

Depart From Me, I Never Knew You - Part 1

by Ralph Mahoney

The sermon focuses on the necessity of personal sanctification and an intimate relationship with God to fulfill His calling and achieve unity in the church.

Duration: 54:36

Scripture: Ezekiel 44:15, Matthew 28:19, Acts 13:1, Revelation 17:14

Topics: "Knowing God"

Description

In this sermon, the speaker discusses a man who was locked up due to an unjust past wound and hurt. The speaker emphasizes that God judged the men who attacked this man severely. However, the man himself gave up his inheritance in God because of his deep wounds. The speaker encourages the audience to not settle for doing less than what the word of the Lord commands and to stay open to the Holy Spirit's leading. The sermon also touches on the importance of unity and the need to be with God.

Transcript

Just a few comments before we get to what we really feel on our heart today for this gathering. One thing I should clarify about some who are expecting to hear some kind of a prophetic declaration, the thing that hasn't been revealed is who it's going to come through. And so that may be some of you sitting there today, and don't close your hearts to that.

It might not be the one standing in front of you. So just keep your hearts open and let the Holy Spirit have his way. Secondly, I know that one of, I presume at least, one of the reasons that you, brethren, get together with your wives and so on for meetings like this is a desire for unity and to come together in fellowship.

And one of the keys, of course, in unity is John 17. And while I've never heard it stated until a week or so ago by a dear black brother, we miss, I think, the two essential keys in unity. Before the Lord prayed that they might be one, he prayed, Sanctify them, sanctify them through thy truth.

And there can never be unity as long as there is lack of sanctification in the body of Christ and especially among leadership. The old story that the snake and the frog want to get together by the snake swallowing the frog. Sometimes that's the way others perceive unity.

And until there is a sanctifying work in our hearts, we are walking clean and straight and upright before the Lord. When our lives are a model for believers to follow, there is little chance of unity. Sanctify them, then, that they might be one.

And that order is very essential. The kingdom of God is, first of all, righteousness. Then it's peace.

There's never the peace unless it's preceded by righteousness. And then there's joy following the peace. So righteousness, as you all know, is not just that which is imputed to us by the gracious work of God in justification when we believe on Jesus, but it is the expression of that, according to Paul's teaching in Romans 8, of right acting, acting right, expressing right behavior, being honest, integritous, moral, upright people who show care and love and concern for one another.

And until righteousness is in our lives, there is never peace. I've had men come to me who are wanting peace in their marriage, but there has been unrighteousness in their marriage. They have been unfaithful to their wife.

And sometimes they want peace without righteousness. They want the wife to accommodate their licentious lifestyle, and they want peace. Well, you can't have it without righteousness.

And that just follows right on through. And it's the same with unity. So may we join the Lord in his prayer for us.

Sanctify them through thy truth, thy word is truth, then that they all may be one. As thou art in me, and I in thee, that they also may be one in us. Today I'm going to ask you to turn to a passage of scripture in the book of Revelation.

This past week at Christ for the Nations Institute in Dallas, Texas, I just flew in from Dallas last night. We were speaking the whole week on the prophetic ministry in the Church. It was a very interesting week.

I always enjoy speaking to the students at Christ for the Nations because there is a unique mantle and call of the Lord on that institution and its mission and work and outreach and vision. The one who leads it now, Sister Gordon Lindsey, I think has provided a beautiful model of what a godly woman should be, and students have a lovely model in her of leadership. It's one of the reasons that I enjoy going there every couple of years to minister because of those who lead the ministry.

But there is a dimension of the prophetic ministry coming in the Church today that we feel the Lord wants to increase, and I trust that you're open to that as well. Maybe in the second half of our session today we'll talk a little bit about some of the implications of that. We turn to Revelation 17 and verse 14, and we're wanting to pick up on the last part of verse 14, where it says, Verse 14.

These shall make war with the Lamb, and the Lamb shall overcome them. For he is the Lord of lords and King of kings, and they that are with him are called and chosen and faithful. Lord Jesus, as we bow in your presence today, we pray the Holy Spirit now will energize our hearts and our minds that the spirit of wisdom and revelation and the knowledge of Jesus will rest upon us here together today.

We know we cannot receive the things of the Spirit of God by our natural minds because they are spiritually discerned. So Lord, cause your Holy Spirit to anoint us today to speak and to hear, and cause your word to be heard among us, for which we'll give you thanks, and all God's servants said, Amen. They that are with him are called and chosen and faithful.

