

"THE ANTIOCH ACCENT: "CHRISTIANS
FIRST IN ANTIOCH" Acts 11:26

92213

I'm glad that God looks at us through Heaven's eyes, aren't you? I'm also happy he doesn't look at us like we look at each other.

It's a marvelous experience to know that we can have that kind of relationship with God. I always like this song. I like that verse line, "In Heaven's eyes, there are no losers." Look over at your neighbor and say, you're not a loser. Some people have never figured that out yet. We come together in Jesus' name, there are no losers. Everybody's a winner through Christ and what a marvelous experience that is.

I hope you still remember who I am. It's been a while.

I was thinking as David was going through the bulletin through the years that I have had the privilege of, Carmelita and I and our family have had the privilege of being with you, all the various expansions we've made. When we moved out here in 1967, the walls were right here where the pillars are, so when you have to look through the pillar, remember that use to be a wall. Think of what it would be like if the wall were still there. Then we knocked out the bottom under the back balcony and got a few more seats there. Then we put in the back balcony and we came in and knocked out all

the sides and put the other balconies in. Then we moved out to North and we moved out to West and we're going East and Southeast and Northeast and Northwest as the Lord leads us and guides us.

So I look at the bulletin now, I see it's almost grown into a catalog, you know. I don't know how churches can, I don't believe we can go to Heaven without the bulletin. I think it will be really hard and you need the bulletin and the first thing the Lord's going to ask you when you come up to the Pearly Gates is, where is your bulletin? You're going to have to have it with you. You understand that? Just like, I don't know how anybody got saved before we had tapes. Do you understand that or have anybody ever learn anything about the Word until we had tapes.

Bulletins, you know, are notorious for bloopers of some sort or other and sometimes you get some strange things going on in bulletins, particularly when they list sermons and closing hymns. They don't always match. Like one Sunday, a pastor had listed he was going to preach on gossip. The closing hymn was listed, "I Love to Tell the Story."

Another Sunday, he was going to preach on Sampson, so he had a very dramatic subject and he had listed as his sermon title, "Sampson in the lap of Delilah." The closing hymn was, "Leave it There."

The one I like best is though, one Sunday night, a pastor was going to preach on hell, so he listed as his Sunday night sermon, "What Hell is Really Like." In parenthesis right under the title, it had, "Come early and hear our organist play."

You have to understand that all the staff members that ever become a part of this staff have to sign in fine print, they play straight persons, whatever the circumstances may be.

We do appreciate the ministry of Mark Blankenship on the organ today. He's such a versatile man who does a lot for us and what a blessing he is.

This morning, if you have your Bible's, turn with me to Acts, chapter 11, beginning with verse 19. Acts, chapter 11, verse 19. I'll be reading from the New International Version, Acts 11:19. Can we stand for the reading of the Word please?

I still hear papers rustling. If the side of the Bible you're in says, Old Testament, you're in the wrong place.

Acts 11, beginning with verse 19, the NIV. "Those who have been scattered by the persecution in connection with Stephen traveled as far as Fenecia, Cyprus and Antioch, telling the message only to Jews. Some of them, however, men from Cyprus", and we call it Siren. The technical pronunciation is sirene, "went to Antioch and began to speak to Greek's also telling them the good news about the Lord Jesus. The Lord's hand was with them and a great number of people believed and turned to the Lord. News of this reached the ears of the church at Jerusalem and they sent Barnabus to Antioch. When he arrived, I saw the evidence of the grace of God. He was glad and encouraged them all to be true to the Lord with all their hearts. He was a good man, full of the Holy Spirit and faith and a great number of people were brought to the Lord. Then Barnabus went to Tarsus to look for Saul and when he found him, he

brought him to Antioch, so for a whole year, Barnabus and Saul met with the church and taught great numbers of people. The disciple's were first called christians at Antioch. The disciple's were first called christians at Antioch."

Let's sing together. Are we in C? (He Is Here)

Will you quietly be seated for prayer and then we'll move right into the Word of the Lord this morning?

(Message in tongue) (interpretation) Hear the Word of the Lord. Be open to my spirit as I work in your life this day, saith the Lord God, for behold, I break before you the bread of life. The bread that I give you shall give you eternal life. Come, for the table is now spread. All things are now ready. Delight yourself in the fullness of that which I give unto you today and I will be unto you a strength. I will be unto you a shield. I will be unto you a butler. I will set you up as a high tower. I, the Lord, will go before you. I will minister to your needs by my spirit as you trust and believe in me. You shall have that which I have promised unto you, for I am the Lord your God and I love you with an everlasting love, saith the Lord God of host.

