working in the field. "Oops, stop the chariot," you know. "Behold, thou art fair." Chapter 4, verse 1. "Behold, thou art fair, my love; behold, thou art fair; thou hast doves' eyes within thy locks: thy hair is as a flock of goats." Well, that sounds funny to us, doesn't it? But it really helps to have the soul of a poet when you study the Bible, especially the poetic sections of the Bible. And this is poetry. You say, what does that mean? Well, picture a hillside, picture a hillside with these black goats up there, and they're moving along, and the sun is glistening down on their hides. And as they move along, it looks like waves, like curly hair, curly black hair. At least this is the way I see it. I try to picture it this way, and it makes good sense to me. He's not saying you're like a goat, but he says your hair is black and

curly and beautiful as the rippling of the goats as they move down the hillside. Beautiful, isn't it? Was your husband as romantic as that when he talked to you?

He says, "Thy teeth are like a flock of sheep that are even shorn, which came up from the washing; whereof every one bear twins, and none is barren among them." What he's saying there is, she has beautiful teeth. She has uppers and she has lowers, and for every upper there's a lower. None of them is missing. That's what he says. It's lovely. It's really lovely. That's poetry, and it's very picturesque. "Thy lips are like a thread of scarlet, and thy speech is comely: thy temples are like a piece of a pomegranate." Well, I think that's beautiful. You know, the red of a pomegranate is different from other reds. Did you ever notice that? Next time you see a pomegranate... I don't know how to describe it, but I can just imagine her working out there in the sun, and these two, it just looks like a section of a pomegranate with that beautiful shade of red. I'd rather admire the color of a pomegranate than eat it. I think they're beautiful, really beautiful. And that's what he's saying here. "Thy neck is like the tower of David builded for an armoury." Well, some of this sounds bizarre and grotesque to us, but it means how fitting it is for necklaces around her neck: "whereon there hang a thousand bucklers, all shields of mighty men. Thy two breasts are like two young roes that are twins, which feed among the lilies."

And she's impervious to it all. I mean, she sheds it like a duck sheds water. She says, "Until the day break, and the shadows flee away, I will get me to the mountain of myrrh, and to the hill of frankincense." She's back in the out-of-doors again, huh? She's not even touched by what he's saying to her. Then, "Thou art all fair, my love; there

is no spot in thee." That is, I think this is the shepherd speaking. "Come with me from Lebanon, my spouse, with me from Lebanon: look from the top of Amana, from the top of Shenir and Hermon, from the lions' dens, from the mountains of the leopards." See, everything's out of doors, huh? Everything. He's a shepherd, and he's been looking at all of these things. And as he looks at them, he sees how he can weave them into the tapestry of his love for her. And so from verse 7 to verse 15, the shepherd lover is telling how very much she means to him.

And she says in verse 16, "Awake, O north wind; and come, thou south; blow upon my garden, that the spices thereof may flow out. Let my beloved come into his garden, and eat his pleasant fruits." What she's saying is, look, I'm all for you. Yeah, that's what she's saying. Yeah. But the time hasn't come yet, that's all. The time for them to get married hasn't come yet. How do you know? Because the rest of the book makes that clear. He says, "I am come into my garden, my sister, my spouse: I have gathered my myrrh with my spice; I have eaten my honeycomb with my honey; I have drunk my wine with my milk: eat, O friends; drink, yea, drink abundantly, O beloved."

Once again, in verse 2, let's see, down to verse 8, she's telling about a dream she had. And in this dream, she was just longing for her shepherd. And she got up, and she went out at night in the city. Well, that's not good, is it? I mean, that creates a false impression when a woman gets up and goes out and walks on the streets alone at night. And the watchmen see her, and they think, well, this is not very good. And so it says in verse 7, "The watchmen that went about the city found me,

they smote me, they wounded me; the keepers of the walls took away my veil from me." And then she says to the daughters of Jerusalem, "I charge you, O daughters of Jerusalem, if ye find my beloved, that ye tell him, that I am sick of love." Not Solomon. Not Solomon. She's deflected everything that Solomon has said to her, and her heart beats true for one, her one and only.

Well, by this time the daughters of Jerusalem are getting interested, aren't they? They're saying, who is this paragon of beauty that you're always talking about? You've only got one string on your violin, and you only play one note on that string. That's all you talk about, is your beloved. And that's good. And I said, if only we were like that with the Lord Jesus! They said, "What is thy beloved more than another beloved, O thou fairest among women? What is thy beloved more than another beloved, that thou dost so charge us?" And she says, in effect, thank you very much for the opportunity, I'd like to tell you. "My beloved is white and ruddy, the chiefest among ten thousand. His head is as the most fine gold, his locks are bushy, and black as a raven. His eyes are as the eyes of doves by the rivers of waters, washed with milk, and fitly set. His cheeks are as a bed of spices, as sweet flowers: his lips like lilies, dropping sweet smelling myrrh." Can't you see that both she and her lover are rural folks? And they've had their eyes open; they've studied God's creation in rural life, haven't they? And they can just reel it off, about the flowers and the trees and the herbs and the spices and all the fragrances. That's what she's doing here. "His hands," verse 14, "are as gold rings set with the beryl: his belly is as bright ivory overlaid with sapphires. His legs are as pillars of marble, set upon sockets of fine gold: his

countenance is as Lebanon, excellent as the cedars. His mouth is most sweet: yea, he is altogether lovely. This is my beloved, and this is my friend, O daughters of Jerusalem."