I walked out my own Christian life as one who was called to do a work of ministry for many years without realizing that the first call of the Lord to all of us is to be with him, they that are with him. Jesus' call to his disciples was first, Follow me. When you go back to God's dealings with the children of Israel in the wilderness, you know that he said concerning their coming out of Egypt into the wilderness and later into the Promised Land, he said, I called you forth unto myself.

His call was to himself. What most of us haven't recognized is that the first call of the Lord is to the Lord himself. We spend much of our time attempting to do the work of the Lord without, first of all, establishing a relationship with the Lord.

When you come over to John's Gospel, the 17th chapter, you have an interesting passage that's worthy of our brief examination today. That's in verse 3 of John 17, where it says, This is life eternal, that they might know thee, the only true God in Jesus Christ, whom thou hast sent. Most of you are aware that the word know, as we use it in the English language, is a word with a number of meanings.

That is, I can say, I know you. That may mean that I have been introduced and shaken your hand and met you on some past occasion and had a few words of conversation, and so I know you. This word, as it's used in the New Testament, is not a word of that kind of knowing.

It's a word of intimate relationship. It's the word we have in Matthew 1.21, where it says of Mary that she knew not Joseph until she had brought forth her firstborn. That is, there was no intimate relationship established.

There was no consummation of a union that God ordered until she had brought forth her firstborn. It's a word of intimate relationship. Jesus teaches us that life eternal consists in knowing God and Jesus Christ, whom he sent, and establishing what some have referred to as a love relationship with him.

In contradistinction to that kind of relationship, we see the story of Mary and Martha in the Gospel of Luke. It might be worthy of taking a few moments to look at the story of these two sisters. I'm sure they both loved the Lord, yet one understood what was involved in that relationship and one did not.

So we have the testimony in Luke 10, verse 38, that it came to pass as they went that he entered into a certain village, and a certain woman named Martha received him into her house. She had a sister called Mary. Now, here's what the Bible has to say about her.

Who also sat at Jesus' feet and heard his word. Who also sat at Jesus' feet and heard his word. That hearing of his word is going to become very important before this day is over.

Sat at Jesus' feet and heard his word. But Martha was cumbered about much serving, and came to him and said, Lord, dost thou not care that my sister hath left me to serve alone? Bitter, therefore, that she help me. Jesus answered and said unto her, Martha, Martha, thou art anxious and troubled about many things, but one thing is needful, and Mary hath chosen that good part which shall not be taken away from her.

In a sense, Jesus psychoanalyzed Martha. She is typical of many of us. I would have to say that that is my nature, my propensity to be cumbered about much serving.

I have to fight that propensity to ever find time to be at Jesus' feet and hear his word. Maybe you don't have that struggle. But people who are driven to that level of constant service and serving, workaholics,

which probably most of us in the room here today could fall into that category, we don't recognize it.

But when Jesus psychoanalyzes Martha, he points out what drives her in that impetuous service. He says, Thou art anxious and troubled about many things. Inner anxiety and failure to come to grips with ourselves and others and relationships drive us onward and onward and onward, sometimes in almost a tyrannical drive on our own life of finding things and activities and new mountains to conquer when maybe the Lord doesn't want them conquered.

Sometimes we think that we are being spiritual by that incessant, insatiate conquest and so on. Of course, if the Lord has given you the mountain and told you to conquer it, that's one thing. Then you are hearing his word and acting upon it.

But if it is only unbridled human ambition and zeal and an unfulfilled ego that needs reinforcement by a bigger project with more money, etc., etc., etc., that becomes a very hard master to work for and under. Yet many of us, especially in our Western culture, are living under the dominion of such a principality and such an influence, the unconscious drive of our own inner anxieties, our own inferiority complexes, and we have got to constantly be tearing down our religious barns and building bigger ones to make more impression, to reinforce ourselves, to be somebody in our society. And that is an unholy drive that the enemy lays upon us as a mantle and drives our lives onward, sometimes far beyond and outside the will of God.

I see in America, of course, things that trouble me very, very deeply. I spend the greater part of my life in the countries of Asia and Africa and Latin America. Since 1959, when the Lord first began opening doors of ministry in those parts of the world, and since that time, we have given a substantial part of most years to those parts of the world.