Father, we thank you for the inbreaking of your Word. We thank you for you spirit that speaks to our hearts. May this word come alive in all of it's fullness and all of it's power. As you prepared our hearts, may we receive it gladly, fully and completely, in the name of Jesus Christ, our Lord, amen and amen.

During the 1960's, during the social marches and the protest rallies, there was a huge placard that was often displayed and was

displayed to us on television as they covered those marches and those rallies. On that placard, there was a slogan, "Jesus yes, christianity no." "Jesus yes, christianity no."

When we analyze that statement, if we're really honest with ourselves, all of us at some time or other have probably felt the same way. Jesus yes, christianity no. On the one hand, we really want to know Jesus Christ personally, as Lord and Savior of our lives. We want to experience the fullness of His personhood, the fullness of His presence and the fullness of His power.

On the other hand, there always seem to be those things that keep us from understanding Him individually and completely.

There are those differing interpretations. There are those ecclesiastical structures. There are those denominational divisions. There are those doctrinal distinctives. Somehow or other, we often want to say to ourselves, Jesus yes, but christianity no.

The truth of the matter is, when we look at our world today, there are over 5 billion, 5 hundred thousand people. Of that amount, there are 1.5 billion who claim the name of christian, but what is a christian? Would we know a christian if we saw him or her walking down the street? Do we really understand the meaning of christianity?

The Bible tells us in our text this morning that they were, the disciple's were first called christians at Antioch. I'm wondering if that name of christian that was used here in the first century has the same meaning for us today. They tell us that the

word was really coined by Rome and it really meant the followers of Jesus or those who were part of the Jesus party.

Today, when we look at the word christian, it really is an over used, over generalized, watered down word. We're not sure what we mean when we say, what is a christian?

It is significant that in this text, it tells us that the disciple's were first called christians at Antioch. That makes us to know that the New Testament word for what we call a christian is really the word disciple. It is a mathetase. By definition, a mathetase is a learner of Jesus Christ. He is a follower of Jesus Christ. A disciple is that person who has confessed Jesus Christ as Lord, that person who has accepted Jesus Christ as Messiah, that person who is crucifying the flesh, that person who is living by the spirit and that person who is trying to live out the Kingdom life in a secular world, because at the bottom of the well and everything we talk about being a disciple or being a christian, we're talking about coming to that place to live out the Kingdom life in a secular world.

The problem we have today is that many of us have never learned how to live the Kingdom life. The reason we stay so defeated, the reason we have so many problems, the reason it's difficult for us to cope with the stress and the strain and the problems and the difficulties of our time is because we've never learned to live the Kingdom life, but when Jesus Christ came into the world to set an order to the church, He said, I'm going to give you the ability to live the Kingdom life.

When Christ talked about the Kingdom life, He was talking about an inner experience. In John 3:3, He said, "Except you be born again, you cannot enter into the Kingdom of Heaven." What He was talking about was in II Corinthians 5:17, "If any person is Christ Jesus, he is a new creation. Old things have passed away and behold, all things become new."

In Luke, chapter 17, verse 21, He told the Pharisee's and the Sagisee's that day, the kingdom is not here. The kingdom is not there. It's not something you can tangibly reach out and touch. The kingdom is within you. He said the kingdom life is an inner life. He said the kingdom life is a coping life.

Hebrews, chapter 12 and verse 28, He tells us that we are receiving a kingdom that cannot be shaken, therefore we should be thankful and we should take grace that we might worship God in reverence and in awe, reverence and respect. We are receiving a kingdom that cannot be shaken, therefore we're able to cope with whatever comes our way.

The Bible tells us that the kingdom life is a persevering life. In Luke, chapter 9, verse 62, it says, "No man having put his hand to the plow and looking back is fit for the kingdom of God." That means that we've got to learn to live the persevering life.

The Bible tells us that the Kingdom is really a caring life. It is a serving life. It is a humble life. In Matthew, chapter 5 and verse 3, it says, "Blessed are the poor in spirit, for the Kingdom of Heaven is their's. Blessed are the poor in spirit, for

the Kingdom of Heaven is their's."

The Bible tells us that the Kingdom is really, the Kingdom life, is really an inherited life. James, chapter 2 and verse 5, James ask the question, "Has not God chosen the poor of this world to be rich in faith and to be heir's of the Kingdom which He has promised to those who really love Him?"

So when He begins to talk about us living in the Kingdom, He said we've got to understand that it is an inner life. We've got to learn that it is a coping life. We've got to understand that it is a persevering life. We've got to understand that it is a caring, serving life. We've got to understand together that it is a kind of life that brings us the inheritance of all that is in the kingdom of Heaven.