Now, you know, that's beautiful when you take that and apply it to the Lord Jesus, isn't it? That's marvelous. Although when we think of the Lord Jesus, we don't think of His physical beauty so much, do we? We think of His spiritual glory and beauty, but His physical beauty would be true as well. When I think, for instance, of His head, I think of that head that was crowned with thorns. "Did e'er such joy and sorrow meet, or thorns compose so rich a crown?" His locks: they plucked His beard. They plucked out His beard. His eyes, eyes filled with compassion, you know, for the people. He looked on the multitude and had compassion upon them. And so you can go down: His lips, "Never man spake like this man." His hands, the nail-pierced hands of Jesus. You can go down the list, and you can make spiritual applications of it all.

Well, once again the daughters of Jerusalem come upon the scene in verse 1 of chapter 6. And they say, where is thy beloved? We're kind of interested in him. We'd like to see him, you know. "Whither is thy beloved gone, O thou fairest among women? whither is thy beloved turned aside? that we may seek him with thee." Her answer, I think, is kind of funny. She says, "My beloved is gone down into his garden, to the beds of spices, to feed in the gardens, and to gather lilies." Kind of vague. Doesn't tell the street or the number, does it? She's kind of vague. She's saying, just keep out of it. "I am my beloved's, and my beloved is mine." You just keep a respectable distance. That's what she's really saying to

them. "I am my beloved's, and my beloved is mine: he feedeth among the lilies." But I don't know that they got enough information to be able to go and find him from there.

Solomon speaks again. And once again, you'll find the background is altogether, altogether different. "Thou art beautiful, O my love, as Tirzah, comely as Jerusalem, terrible as an army with banners." And a lot of what he says is repetition. I think he's running out of steam. In verse 5 he says, "Thy hair is as a flock of goats that appear from Gilead. Thy teeth are as a flock of sheep which go up from the washing, whereof every one beareth twins, and there is not one barren among them." Like the temples; we've had it all before, haven't we? "My dove, my undefiled is but one; she is the only one of her mother, she is the choice one of her that bare her. The daughters saw her, and blessed her; yea, the queens and the concubines, and they praised her." It will help you in understanding the transition between verse 9 and verse 10 if you supply the word "saying." They praised her, saying, "Who is she that looketh forth as the morning, fair as the moon, clear as the sun, and terrible as an army with banners?"

She says in verses 11 and 12, "I went down into the garden of nuts to see the fruits of the valley, and to see whether the vine flourished, and the pomegranates budded. Or ever I was aware, my soul made me like the chariots of Ammi-nadib." I want to tell you, there are a lot of things in the book that really we don't understand. This is a good example of it. I don't know what that means. I don't know what it means when she speaks about the chariots of Ammi-nadib, or "as it were the company of two armies" in verse 13. There are things we

don't understand. All I'm trying to give is kind of an overview of the whole book tonight.

Solomon says to her in chapter 7, verse 1, "How beautiful are thy feet with shoes, O prince's daughter! the joints of thy thighs are like jewels, the work of the hands of a cunning workman." And so he goes on and speaks to her, telling her all her beauty. But there's something very cute here, and you would never know it from the English, but from the original language of the Old Testament. Verse 9. Let me go back to verse 8. "I said, I will go up to the palm tree, I will take hold of the boughs thereof: now also thy breasts shall be as clusters of the vine, and the smell of thy nose like apples; and the roof of thy mouth like the best wine." And you don't know it from the English, but she interrupted him there. After he said "like the best wine," she says, "for my beloved, that goeth down sweetly." Smoothly for my beloved, not for you; for my beloved. I mean, he's lavished on her all his praise and flattery and all the rest. And he says, the roof of your mouth is like the best wine, and she says, that goes down for my beloved, not for you, "causing the lips of those that are asleep to speak."

And then she says to the shepherd, "I am my beloved's, and his desire is toward me. Come, my beloved, let us go forth into the field; let us lodge in the villages. Let us get up early to the vineyards; let us see if the vine flourish, whether the tender grape appear, and the pomegranates bud forth: there will I give thee my loves. The mandrakes give a smell, and at our gates are all manner of pleasant fruits, new and old, which I have laid up for thee, O my beloved." I can hear wedding bells as I read that, can't you? The time has come. The time has come

for her to be released from the work with her brothers in the vineyard. And she's saying, look, isn't it time for us to go now? Go where? Go back to our childhood home. That's where. How do you know? Because it says so in the next chapter.

She says to him, "O that thou wert as my brother, that sucked the breasts of my mother! when I should find thee without, I would kiss thee; yea, I should not be despised. I would lead thee, and bring thee into my mother's house, who would instruct me: I would cause thee to drink of spiced wine of the juice of my pomegranate. His left hand should be under my head, and his right hand should embrace me."

Now, in verse 5, you have the village folks talking. The folks are there in her home village, and they're looking down the road, and they see this little cloud of dust coming. "Who is this that cometh up from the wilderness, leaning upon her beloved?" Well, it's the Shulamite, leaning on her shepherd lover. That's who it is. Verse 5, the first part of the verse: "Who is this that cometh up from the wilderness, leaning upon her beloved?" And then, as they walk along, he's talking; he's reminiscing with her. "I raised thee up under the apple tree." I think that's where they had their first date, under the apple tree, their first date. "There thy mother brought thee forth." Oh, they're passing the house where she was born. "There thy mother brought thee forth: there she brought thee forth that bare thee."

And she says to him, "Set me as a seal upon thine heart, as a seal upon thine arm: for love is strong as death; jealousy is cruel as the grave: the coals thereof are coals of fire, which hath a most vehement flame. Many waters

cannot quench love." Well, that's true. That's true. All of Solomon's talk didn't quench her love for her beloved. I tell you, she was steadfast. She was true. She was not like Israel, who ran after other gods, terrible gods, as a matter of fact, the gods of the heathen. It was just terrible. "If a man would give all the substance of his house for love, it would utterly be contemned."