Of course, when you spend a great deal of time outside this culture and constantly have to come back and reenter it, I must acknowledge that the older I get, the more culture shock I experience every time I come back. I have never had culture shock for some reason going to Asia or Africa or Latin America. Most complain of that aspect, but I hit it when I come back from those parts of the world.

I see our leadership in America and our churches in America in an incessant drive for non-essentials and an incessant drive for inconsequential things in the light of eternity, things that 50 years from now won't mean that, 100 years from now won't even mean that. We are doing things with such a temporary, short-term view, and in that drive that has come upon the churches and a spiritual blindness that accompanies it, we have got into monument building that is unbridled and out of control and not the drive of the Holy Spirit's action and activity upon the minds of leaders nor upon the Church. We have abandoned the essentials of which the gospel is composed to get involved in our monument building and in our memorials to our own ignorance.

On and on we drive in the incessant work of a Martha who is out of control and doesn't realize it. When Jesus spoke to her, he said, Martha, Martha, one thing is needful. One thing is needful.

I suppose one thing that marks the Martha, as I remember Bob Mumford saying some years ago, he told about a woman who was like Martha, very, very active in her community. She belonged to the flower club, the women's club, every kind of a club in the community that she could join. She belonged to it.

And when she died, there was this epitaph written on her grave, she was clubbed to death. I think that epitaph could be written on the grave of many ministers, clubbed to death. Activities that occupied their days, their years, their time, until they were driven to perhaps an early demise.

The Prophet Balaam has some interesting things to say in the Old Testament in chapters 21 through about chapter 25. Those chapters are the primary chapters concerning his life, and I think that most of you no doubt have studied Balaam. If not, I would surely recommend that you do so.

He is the epitome of a false prophet. The interesting thing about Balaam's ministry is this. There is not a single prophecy recorded that left his lips that was false, and yet he was called a false prophet.

We are warned three times in the New Testament about Balaam, his way, his doctrine, and one other aspect of his life that we are warned about in the epistles. Peter talks about it, Jude talks about it, and so on. But what marked Balaam's error was not that he was wrong in his ministry.

His ministry was right. It was 100 percent right. He was wrong in his motive, and that is what made him a false prophet.

Not his ministry, not his words, not his prophecies, but his motivations. And when his motives went wrong, he went wrong. He was willing to begin putting his ministry on the auction block to the highest bidder, and when Balaam came along and offered to bid high with promise of position, with promise of money, with promise of fine clothes, with promise of prosperity, then he took the bait and he became Balaam's man instead of God's man.

And you know the tragedy that followed. And yet in even going after the reward of Balaam, and in pursuing a materialistic goal, and a goal that would put him into prominence and fame, and that becoming the motive of his life, even then his prophecies still were not wrong. When he got over on Balak's territory, he said, I cannot go beyond the word of the Lord my God to do less or to do more.

Even then he understood the principle that God controlled the boundaries and parameters of his ministry, and he couldn't do less or more than God ordained. Now he had a lot more wisdom in that than some of us, because some of us are trying to do far more than the word of the Lord over our lives, and some of us are falling short by doing less than what God has ordered over our life. As I look at the body of Christ and leadership, I see both these things happening.

Now there are those few who I would love to be numbered among, I don't say that I am, that are walking out that central ground of God's order for their life. Most of us are involved in one excess or the other. One, either we are falling short because of some past hurt and wound and injury that hit us like dynamite and neutralized our commitment to do the will of God, or on the other side there are those with unbridled zeal and ambition who are seeking prominence and acceptance and all the subliminal drives that get involved in motivation, who are going way out beyond the word of the Lord, and in the process getting themselves in trouble and the body of Christ in trouble if their sphere of influence gets quite large, as it does oft times.

So in this word that we have in Balaam's testimony, I cannot go beyond the word of the Lord my God to do less or to do more. We see then that God establishes boundary and parameter, and if we are not hearing his word we will not be aware of that. Just to speak to these two issues briefly this morning, Brother Hal and I were, as he has already indicated, sharing last night a little, and he was telling me about an

acquaintance of his some years ago who he loved very dearly and who, by the Holy Spirit, Hal was able to see that here was a man who had a calling to a dynamic and large ministry in the miraculous, and yet because of very difficult things that came into his life, had been neutralized by those burdens and pressures and problems.

I'm going to talk about that a little later today as we talk about being called chosen and faithful. But as he was sharing that story with me, I thought of two men that I have known in my life, and I must say that I respect these men very, very highly in the Lord. They are both great men of God.