When we begin to see that and begin to live that life, everything takes on a new perspective. Then we know that we don't march by the drumbeat of the world. We don't live our lives by the trumpet sounds of the world. That means when we look at the uncertainty and the unpredictability of our world, we do not give up and we do not get frightened because we know when the world is at it's worst, then we know that God is at His best. We know that when the world is falling apart, then God is just really putting His Kingdom together. He begins to say, you're not going to find the answers in Washington, D.C. You're not going to find the answers in the United Nations. You're not going to find the answers in a new world order. You're not going to find the answers in anything that man can concoct. There's only one way you're

going to find the answer and those answers are going to be in the Kingdom of God. The answer is in Matthew 16:18, Christ says, "Upon this rock I will build my church and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it and I will give you the keys to the Kingdom of Heaven. Whatever you bind on earth will be bound in Heaven. Whatever you loose on earth will be loosed in Heaven."

The answer is in Romans 14:17, "The Kingdom of God is not eating and drinking, but it's righteousness and peace and joy. It is power in the Holy Spirit and in the love of God." When we begin to see the Kingdom in that respect, then we begin to understand the full meaning of what God is doing in the world. The answer is found in I Corinthians, chapter 15, verse 50 when we begin to hear Paul saying to those Corinthians, what you have to understand is that flesh and blood cannot inherit the Kingdom of Heaven and the perishable cannot inherit the imperishable, but when this perishable is clothed in the imperishable, when this mortal is clothed in the immortal, then is brought that saying to past, death is swallowed up in victory. Oh death, where is your sting? Oh grave, where is your victory.

We've got to understand that the answer is in I Corinthians, chapter 15, verse 24. When everything comes unraveled, when the last prayer has been prayed, when the last song has been sung, when the last worship service has been conducted, when you've worked your last days work, the Bible tells us, when the end shall come, then Jesus will present the Kingdom to the Father and He will defeat all of the dominions and the authorities and the powers and

He will reign until His enemies are put under His feet.

That means when we look at the world today, we don't trust in human ingenuity. We don't trust in social engineering. We don't trust in the ability of mankind to pull himself up by his own boot straps. We don't believe that man is the measure of all things, but we go to Psalm 46; God is our refuge and our strength and ever present help in the time of trouble of whom shall we be afraid. Amen, amen and amen. Hallelujah be to God. Praise the Lord in this place. Hallelujah. Praise Him in this place. Magnify the name of the Lord.

You begin to see life in a broader perspective. Though the earth will be moved aside, though the mountains will fall into the heart of the sea and though the sea will surge and foam and though the mountains will quake with their shaking, yet what's going to happen, the Lord, almighty, is our strength. The God of Jacob is our refuge and the final word is not the word of man. The final word is the Word of God. Heaven and earth may pass away, but Christ said, "My Word shall stand forever." Amen, amen and amen. Hallelujah be to God. Praise God. Amen. Praise Him in this place.

You say, Pastor Walker, can we really come to that? I look at the world today and I see so many people that are uncommitted. I see so many people that don't seem to be dedicated. I look at the church and I wonder, is it really christianity? Can the church really be all that it ought to be?

Sometimes we get the feeling, you know, we talk about being

committed and we talk about being dedicated and we sing the songs and we make the claims, but then we get in the battle, we seem to be so weak.

It's kind of like the young adolescent that was falling in love with another young adolescent and the boy and the girl talked often on the phone. Any of you have adolescence in your home? How high is your phone bill every month? She was talking to him on the phone one day and asked him, "do you really love me"? He said, "Yes, you know I love you. Why, I'd swim the widest ocean for you. I'd climb the highest mountain for you. I'd traverse the hottest desert for you. If it doesn't rain, I'll be over to see you tonight at 7:00."

Sometimes we look at christianity and it's that way. Don't you sometimes get tired of the false claims? Don't we sometimes get tired of the hypocrisy? Don't we get sometimes tired of this cracked bell and the sounding symbols? Don't we sometimes get tired of the false faces that we often put on ourselves?

It kind of reminds me of the man who tells this for the truth. He said he was born into a family of 5 children. All of them were monotones. They just couldn't sing. When the gifts were passed out, they did not get the gift of music and they could not sing a tune. Said he was rocking his little one year old boy to sleep one evening, so he decided he'd sing. Said he got through the first verse and it was so bad, the little baby took the pacifier out of his mouth and put it right in his father's mouth. We'd like to stop it up, wouldn't we? We'd like to stop it some time?