Now, in verse 8, it takes you back a little while, to when she was a little girl, and the brothers were talking among themselves. And they say, what are we going to do for our sister when she becomes mature and eligible for marriage? What are we going to do for her? Well, it says, "We have a little sister, and she hath no breasts." She wasn't mature. She was still a child. "What shall we do for our sister in the day when she shall be spoken for?" Well, they decided this: "If she be a wall, we will build upon her a palace of silver." What does that mean? It means, if she is true, steadfast, unshakable in her love, we'll give her a tremendous dowry of silver. That's what it means. "And if she be a door, we will inclose her with boards of cedar." You know, just swinging back and forth for any guy that came along. That's what it means. Just swinging in the breeze, as it were, open to any fellow that came along. Then she'll live the life of a nun. That's what it means: we will enclose her with boards of cedar, separate her from the rest of society.

She answers, and she says, I'm a wall. And she can well say that, too. Verse 10: "I am a wall, and my breasts like towers: then was I in his eyes as one that found favour." I have reached my maturity. "Solomon had a vineyard at Baal-hamon; he let out the vineyard unto keepers; every one for the fruit thereof was to bring a thousand pieces of silver. My vineyard, which is mine, is before me: thou,

O Solomon, must have a thousand." Well, you can say that again. "And those that keep the fruit thereof two hundred." The shepherd says, "Thou that dwellest in the gardens, the companions hearken to thy voice: cause me to hear it." And she says, "Make haste, my beloved, and be thou like to a roe or to a young hart upon the mountains of spices." You know what that is? They get married. They exchange vows. That's what it is. And they live happily ever after.

And this is a rebuke to the nation of Israel for the fact that they so sought after other gods, and God divorced them. He's going to take them back again, going to take the nation back again, but He divorced them. Jeremiah chapter 3 says that.

What a lesson for us. Let's be true to Jesus, though a thousand voices from the world may call. I often think of the story of Spurgeon. You know, one night he came to a meeting at the auditorium. He went and got his girlfriend first, and they had a horse-drawn vehicle, you know, and they drove up to the front of this great tabernacle in London. And all Spurgeon could think of was the souls that needed Christ, and he was just absorbed with the message of the gospel he was going to preach. And when the carriage stopped, he jumped out and went into the auditorium and left her sitting there. And when he was up preaching, he looked around and couldn't see her. She wasn't there. And so after the meeting he went to her home, and the parents said she was upstairs and she didn't want to see him. She was pouting. He said, "I insist on seeing her." She finally came down, and he said, "Well, look, I'm sorry for what happened tonight. I want to tell you something. If you and I are going to get married, you have to take second

place in my life. Christ must have first place." And she said at the end of his marvelous ministry, and it was a marvelous ministry too, she said that she learned a good lesson that night. In Charlie's life there was Someone who had precedence over her, and it was the Lord Jesus Christ.

Well, I hope this will be helpful to you. You'll hear other interpretations of the Song of Solomon. This is just one, you know. It may not be the right one; may not be the right one. But consider it, read it over, and see if the parts fit together.

Heaven's Cure for Troubled Hearts (John 14)

Thank you. It's such an inspiration to be here tonight, to hear these songs of praise to the Lord Jesus, who alone is worthy, and to see you gathered here for the study of the word of God. It's wonderful to see people who love the word of God and want to hear more of it all the time. The only thing that could be better would be if my friend Damian were standing here and I was sitting down where you're sitting.

Would you turn with me in your Bibles to John 14, please? We're going to read the first six verses, John chapter 14 and verses 1 through 6. And our subject tonight is Heaven's cure for troubled hearts.

"Let not your heart be troubled; you believe in God, believe also in Me. In My Father's house are many mansions; if it were not so, I would have told you. I go to prepare a place for you. And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again and receive you to Myself; that where I am, there you may be also. And where I go you know, and the way you know. Thomas said to Him, Lord, we do not know where You are going, and how can we know the way? Jesus said to him, I am the way, the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through Me."

As I read these verses of Scripture, I can't help thinking of the vast number of people who will be in heaven singing the praises of the Lord Jesus for all eternity because of verse 6. How the Holy Spirit of God used that verse to bring light to darkened souls! They came to

Christ, depending on Him and Him alone for their soul's salvation. I think of people going through trial and difficulty and trouble, pain, sorrow, tears, and I think of the comfort that these verses have brought to them. "I go to prepare a place for you. And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again and receive you unto Myself; that where I am, there you may be also." And I think of how God has used these verses at times of bereavement, when loved ones have been taken away, taken to heaven, and the comfort that has come to troubled hearts through these wonderful verses of Scripture. So I'd like to look at this chapter with you tonight, and see if the Lord might have something for your heart, especially if you have a troubled heart tonight.

The Lord Jesus says, "Let not your heart be troubled." Why did He say that? Well, of course, chapter 14 is closely linked with chapter 13. I'll never get famous for saying that, but it's true just the same. You know that the chapter breaks are rather artificial. They're not part of the inspired text. So it might be good if you read chapter 13 and then immediately read chapter 14. And you'd find that there are several reasons in chapter 13 why their hearts might be troubled. If you just turn in your Bible and scan chapter 13, you'll see, first of all, the Lord Jesus said He was going away. Well, that's one reason for a troubled heart. He was going to leave them. There was going to be a time of separation. He also said that one of the disciples was going to deny Him, Peter. And if that wasn't bad enough, He also said that one of the disciples was going to betray Him, Judas. And it says there that when He thought of Judas and of that betrayal, His heart was troubled. So there are four

reasons in the preceding chapter why the hearts of the disciples might be troubled.