They are both men of sterling character. They are both men who I would trust with my life, and I know that they would not in any way take advantage of that trust or in any way betray that trust. But both of them are men who have been walking out their lives the last 25 years far below that which God ordered for their life.

In the one case, I was in this man's church many years ago, 1968, in fact. He lives in another part of the world, not even here in the United States. When I came into his church, I had heard of him from numbers of people and the outstanding dimension of the ministry he had had in the past, and I suppose this man has the most in-depth knowledge of the Bible of anyone I've ever met in my life.

He probably has got to be up in the top three men I've ever met in my life in terms of his understanding of the scripture by the revelation of the Holy Spirit, not just an intellectual assimilation learned in a cemetery or seminary, not just that sort of an approach to the scriptures but a God-gifted, revelatory insight into the word of God. But as I was with him and praying, the Spirit of the Lord gave me a picture in my head. Some call them visions.

In this picture I saw this man in two countries of the world with massive, massive, massive numbers of people out in front of him, numbering up in the hundreds of thousands. I saw that God's call on his life was first to that as an apostle evangelist, to go out into these pagan nations. These two nations were both pagan nations, and there to proclaim the word of the Lord, and if he would do so, he would have established a movement that would have changed the direction and force of both those nations.

As I continued praying about this and the dimension of what I was seeing, I was so troubled in my heart because here he was in this city, a large city. He had bought a very prominent piece of property in that city, and he was trying to make a church go and work and function in that city as a pastor. But the call of a pastor was not on his life.

His call was apostle, prophet, evangelist. He was all three, a man of tremendous depth in God. And yet there he was, carrying on, and not that pastoring is a lesser work than those others.

I'm not suggesting that for a minute, it just wasn't his work. And here he was, outside the sphere of God's call, and that man for twenty, what is it, from 1968 until now, twenty-one years almost, nineteen years, he has continued to struggle in that city. His congregation has never reached more than 250 people.

And he goes on and on, and he has got to be the greatest orator and preacher in that country. He's got to be the man with the greatest depth. He has seen some of the greatest miracles in his ministry.

When has he been out doing what God wanted him to do? He's had a dimension of ministry that was just staggering in years past, but he was a man who became the victim of a group of church leaders who, because of some little point of preaching and teaching in his theological briefcase, I suppose I could say, a whole group of preachers got together and dashed that man's ministry to the ground. And overnight he

was off of a national radio hookup, and a large tent ministry of evangelism they had going was collapsed, and overnight he was destroyed in that nation. And because of the deep hurt and all the vicious things that were said about him that were untrue, he went back and effectively crawled into his little nest and has stayed there ever since.

A man locked up because of a past wound and a past hurt that was unjust and was not right. And God judged, in fact, the men in that other country severely who, in fact, attacked him, and they came under a judgment of God that was very severe. But he himself, being so wounded by that, gave up his inheritance in God, in effect, being pressed to do less than the word of the Lord.

To do less than the word of the Lord. And I shared that mental picture with this brother. And as I did, he broke down and wept, but he didn't do anything about it.

He hasn't done anything about it. He's still sitting there in that situation, and I just heard this past week from someone I met down at Christ for the Nations who knows him well that now he's gone into politics and is running to become a member of Parliament in his country. And my heart breaks for him, because here's a man that would probably have led millions to Christ had he gone out and fulfilled the apostolic, prophetic, evangelistic ministry that God had anointed him to fulfill.

But being deeply wounded and hurt, he somehow decided to close his briefcase up and fold up his Bible and go back to pastor. And he wanted to build a successful church. He tried hard to do it.

He was doing everything in the world to do it, but he could never make it work. Why? God's anointing and blessing wasn't on that in his life. And I could go on to tell you a similar story of another brother, again with a very powerful call.

Men who did less than the word of the Lord their God. And on the other hand, I don't have to tell you. You have more examples of it in America than anywhere else in the world, of men who go out and go far beyond the word of the Lord in their zeal and in their ambition and in their drive for whatever.

I think most of it flows out of insecurities in men's lives who have to prove themselves something that maybe God didn't call them to be or to do. And their projects get out of hand and out of bound, and unfortunately many of them end up in economic catastrophe and give the enemies of the Lord great cause to blaspheme. And that's the other tragedy of going beyond the word of the Lord.