Then when we really look at the Word, we begin to see that these christians first got their designation at Antioch. Antioch was a city much like Atlanta. Antioch, in fact, had the elevation nearly the same as Atlanta, close to 2,000 feet. Antioch was the third largest city in the empire. It was a capitol of the provence in which it resided. It was up on a plateau. It was a beautiful city. It was on the Erantaes River and it was a well known city. It was a city of law and order. It was a city of great commercial roads and communication lines. It was well known throughout the whole empire. It was the city of religious tolerance. The Gentiles and the Jews got along well together. The Gentiles often visited their synagogues. It was a city in which the Jews, who were rushing away from the persecution because of Stephen, went to Antioch to find refuge because of it's tolerant situation.

While they were there, they began to preach the gospel of Jesus Christ, the Jews who had become christians in Jerusalem. As they preached, they had a great revival among the Greeks. They got a church started, had Barnabas come down. Barnabas got a hold of Saul and christianity was on it's way in the western part of Asia Minor on into Italy and it became the nerve center and they were called christians first at Antioch.

What is a christian? When we look at our own lives, are we satisfied to where we are? There's an urgency in my heart. There is a new burden on my soul. I look at what God is trying to do in the world and I get very concerned. There's a great revival in Europe. There's a great revival in Russia. There's a great

revival in Central America. There's a great revival in South America, but there is no revival that can match that revival. We see no revival going on in America. No revival in America. No revival in England and no revival in the near East. That's the only part of the world today that's not being shaken by the Word in a mighty way. I long to see a new revival come to America. I long to see our churches get shook up. I long to see us in the market place, to see the Kingdom of God is at hand. Hallelujah be to God. Praise God forever. Praise Him. Let's magnify His name. Hallelujah.

The next revival that I see on the horizon will not be the revival of the great evangelist, though we'll still have great evangelist. It won't be the revival of the great churches, though we'll still have great churches. It won't be the revival of the great pulpits, though we'll still have great pulpits. It won't be the revival of great sermons, though we'll have great sermons. It will be revival of the lay minister in the market place who will say I have found the way. Come and follow me. Don't you worry about what's going on in the world. Jesus Christ is coming soon. Amen, amen and amen. That's the revival we're going to see. That's the revival we want to see happen.

So he says the christians were called first who were called christians at Antioch. The disciple's were first called christians at Antioch. So what is a christian? When we start out by looking in the Bible, there are certain Greek words the come to play. The first one is that a christian is a believer in faith. The word is,

Cristos. It comes from the Greek verb, *peistuo*, which means to believe. When you look at that word belief, it means that for christians, we start out with the fact with this antioch accent, accents of fact that these people were believers in faith. Let's say it together, believers in faith. Believers in faith. One more time please. Believers in faith.

In John 3:36, it says, "He that believes on the Son shall have everlasting life, but He that does not believe the Son will not see life and the wrath of God will be upon Him. It starts out with an intellectual commitment right out of our mind. It's more than just a sense of acathesis. It's more than just a sense of an emotional purging. It becomes an intellectual commitment to a set of beliefs. It is a conviction that is motivated by our highest aspirations.

To believe means a joyful acceptance of Jesus Christ as Messiah. To believe means that we have a confidence in the living Word of God. To believe means that that word comes alive in our heart and it doesn't matter what the circumstances are, when we speak the word, we know that the word is alive.

I remember in California, on one occasion, coming on a terrible accident and there were 2 or 3 people who were killed and our first car was the first one at the scene. We got out of the car and there was a man who was dying and his family was gathered around him. Those who were in cars behind him. There were 3 cars traveling together. This car had had the accident and 2 or 3 people in the car were killed and this man was dying. I gathered

together with the people and they were hysterical. I didn't know what to do. I didn't know what to say. I didn't know how to do it. I just kind of got them by the hand and brought them around and I began to quote the living Word of God.

I tell you, when you really believe and when you really trust in this Word and when this Word comes alive in your heart, it has a great meaning for every person. I just began to say, "The Lord is my shepherd, I shall not want. He maketh me to lie down in green pastures. He leadeth me beside the still waters. He restoreth my soul. Yea, though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death I will fear no evil, for thou art with me. Thy rod and thy staff, they comfort me. Thou preparest a table before me in the presence of mine enemies. Thou anointest my head with oil. My cup runneth over. Surely goodness and mercy shall follow me all the days of my life and I shall dwell in the house of the Lord forever."