Okay. And so He says, are your hearts troubled? And the chapter that follows, chapter 14, is just full of reasons why our hearts shouldn't be troubled. They're going to pop out at you at almost every verse that we read. "Let not your heart be troubled; you believe in God, believe also in Me." To believe in God means to trust God. There's a cure for a troubled heart: trust God. God doesn't do anything but what you yourself would do if you had His wisdom, love and power. Around every one of His people there's a hedge, and Satan can't get past that hedge, we learn in the book of Job, except by the Lord's permission. Everything that comes into our lives is filtered through the love of God.

The Lord Jesus says, "You believe in God, believe also in Me." Let me just pause there to say that the chapter is also filled with many statements concerning the deity of the Lord Jesus Christ, statements where the deity of the Lord Jesus is implied. And this is one of them. To believe in Christ is the same as believing in God. To believe in God is the same as believing in Christ. "You believe in God, believe also in Me." And I like to substitute the word trust there. Trust in the Lord, no matter what your circumstance may be tonight, no matter what trial you may be called on to go through, in the home, at work, at school, at college. The answer is, trust in the Lord. When the Lord Jesus said, "You believe in God, believe also in Me," He claims equality with God. To trust Him is the same as to trust God. And He claims to be the sole revealer of God in this chapter. This verse tells me that the Lord Jesus is just as much to be trusted as God the Father is. That's wonderful, isn't it?

"Let not your heart be troubled." It's good that He didn't stop after the word troubled. He went on to tell them why they shouldn't be troubled, and gives many reasons. Let's go down the chapter and look at some of the reasons. He was going to the Father's house of many mansions. That's good news. He was going back to heaven. The cross wouldn't be the end, would it? He would rise from the dead; He would ascend back to heaven; and He was going to the Father's house of many mansions. Verse 2, He was going to prepare a place for them. It's getting better all the time, isn't it? Not only that He was going to the Father's house; He was going to prepare a place for them. Verse 3, He would come again and take them to be with Him. Does that make your heart rejoice? It should. Verse 6, He Himself was the only true way to heaven, the only true way to the Father. Verse 12, they would do greater works. After He went back to heaven and the Holy Spirit was given, they would do even greater works than He had done when He was here on earth. He would answer any prayers that were offered in His name. My, it's really just a wonderful collection of promises that He makes here.

Then verse 16, another Helper would come and abide with them forever. Of course, that was the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit was going to come, and He would stay with His people forever. Verse 17: this Holy Spirit was now with them; at that time He was going to be in them. And that's what happened after Pentecost. Verse 18, Jesus would not leave them orphans. Verse 18, He would come to them; that is, He would come back to them in the coming of the Holy Spirit. When the Holy Spirit came to them, in a sense the Lord Jesus came to them at that time. Verse 19, they would share His endless life.

Wonderful, wonderful Jesus. And verse 20, they would understand in the coming day that they shared oneness with God the Father and with the Lord Jesus His Son. I like verses 21 and 23. He said that obedience to the Lord would result in a special bond of fellowship between the believer and the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit. God loves obedient people. He loves everybody, but there's a special way in which He loves His people who are obedient to His word. And then verse 27, He promises peace to His people. "Peace, perfect peace, in this dark world of sin? The blood of Jesus whispers peace within."

"In My Father's house are many mansions." Well, He doesn't tell us all that we would like to know about those mansions. Maybe we wouldn't be able to take it in if He told us. Somebody has said, we have five senses now; perhaps we'll have 50 senses when we get to heaven. I wouldn't be surprised. To take in all the beauty, the majesty, the fullness of that scene, we probably would need more than five. If the joy that will be ours then were poured into us now, we would burst.

"In My Father's house are many mansions; if it were not so, I would have told you." I like that. "If it were not so, I would have told you." What does that mean? It means the Lord Jesus tells us everything in the word of God that we really need to know. That's a comfort, isn't it? A lot of us have a lot of questions. I'd like to ask Paul a lot of questions when we get to heaven. But I like those words: "If it were not so, I would have told you." I will tell you in the word of God, especially in the New Testament, everything you really need to know. "If it were not so, I would have told you."

"I go to prepare a place for you." That's wonderful. You know, I said that the chapter is filled with implications of the deity of Christ. Here's something that's really wonderful. We read it; we're so familiar with it; and we read it kind of as a matter of fact. But when He says this, He's claiming ability to go instantly throughout all the universe, throughout all the universe, to go to the Father's house, to go to heaven, and to prepare a place for you. If I were to stand here tonight and say that to you, what would you ever think? If a mere man ever said that, "I'm going to heaven to prepare a place for you," you'd say, let's get the little men in the white jackets to come and take him away to the psychiatric ward, you know. But on the lips of the Lord Jesus, they sound absolutely perfect, don't they? "I go to prepare a place for you. And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again and receive you unto Myself." That's wonderful. How very personal the gospel is. How very personal. Imagine Him receiving ones unto Himself. How very personal: receiving people like ourselves unto Him, saved by His marvelous grace. When He talks like this, it means that He really thinks we are somebody. Isn't that great? He really thinks that we are somebody. We were worth dying for at the cross of Calvary.

"That where I am, there you may be also." That's wonderful, isn't it? The Lord Jesus wasn't satisfied just to deliver us from going to hell. He wasn't satisfied to just give us a long life on earth. He never will be completely satisfied till He has us with Him in glory, with Him and like Him forever. I think that's wonderful. Salvation couldn't have done less than that.