And that's the tragedy of the Martha syndrome that many of us operate in, anxious and troubled about many things. And our compensation is to escape it with incessant activity and bigger projects and bigger things that we all do in the name of faith when much of it is bordering on or a plunge into presumption. And we whip people up to try to help us with these projects God has not ordered and end up not meaningfully, I'm sure, in most cases, but functionally trampling on God's flock, fleecing the sheep to support our towers of Babel, because we have determined we're going to make us a name.

We're going to build us a city. And that spirit gets not only into local churches and pastors, but into denominations who, driven by the same spirit, go out and trample the body of Christ down around the world with no regard for the implications of what they're doing in their blind zeal to spread the influence of their denominational name. And oh, what a horror it inflicts on the mission fields of the world when people come in motivated that way with all of their American money and begin to buy up the national preachers and pastors with their money and bait these men into prostituting their gifts for your dirty dollars.

And oh, how many thousands of third world leadership have thus been corrupted and ruined and dirtied by unwise missionaries with all of their backing from America who come in to pervert and subvert the work of God in third world nations. And I could go on to speak to that issue, but I better stop before I get in big trouble. Because I see my brethren suffer in Asia and Africa and Latin America under the heel of the American with all of their wealth and their manipulation and control by their wealth.

And it was the prophet who well said, the priests rule by their means, and this still goes on. The fact they've got the resource financially, they rule by their means, and certainly it brings havoc and hurt to the body of Christ. What is God's antidote? It is getting to know him, getting to know him.

This is life eternal, that they might know thee, the only true God in Jesus Christ whom thou hast sent. Some years ago I taught a whole series on knowing God based on the book of Ruth, Ruth, the beautiful story of a woman who was disenfranchised because she was of the wrong birth, disenfranchised because she was a widow, but who came back to the land of promise and met the Lord of Harvest and established a love relationship with him and ended up in the genealogy of Jesus Christ. A moral by this woman who had no name or claim to be in that line, and yet because she established a love relationship, she got in with the Lord of Harvest, Boaz.

And the steps of that relationship are not mine to exegete to you today, but I would recommend them to you by a reading of the third chapter of Ruth, because they are all there in very beautiful sequence, and at your study times and prayer times, if you wanted to get into that little book for a time, I think you would be much blessed because leaders more than anyone else need the message of Ruth, chapter 3. The very simple steps that were outlined for Ruth by her paraclete, the one called alongside to help her, Naomi, were these, I will seek rest for thee, and that's where it first starts, ceasing from your own labors and entering into his rest. Laying down your work to allow God's work to begin to be expressed in you is the hardest thing we're called to do, entering into rest. It was Dad Spencer, the founder of Elam Bible Institute in Lima, New York, who told me years ago, Brother Ralph, as long as you work like you're working, God is resting.

And he was right. But when you start resting in faith, God will start working. And he was right.

When I laid down my own works to enter into his rest, and that takes faith, it takes a tremendous amount of faith to stop doing it and let God start doing it, to quit working for God, to begin to learn to work with God. That's a tremendous transition and a very difficult one to make. And I don't profess I made it all.

I'm still laboring to enter into his rest. But the word to Ruth was, wash thyself. And that's where it begins after resting is cleansing.

Anoint thyself, the anointing of the Holy Spirit, not by might nor power, but by my Spirit. Put thy raiment upon thee. The raiment being the priestly garments that come upon us after our washing and anointing, if you know the sequence in the tabernacle of Moses and the dedication of the priests.

They came first to the altar for the blood sacrifice, then to the labor for the washing and cleansing. And then the raiment, the priestly garment, was put upon them. And that's the order that Jesus speaks of in Luke 24, 49.

Wait in the city of Jerusalem until you be clothed with power. The baptism in the Holy Spirit should result in our being clothed with power. That's our priestly garment as New Testament priests.

And then, number four, get thee down to the floor, meaning take the low place of humility. Don't be lifting up yourself. Promotion doesn't come from the North, South, East, or West, or professional promoters.

It comes from the Lord. And then lie down. Again, secession of your efforts and your work.

And then and only then he will tell thee what thou shalt do. He will tell thee. And as I say, I don't have time to elaborate that sequence, but that's where you'll start hearing God's voice at the end of that sequence of establishing relationship with the Lord of Harvest.

So if we could flip back briefly then to Revelation 17 and verse 14. They that are with him. Oh, how wonderful to be with him.

They that are with him. So many are not with him, even though they are serving him. May I just allude to one other reference briefly in passing before we go on to call chosen and faithful.

Back in the book of Ezekiel, many of you are aware of the story that is recorded there concerning an apostasy that took place in Israel. And I've often said and do believe that the majority are seldom right. God, almost in every generation, has his minority that are doing the right thing.

And the majority are unfortunately often doing the wrong thing. And it was so in Ezekiel's time. And there was this apostasy that came.

Many were bowing down in idolatry, and many were refusing to lift up their voice against the idolatry, those among the Levites who were the priests of the Lord. I'm pausing here to ask for wisdom because I don't know how much to say or how far to go here. And I don't want to hit God's servants with clubs.

But we are living in a land as filled with idolatry as the land of India, which has over 300 million gods. And the god here is not the carved-out kind or the wooden and stone ones. It's got a different name.

It's called Mammon, which is the ancient god of prosperity. And many are bowing to that god and worshipping it today. I was asked in Australia some months ago on a nationwide radio broadcast, Mr. Mahoney, what's the greatest enemy of Christianity in the Church and the spreading of your message? And I said, well, first of all, let me clarify what my message is.

It's Jesus Christ. I want you to know that. I don't have an ideology.

I'm spreading the good news about a person. But I said the greatest hindrance to that is materialism. That is the great impediment.

He was somewhat shocked. He said, I thought you would say communism. I said, well, sir, if I were to tell you the truth, the Communists have done more to help spread the gospel in my lifetime than the Church has.

That shocked him. He said, what do you mean the Communists have done more? I said, they have brought the necessary hardships on the Church through persecution and through depriving them of their liberties to get them spiritual. And when they become spiritual and they love Jesus for Jesus alone and it starts costing something to follow him, the Church starts multiplying.

The Church starts growing. The Church starts evangelizing. The Church starts getting its priorities straightened out.

And the Church starts doing the work of God effectively because they have one reason only to serve him. They love him. And if I were to take you to Eastern Europe today and compare what's going on there with Western Europe, you would know that five times as many people in Communist lands in Europe attend Church as in non-Communist lands.

What is the greater enemy of the gospel? The materialistic prosperity of the West or the Communism of the East? I hope you understand I am not pro-Communist. But I hope you also understand that pressure and persecution and difficulty can become God's instruments of purifying his Church and getting it where it can become productive, as it did in China. As we were chatting last night, Brother Howell and I, I don't know if I told him this, but it might have been someone else.

But it's been wonderful for me to have the experience of going into China, as some of you no doubt have, and working there off and on. We've been helping place Bibles into that country since 1972 when the doors opened again, and we have couriers that are constantly doing this 365 days a year, year in and year out, and we're able through surreptitious means to put anywhere from a half to a million Bibles and testaments a year across the borders and get them into that exploding Church in China, a Church which after 120 years of traditional missionary effort by Western churches and Western nations had less than two million adherents and maybe a million born-again believers, if that many. And I'm not belittling or in any way putting down those dear men and women of God who went out to China in those early years.

They certainly laid necessary foundations. They certainly were models of sacrifice and willingness to lay down their life for the Lord, and we're not taking anything from them. But the problem was they brought their Western nation's mentality and Church mentality, which was hostile to the work and power of the Holy Spirit, as most of you would understand, and they also tried to bring, in some cases, their culture along with their gospel.

And without belaboring it, they lacked a prophetic vision for the nation. You know what Solomon, or the Book of Proverbs, says, without a vision, the people what? And that word vision isn't what we commonly say in Western nations, a vision for lost souls, although that's certainly right and biblical. But it is the prophetic vision.

Without the vision of the seer, the prophet, someone who is seized by the Holy Ghost into the future and know God's will and God's call and God's purpose over a nation, without that kind of vision, the people perish. And that's why I'm appealing for us to seek God for restoration of that prophetic ministry in the Church, that when we go into nations, we go in with a prophetic vision of God's will and design and desire for that nation, and proclaim what God wants said in all these situations. And anyway, without belaboring it, after that 120 years of sacrifice, tears and toil, and many giving their life for Christ in China and there to be honored and revered for their sacrifice, yet their work was unproductive for some very practical reasons.

I won't go into all of them, but one of the things the Communists did in 1951 when they took over and it turned out to be a great favor to the Church, they first of all packed up all the missionaries and sent them home. The second big favor they did was lock up all the preachers trained by those missionaries. And the third thing they did was take all their cathedrals away from them.