"And where I go you know, and the way you know." Well, He had already told them where He was going, and they

knew the way as well. But, you know, the disciples were just like ourselves. They'd hear a thing, and sometimes it didn't register with them. He told them many times that He was going to go to the cross. He was going to be delivered to the Gentiles. He was going to die. He was going to be buried and rise again. And it seemed at the time that they took it in, and then they would go on, and they just seemed to be completely forgetful of it all. And we're like that, too. And that's why the truths of God's word have to be repeated to us over and over again.

Well, Thomas speaks up at this point. He said, "Lord, we do not know where You are going, and how can we know the way?" Thomas might have thought He was going to Tyre or Sidon or Damascus in Syria. I don't know what Thomas thought. "We don't know where You're going, Lord. How can we know the way?" And then the Lord Jesus came out with those immortal words: "I am the way, the truth, and the life. No man cometh unto the Father, but by Me."

"I am." When the Lord Jesus said "I am," He took one of the Old Testament names of God to Himself, didn't He? God the Father is known as the I AM, the ever great I AM. And seven times in the Gospel of John, these words are ascribed to the Lord Jesus Christ. He is the I AM. It really means I was, I am, I always will be. It comprehends all tenses of existence. "I am the way." He's not just a sign showing the way. He is the way. And I want to tell you tonight, if you have the Lord Jesus as your own, you're as sure of heaven as God can make you. That's wonderful, isn't it? If your only hope for heaven is the Savior, you're saved. He is the way. He's the truth. He's the true way, and He's the embodiment of truth as well. People go to colleges and universities, and

they have great philosophical arguments about what is truth. Well, I'll tell you what truth is. Truth is what God says about something. That's truth. And the Lord Jesus is truth. He's the embodiment of truth, and everything He says is true. "I am the life" as well. He not only is the way; He gives us the life to go the way. So I read it this way: I am the way, the true way, and the living way.

"No man cometh unto the Father, but by Me." I would suggest to you that those words I just read, "No man cometh unto the Father, but by Me," are some of the most hated words in the world today. People don't like that. They don't like to hear that there's only one way of salvation, that the Lord Jesus is the way, that there's no other way, that nobody can ever get to heaven in any other way. And that, of course, excludes all the great world religions except Christianity. And that's one reason we have such an increase of anti-Christian bigotry in the world today. They hate that truth. It's the truth just the same, and you can fight against it, but that doesn't change it a bit. God sent His Son to die on the cross for mankind. He presents Himself as the way. There is no other way.

Verse 7: "If you had known Me, you would have known My Father also." Another clear statement of the deity of the Lord Jesus. To know the Lord Jesus is to know the Father. You say, how is that? They're separate Persons. Yes, they're separate personalities. If you look at the words carefully, there's "Me," and there's "My Father": separate personalities. Yet to know one is to know the other. It reminds us of John 1:1. "In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God." "In the beginning was the Word": the eternity of the Lord Jesus. "The Word was with God": His distinct

personality. "And the Word was God": His absolute deity. Great truths concerning the Savior.

And here He says, "If you had known Me, you would have known My Father also." And, of course, He came to tell us what God the Father is like, didn't He? There was a little girl that was afraid of being in the dark in her bedroom, and her mother came in to comfort her. And her mother said to her, "Don't worry now. The Lord is here." She said, "I want a God with a face." And that's what the Lord Jesus is. He's our God with a face. If you go to Trafalgar Square in London, there's a column there, and on the top of the column is Lord Nelson. But honestly, Lord Nelson is so high up there that nobody can see him but the pigeons. And so one year they were going to have a great exposition in Britain there, and they made a duplicate of Lord Nelson, and they brought it down to street level so people could see what he was like. You know, that's what God did when He sent His lovely Son down to this world. The Lord Jesus came down, and He fully declared what the Father is like. So if you want to know what God is like, look at the Lord Jesus, and He'll tell you exactly what God the Father is like. "From now on you know Him and have seen Him"; that is, in the Lord Jesus.

There is a question whether we will see God the Father in heaven, and I'm not sure we can solve that problem tonight. It says, "Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God." And Job had the hope of seeing God: "yet in my flesh shall I see God." Other people say, yes, but they'll see Him as revealed in the Person of the Lord Jesus. God is Spirit, and you can't see spirit with these eyes. I was at a junior high camp one time, speaking, and we had a question and answer period, and one of

the fellows said to me, "Will we see God in heaven?" And I went through quite a long theological discourse, that our eyes, being what they are, cannot see spirit, you know, and went through quite an elaborate explanation. He said, "I know, but will we see God?" He wasn't at all satisfied. And so I repeated myself again, hoping that the mere repetition would help me, but he wasn't satisfied. He said, "Maybe when we get to heaven we'll have bigger eyes." And that was absolutely right. I think he was absolutely right. When we get to heaven, we'll have bigger eyes.

Philip said to Him, verse 8, "Lord, show us the Father, and it is sufficient for us." Show us the Father. Dear Philip. He had been living with One who revealed the Father. He was one of the earliest disciples, Philip. And all that time he had been traveling with the Lord Jesus, and he had seen His miracles and heard His marvelous words. And now he says, "Show us the Father, and it is sufficient for us. That'll be enough for us. Just give us a glimpse of God the Father." And Jesus said to him, "Have I been with you so long?" referring to the fact that Philip was one of the earliest disciples. And yet the truth had not dawned on him as yet. "And yet you have not known Me, Philip? He who has seen Me has seen the Father." Once again, I mentioned to you at the outset how many statements are in this chapter which, if you put them in the mouth of a mere man, are absolutely ludicrous, absolutely ridiculous. And this is one of them: "He who has seen Me has seen the Father." "So how can you say, Show us the Father?" The Lord Jesus perfectly represented the Father down here. "The only begotten Son, which is in the bosom of the Father, He hath declared Him." And that means He has fully told Him

forth. So we don't really have to be in darkness as to what God the Father is like. We see Him perfectly expressed in the life, words, and character of our blessed Savior.