And they ended up with just lay leadership and homes to spread the gospel, relieved of the overburden of all that economic pressure that poor societies cannot sustain or maintain. They got to doing what Andrew Gee and Watchman Nee and others of those great Chinese prophetic evangelistic ministries were

saying in the 1930s and no one would hear them. The missionaries were fighting them.

The men of God raised up in the Chinese Church with prophetic vision were not appreciated in the years when they were proclaiming their message to the Church. They were attempting to change the Church to posture itself for the coming days of persecution and to get ready for what God was going to cause to happen in the country. But the Western influences shut these men up and called them false prophets and put them down and they had their following, but it was nothing because they didn't have the money.

Many Chinese leaders, bought out by the Western missionary, continued to preach the line. With all due respect to my own heritage and my own understanding of eschatological considerations, our missionaries went in there with their pre-mill, pre-trib doctrine and assured the Chinese, Jesus is coming soon and you don't have to worry, he's going to catch you up and there's going to be no problems. But Jesus didn't come.

The Communists came instead and many of them went to their death and many of those congregations were slaughtered because there was no prophetic vision. I don't believe any less in the coming of the Lord or the things I believe eschatologically, but the point is you have to apply things by prophetic vision and foresight and know God's word and message in time. It was totally lacking apart from a few Chinese leaders who were hearing from God and trying to proclaim God's message to prepare that Church.

Without belaboring it, that Church, as you know, took off and began to grow. How? Well, the Chinese began to do what they are good at, that is family life and structure. They began, because they would be arrested and thrown in jail if they tried to openly evangelize and convert, they would talk to their cousin because that was safe and tell them about Jesus and their cousin would get saved, who would talk to her aunt because it was safe and she would get saved, who would talk to her husband because that was safe and he would get saved, who would talk to his grandfather and so on and along those relational lines, the gospel began to spread across China until 20 years later in 1971 there were 20 million born-again believers in that nation, and today there are well over 50 million born-again believers across China, all without missionaries and all without professional clergymen and all without the thing you can't get along without, and that is multimillion dollar cathedrals.

But without all of those trappings, the gospel made its penetration into that society, and it is exploding with growth across that nation. And my greatest fear is that missionaries will start going back in there and mess the whole thing up that God is doing. And the whole point I'm trying to get across to you is, in Ezekiel 44, here were these two categories of priests, the sons of Zadok who were the minority and the rest.

What were the sons of Zadok's distinctives? Well, one is, it says of the sons of Zadok, they had an understanding of the times. They had an understanding of the times. And it goes on to say, because they were true to the Lord and kept faithful to him when all the rest of the priesthood went after the idolatry and the popular cause celeb that was being promoted in their generation.

Then it goes on to say that because they didn't go astray, verse 15 says, they shall come near. This is Ezekiel 44, if you're making notes. Ezekiel 44, verse 15.

It says of these, their reward is going to be this. The reward for their faithfulness is they shall come near to me to minister unto me. That's the highest ministry we have is to the Lord himself, and the one that I suppose I neglect the most.

But it is our first and highest call, our ministry to the Lord. All of you know Acts 13, verse 1. There were certain prophets and teachers in the church at Antioch. I would have thought they would have been teaching and prophesying, but it says, as they ministered to the Lord.

You can just read these. I'm just picking them up right out of the verses of this chapter. Then verse 18, they shall not gird themselves with anything that causeth sweat.

Does that speak to you of an overactive life, driven in the power of your own strength and fleshly energies and activities, as opposed to one energized by the Holy Spirit? No sweat. And Ezekiel 44, verse 23, they shall teach my people the difference between the holy and profane or common, and cause them to discern between the unclean and the clean. And in controversy they shall stand as arbitrators or judges.

And on it goes. I am their inheritance. You know, I find that even in our theology and our hymn writers who do more to influence theology than theologians, our orientation has been almost totally materialistic, hasn't it? I mean, we're looking for a mansion, a harp, and a crown.

Glory to God. Isn't that going to be an exciting eternity? A mansion, a harp, and a crown. Number one, there is absolutely, as you know, no biblical basis for mansions in heaven.

We've got a mistranslation in one verse in our King James Version and have built a whole Muslim, paradisaical view of heaven based on a mistranslation, which Father says and Jesus said, not in my Father's house are many mansions, but in my Father's house are many places of abode. What do you have in your house? Rooms. In my Father's house are many rooms.