"Do you not believe that I am in the Father, and the Father in Me?" Once again, separate personalities, but union, wonderful union of personalities in the Trinity, in the Godhead. "The words that I speak to you I do not speak on My own authority." That's a wonderful thing. When the Lord Jesus came into the world, He came in perfect subjection to God the Father. He always did those things that pleased the Father. He never did anything through willfulness, through the exercise of His own will apart from God the Father. The miracles He performed, He performed in the power of the Holy Spirit and in obedience to the Father. And that, you know, is a tremendous lesson for us. It should teach us that the greatest glory that any of us can have is subjection to the Lord, to have our wills completely in accord with Him. It might save us a lot of misery. It's so easy for us, even in Christian work, to decide we're going to do this. We can lay out goals for next year and have everything planned and mapped out. But our real calling is to be so in touch with the Lord that we do what He wants us to do. How do you do that? Well, by prayer, by study of the word of God, and just by yielding our wills to Him day by day and letting Him reveal His plan to us. The good works that we're to perform have been foreordained for us, and it's just for us to find out what they are and to do them.

So the Lord Jesus was the subject Son of God. "The words that I speak to you I do not speak on My own authority; but the Father who dwells in Me does the

works." You've got the words of the Lord Jesus, and you've got the works of the Lord Jesus as well. He says, "Believe Me that I am in the Father and the Father in Me, or else believe Me for the sake of the works themselves." The best faith in the Lord is to believe something because He says it. But here He seems to say, if you can't do that, then believe because of the works that I do. I would say that's a lesser form of faith. People say, well, if I could just see a miracle, I would believe. Well, God is not really pleased with the kind of faith that demands a miracle. He's not pleased with that kind of faith. Actually, unbelievers say, well, if I could see somebody raised from the dead. But the word of God says, no, you still wouldn't believe, though one should rise from the dead.

I believe that the great miracle that the unsaved world wants to see today is not the healing of a leper, not giving sight to the blind or hearing to the deaf. The great miracle that the unsaved want to see today is the miracle of a transformed life: people who've been saved from sin and defilement and corruption, who are new creatures in Christ Jesus, and they're really different persons. "Therefore, if any man be in Christ, he is a new creature: old things are passed away; behold, all things are become new." And we're going to come to that just a little bit later in the chapter. "Believe Me for the sake of the works themselves." The Lord Jesus came performing the works that were predicted of the Messiah in the Old Testament. He performed them all. It's strange that the rabbis of His day didn't realize that and trust in Him.

He says, "Most assuredly, I say to you, he who believes in Me, the works that I do he will do also; and greater works than these he will do, because I go to My Father."

Well, that's something, isn't it? Greater works than the Savior? Yes. Well, first of all, greater geographically. The farthest Jesus ever traveled, as far as we know, in Palestine was up to Tyre and Sidon. Not very far. That's the farthest that's described. And when He finished His course here on earth, let's say He had about 120 disciples in Judea and maybe 500 up in Galilee. You think of people that travel the world today. You think of people who preach the gospel to thousands of people. You think of the outreach today by radio and by television and by the Internet now.

But I think there's something more, going back to what I just said, in the greater works. The Lord Jesus performed miracles of healing. He raised the dead, but those people died again, didn't they? I think it's a more wonderful work, a greater work, to witness to someone, to see that person led to Christ. That person is going to worship the Lamb of God for all eternity, life forever. That's greater, isn't it? I think it's greater. Blind eyes healed, yes. But I tell you, it's more wonderful to see people who are in the darkness of sin, held in the grip of some cult or false religion, to see them liberated by the grace of God, and they're going to be forever worshiping Him in heaven. To me, that's a greater work. So I read the Gospel of Mark, and I see all these physical miracles that the Lord Jesus did, and I realize that there's a spiritual counterpart to every one of them, and that's our privilege. He healed the leper. Leprosy speaks of the loathsomeness of sin. And can we see that? Yes, we can see the healing of lepers, moral lepers, sitting at the feet of the Lord Jesus. Demoniacs, yes; once again, sitting at the feet of Jesus, clothed and in their right minds. Paralysis: He healed the paralytics. Well, that speaks of

the paralysis of sin. And we can see that miracle performed by being faithful witnesses of the Lord Jesus and leading souls to Him. So it's no exaggeration when the Lord said that greater works than these shall you do, because I go to the Father.

What does that mean, "because I go to My Father"? Well, it means that when He goes to the Father, when He's glorified in heaven, the Holy Spirit is sent, and the Holy Spirit empowers us in this ministry. We can't do it ourselves, but the Holy Spirit gives us the power. And I think you all know that the work of ministry today is not for a special class of people. It's for all believers, right? If the evangelization of the world depends on a special class, the world will never be evangelized, never be evangelized. But in Ephesians 4 it says that the gifts were given for the perfecting of the saints for the work of ministry. Who are the saints? You and me. We are the saints. And the gifts were given to us "for the perfecting of the saints, for the work of the ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ." My Bible teaches every-member evangelism. And of course, the greatest thing is to know the word of God and exemplify it in your life, so that people say, "You've got something I don't have. I don't know what it is, but I want it." I've heard of that happening within the last few weeks to someone. "You've got something I don't have. I don't know what it is." But I tell you, it's easy to lead a person like that to the Lord, isn't it? It really is. "Because I go to the Father." Going to the Father meant the coming of the Holy Spirit, who empowers us. He's in us. He's with us forever.