In my Father's house are many abiding places. I go to prepare a place for you. If a mansion is what you're serving God for, I hate to just rob you of it, but you're going to be very disappointed.

You can have that now, I suppose, if you preach the right message in America. If that's what you want, you can have it. I've said it and it's biblically so true.

The greatest judgment God gives us all is what we want. Psalm 106, verse 15, He gave them their request, but sent leanness to their soul. That isn't God's mercy, that's God's judgment.

If your focus is material things, go ahead and get them. Get what you request and have the leanness of soul with it. That's what a materialistic orientation produces.

Glory to God, hallelujah, the greatest preaching I've ever heard in my life. I tell you, I don't like to preach in Western nations. We don't like separation from our idols.

We are committed to the wrong things. I am their possession. Mansion, harp, and a crown.

When I read the fifth chapter of the book of Revelation, I find all the crowns are thrown at the feet of him who sits on the throne as the bleeding, broken, dying Lampkin ruling from that throne. I don't find any crowns being sported around heaven, contrary to what you might have been anticipating. I remember years ago up here in Prescott, Arizona, when I was a kid, there were, I don't know if they're still even there, but there were two conference grounds up there very close, Presbyterians and the Methodists.

Our denomination, which was a Pentecostal denomination, used to use the Presbyterian campground every summer. We would be singing away, Will there be any stars in my crown, in my crown? We'd hear the Methodists singing, No, not one. Well, I hope your pursuit is Jesus.

Philippians 3, 15, Paul says that I might know him. Him. That's the reward of heaven, folks, is him.

You know what the judgment of heaven is? They shall not come near to me. They shall not come near to me. Those guys talked about in Matthew 7, who prophesied in his name, did many mighty supernatural works in his name.

What was their judgment? What was it? Depart, what? From me. I never had any intimate, loving relationship with you. I don't think those fellows went to hell, personally.

If you believe they did, well, maybe they did or will. I don't know. I think they were banished to the perimeter of heaven.

They shall not come near to me to minister unto me, but they'll minister at the gate, the outer court. And according to the book of Hebrews, Moses' tabernacle is a pattern of things in the heavens. So I think heaven has its holy place and holy of holies and outer court.

And without elaborating on my reasons for that, there's a lot of biblical evidence to support it. But where do they end up? Not in the throne, not seated with him in his throne, as he also overcame and sat down with his father in his throne. But their word was, Depart from me, ye that work lawlessness.

And I hope that's not my eventual end. I want to know him. With those he had no intimate relation.

I never knew you. It is the word of intimate relationship. And that's the issue with all of us in leadership, is knowing him.

This is life eternal, that you might know the only true God and Jesus Christ whom he hath sent. I reflect often on the words of Peter, who having pulled out his sword and whacked off the high priest's servant's ear, and Jesus had to tell him to put it away and heal the servant, who had done everything he could to try to win the favor and approval of Jesus at that hour of his greatest trial. And at the end of the whole thing, when everything he has done in all of his zeal to want to please the Lord has been the wrong thing, finally, outside, when the young girl says, He was with him, he begins to curse and swear and say, I never knew him.

I'm not taking away from the fact that was a denial. I'm sure it was that. But I think it was Peter's honest confession.

I never knew him. Shaking his head, total bewilderment. And we can have such a desire to want to do right and be doing wrong, because we don't know him.

It says of the children of Israel and Moses in Psalm 105 that he made known his acts unto the children of Israel, and he made known his ways unto Moses. And so many of us have been walking in the pathway of his acts, not knowing his ways. And it is the Lord's desire that you come to know him.

One of the prophets said it's the glory of God to hide a thing and the honor of kings to search it out. And God wants us to search out his ways. That's our honor as kings and priests unto God, to search them out.

The Lord hides it, but he gives to us the glory of searching it out by forcing us to be pressed into a relationship with him to find them. And oh, when we do, how wonderful it is when the mysteries of the kingdom begin to be made plain by the revelation of his Spirit and word upon our lives. Well, these, they that are with him, that's who we're talking about, they that are with him.

I want to be with him, don't you? I want to know him. I think we should let you do some charismatic calisthenics here to get limbered up a little bit. Let's stand for a few moments, shall we? If the foregoing message has been a blessing, we urge you to share it with your pastor, your prayer group, your neighbor, or someone in spiritual need.

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