"And whatever you ask in My name, that I will do, that the Father may be glorified in the Son." Well, you say,

that's a blank check, friends. No, not exactly. It says, "in My name." Asking in the name of the Lord Jesus means asking according to His will. It means asking according to the principles that are laid down in the word of God. For instance, can I get down on my knees and pray that the Lord will give me a million dollars tomorrow? Well, He won't. He loves me too much. He knows that could be the worst thing that could happen to me. God wants me to live a life of faith. He wants me to be dependent on Him, to look to Him for the supply of my needs. So it would be completely contrary to the principles of the word of God for me to ask for a great sum of money like that. "Lay not up for yourselves treasures upon earth... But lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven." So asking in His will really limits the prayers to prayers in accordance with the principles that He has taught us in His word.

I want to tell you, that's a wonderful verse of Scripture. To ask the Lord according to His will is the same as asking God. It's the same as asking God. Because when we pray to the Lord Jesus, our prayers go through Him and they're purified through Him, Revelation chapter 8, and they go to God the Father, and they're absolutely perfect. And I believe that God answers every prayer of mine, as I said before, in exactly the same way I would answer it if I had His wisdom, love, and power.

> *God nothing does, nor suffers to be done,*
> *But what thou wouldst thyself,*
> *If thou couldst see the end of all He does*
> *As well as He.*

That's a comfort to me. A comfort to me. I can pray. I'm a simple believer. I can pray with full assurance that my

prayers go to the throne of God and that He answers them in the very best possible way. And one answer is no. When I was a younger believer, there was a prayer I sent up, and I insisted on it. And God gave me my request, but He sent leanness into my soul. And I wish today I had never asked for it. It was a prideful prayer, and I should never have asked for it. But we never come closer to omnipotence than when we pray in the name of Jesus. You and I will never be omnipotent. We'll never have all power. Only God has all power. But when we pray in the name of the Lord Jesus, it's the closest we ever get to omnipotence. Wonderful. This should be a great inspiration to us to pray.

Say, "Brother MacDonald, I've been praying for the salvation of a loved one, and as far as I know, that loved one has never been saved. This bothers me. How do you reconcile that? Isn't it God's will to save?" Yes, it is God's will to save that person. But let me tell you something. God is not going to populate heaven with people who don't want to be there. And God has given each person a will, and God doesn't trample on the will of any person. He doesn't drag reluctant people to heaven. And my Bible and my experience tell me that there was a time in my life when, by a simple act of faith, I had to trust Jesus Christ as my Lord and Savior.

When I was in the Navy, I started to pray for a fellow. We were friends. We were friends in the Navy. And let's see, I think it was a year ago last January, he died. I had prayed for him for 50 years. As far as I know, he died without Christ. And his wife really read the riot act to me. She said, "You think yours is the only true religion." After he died: why? Fifty years of prayer? Yeah, 50 years of prayer. I still believe that when I prayed for him, God

brought the word of God before him. Maybe he saw "Jesus Saves" on a rock as he traveled along the road. Maybe he turned on the radio by accident and heard some gospel. Maybe somebody passed him a tract. I believe that when I pray for an unsaved person, God does something. God jiggles the conscience of that person in some way or other. But "whosoever will may come." And the Lord Jesus taught that. He said to the Jewish people of His day, "You search the Scriptures, for in them you think you have eternal life; and these are they which testify of Me. But you are not willing to come to Me that you may have life." He didn't put it to their intellect. He put it to their will: "You are not willing to come to Me that you may have life."

And there's somebody here tonight who's fighting the Lord on the issue of salvation. Let me say quite clearly, there's nothing about Jesus that makes it impossible to believe in Him. Nothing. If there's a problem, the problem is in your will. So that will has to be broken, to come to the feet of the Lord Jesus Christ.

"If you ask anything in My name, I will do it," the Lord Jesus said. But notice, "in My name." "If you love Me, keep My commandments." It's interesting the way prayer and obedience are linked together. Prayer and obedience. Somebody might say to me, "Brother MacDonald, commandments? I thought we were under grace, not under law. And here in the New Testament I'm reading about commandments. Are we under commandments?" Well, let me explain. The New Testament is filled with commandments for the child of God. But they're not commandments like the Old Testament commandments, with penalty attached. When God gave the commandments in the Old Testament,

"This do and thou shalt live" implied "This fail to do and thou shalt die." It was law with penalty attached. The commandments of the New Testament are commandments for the new nature. They're instruction in righteousness for God's people. God says to you and to me, "Look, I've saved you by My grace. Now walk worthy of the vocation wherewith you are called." And I say to Him, "Lord, give me an example." And so He gives me examples, the commandments, the New Testament commandments: "Let him that stole steal no more: but rather let him labour, working with his hands the thing which is good." "Let no corrupt communication proceed out of your mouth, but that which is good to the use of edifying," and so forth. "Honour thy father and mother; which is the first commandment with promise; that it may be well with thee, and thou mayest live long on the earth." They're not given to me with a penalty. He doesn't say, look, if you fail to do it, you're going to lose your salvation. That's not the point at all. I've asked Him to let me know what a life that's consistent with my calling is, and so He gives me all these New Testament commandments. Let me say again: instruction in righteousness for God's people down here. So I have no trouble with New Testament commandments. We are under grace. We're not under law. But we still have these guidelines to go by.

"And I will pray the Father, and He will give you another Helper, that He may abide with you forever." Verse 16. And of course, this is the promise of the coming of the Holy Spirit of God. He came on the day of Pentecost. He indwells every true believer. Isn't that marvelous? Your body is the temple of the Holy Spirit. I tell you, that blows me away, friends. I say that reverently: to think

that my body is the temple of the Holy Spirit, 1 Corinthians 6. I tell you, to me, that's one of the greatest motivations to a holy life that there can possibly be. That solves a lot of questions. Is it all right for me to do this? Is it all right for me to do that? Your body is the temple of the Holy Spirit. And think of that: think of God deigning in His grace to send one of the Persons of the Trinity to indwell His people.

"Another Helper." Another? Yeah, the Lord Jesus is a Helper. This is another Helper, the Holy Spirit. A friend of mine went out from Half Moon Bay the other day. One of his customers had just bought a new boat, and they went out fishing, and they began taking in water in a brand-new boat. It was a hole where a hose was supposed to be. And they sent an SOS to the Coast Guard. And the Coast Guard telephoned a master seaman there in Half Moon Bay, and he set out in his own boat to go to them. And pretty soon he just pulled up alongside the sinking craft. He said, "Now don't worry, everything's all right. I'll get you to port safely." A good illustration of the Holy Spirit. That's just what the Holy Spirit does. He comes alongside us in time of need. Another Helper, just like the Lord Jesus is.

Notice, "that He may abide with you forever": the eternal security of the believer. "Once in Christ, in Christ forever; thus the eternal covenant stands." "Even the Spirit of truth." The Spirit of truth: He speaks the truth; He is the truth, just as Jesus is the truth. "Whom the world cannot receive." Why can't the world receive Him? Because it can't see Him. The world says, show me and I'll believe. But the Spirit of God is invisible. We can see His work. We can see Him acting in marvelous ways, but we do not see Him except with the eye of faith. It

says that: "whom the world cannot receive, because it neither sees Him nor knows Him; but you know Him, for He dwells with you." The Lord Jesus said that to the disciples when He was here on earth. "And will be in you." And that took place on the day of Pentecost, when the Holy Spirit came and indwelt believers for this whole church dispensation, up to the rapture of the church. "And will be in you." And we really little know how much we owe to the Holy Spirit of God. You know, the Christian life is a supernatural life. I don't know if you realize it, but to me the Christian life is like walking through a minefield. And I can think of many incidents in my life where, for instance, my life would have been taken, I think, if it weren't for the ministry of the Holy Spirit. Many incidents. I'm conscious of His wonderful ministry in my life.

"I will not leave you orphans; I will come to you." Well, that expression, "I will come to you," has various meanings. It can mean, I will come to you in the coming of the Holy Spirit. There was a sense in which the Lord Jesus came back to us in the coming of the Holy Spirit, because the Holy Spirit is the representative of Christ in the earth today. But of course, He came back to them in the resurrection, and He will come back to us at the rapture, which we read about in the first verses of this chapter. A wonderful promise that the Lord Jesus has left you: "I will not leave you orphans." And we're not orphans. We're never alone. The Lord is always with us and makes Himself very real to us. How does He make Himself real to us? Through the word of God, by the Spirit of God.

You know, we know the Lord Jesus better today than the disciples knew Him when He was here on earth. Did you

ever think of that? We know Jesus better today than the disciples knew Him when He was here on earth. For instance, Matthew saw Him through Matthew's eyes, Mark through Mark's eyes, Luke through Luke's eyes, John through John's eyes. We see Him through all their eyes, don't we? And not only that, but if the Lord Jesus were here and was down there at the front, He'd be closer to these folks at the front than He would be to you at the back. But that's not true today. He's just as close to any one of us as He is to the other. And this is all through the ministry of the Holy Spirit of God. What a blessing it is to know that, that we have such a wonderful revelation of the Lord Jesus Christ.

Just let me close with verse 27. We're not going to be able to get to all the verses. "Peace I leave with you, My peace I give to you; not as the world gives do I give to you. Let not your heart be troubled, neither let it be afraid." That's good, isn't it? There's the word troubled again. He began with, "Let not your heart be troubled." And now He says, "Peace I leave with you, My peace I give to you; not as the world gives do I give to you. Let not your heart be troubled, neither let it be afraid."

This peace is a supernatural peace. It's nothing you can cook up yourself. For instance, in some great trial in life, and I know many of you have had this experience, when you should have worried yourself sick, and yet you have the peace of the Lord in your heart. We have a young fellow who went in for a kidney transplant last night at 10 o'clock, actually. He was operated on. And you could see the peace of the Lord in that fellow's heart. It's not natural. It's supernatural. And the Lord Jesus left us that peace, just as His joy is supernatural, too. You can have joy in the midst of sorrow; not in the midst of sin, but in

the midst of sorrow. A wonderful bequest He made to us: "Peace I leave with you, My peace I give unto you." He had that peace Himself, didn't He, here in life, when all the scaffolding was falling around Him, as it were. He could say, "Even so, Father: for so it seemed good in Thy sight." We can do that, too. We live in a day when the moral fiber of the nation is gone, when you think you've read every terrible thing that can happen, and you look at the newspaper and something worse has happened. And yet it's possible in the midst of it all to have the peace of Christ ruling in your heart. How? Staying close to the word of God, spending time with God in prayer, walking in obedience to the word of God, trusting the Lord in all the changing circumstances of life.

Shall we pray? Blessed God and Father, we just marvel at Your word. We stand in awe of the Holy Scriptures. We think of the marvel of the Bible. And we thank You especially tonight for these words of comfort for troubled hearts. Perhaps there are many here tonight who have broken hearts, maybe over wayward children, maybe over broken homes, maybe over some serious illness, Lord. We just pray that You'll come and speak peace to those troubled hearts, that they may know that You are in control, and that the winds and waves still know Your voice who ruled them while He dwelt below. We give You thanks in the Savior's name. Amen.