I didn't know it, but this was a group of christians. When that Word came alive, I looked at the wife of the man who was dying and as she stood there with tears streaming down her face, suddenly her hands went into the air and she began to praise and glorify God even in the midst of death.

It's paradoxical. It's contradictory, but if we really believe that there's an empty tomb and that there's a Jesus Christ at the right hand of the Father and He's coming back again and He's left us an eternal Word, it doesn't matter about life and death, what really matters is whatever we do is for the Lord Jesus Christ

and in His Kingdom. Amen, amen and amen. Hallelujah. Praise God forever. Praise Him in this place. Praise Him in this place. Amen. A believer in faith. Hallelujah.

What we have to learn in the second place, not only were these believers in faith, but they were friends in privilege. I don't know that we really understand that. So much of our religion today, if I may use the term, our christianity, our discipleship, is so abstract. It's so removed from us. We don't understand that it's Christ in us, the hope of glory, Colossians 1:27. We haven't come to the place yet that we really understand I Corinthians, chapter 6, verse 19 and 20 that our bodies are the temple of the Holy Spirit which we have of God and He is in us. We're to glorify God in our own bodies and we're bought with a price. We've had a hard time understanding that we're friends with Jesus Christ.

So many people have Him out there so far, have Him up there so high and have Him so to the side, they never walk with Him. They never really talk with Him. They never really commune with Him.

In John, chapter 15, verse 15, in that great chapter of the vine and the branches, He says, I'm not going to call you servants anymore, because a servant does not know what His master's doing, but I'm going to call you friends, because everything I've heard from the Father, I've made it known to you. Everything I've received from the Father, I've given it to you. No hidden agenda. I haven't kept anything from you. I've given you everything that I have received from the Father, therefore, I'm going to call you a friend in privilege. You are my friends.

It's wonderful to walk in the presence of God. I talk about practicing the presence of God, but you can't practice the presence of God until He becomes your friend. You can't hold Him in fear. You can't hold Him at arm's length. You have to know He sticketh closer then a brother. He's a friend closer, does anybody here know what I'm talking about? Do you people understand what I'm talking about here this morning? Hallelujah. You can't walk with Him if you're mind and your life's going to always being cluttered.

I've been talking to pastors a lot about burnout and a lot about handling stress and I guess the reason I'm talking to them so much about it is so that I'll be able to handle it better. One of the things I've talked about is daily meditation. I'm not one of those people that is oh so structured that I can get up every morning at 4:30 and pray. I've tried that and I keep falling asleep on God at that time in the morning. It just doesn't work real well with me. There are those people that can do that. Carmelita is diligent. She gets up in the morning and she can do it. I get up that early in the morning and try to do it and she has to wake me up and say, pray.

Some time during the day and there's not a day that goes by that I don't have that time of meditation in Him where He and I just get together. You don't have to be able to pray great eloquent prayers. You just have to be able to walk with Him and talk with Him and know that He is your friend and that He's beside you, never to leave you nor to forsake you. Hallelujah, does anybody understand that? Amen. Praise God, He's a friend. He's

a friend. I have to get pastors to understand that He's a friend.

I asked a group of pastors one day, what does Jesus mean to you and I got all of these theological principles. My goodness, you had to be Bart and Bruner and Bultmon to understand them. If you've never had any theology, those names don't mean anything. They're not like Shadrack, Meshak and Abindigo.

It's like the little girl and her mother asked her, "Well what did you learn about in Sunday school today?" "About the three Hebrew Children." Said, "Well what were their names?" She said, "My shack, your shack and a bungalow, that's who they were. Anybody knows who they are."

I read all those answers and said, no wonder these guys are under stress. If I saw Jesus Christ the way they've described Him, I'd be under stress too.

They asked Bart, the great theologian, one time if he could take all of his theology and I'm a systematic theology major out of seminar and I've read thousands of pages of theology and I've slept through lots of lectures on theology, and said, would you put it one sentence what you would say? He said, "It's easy, Jesus loves me this I know for the Bible tells me so." That's all you need, amen. Hallelujah. That's all you need. A friend in privilege. Amen.

I'm not going to call you anymore, He says, I'm not going to call you servants. I'm calling you friends. So you're believers in faith and we're friends in privilege, but then we're witnesses in testimony.

The third word is martyrs, from which we get the word martyr and it means testifying and verifying that which we have seen and that which we have heard. Jesus Christ met the little woman at the well in John, chapter 4 and verse 29. She went rushing into the city, "Come and see the man that told me everything I've done. Do you think this is the Christ?" The city came out.

In verse 39, it says, "Many of the Samaritans believed because of her testimony, because of what she had seen and what she had heard. She witnesses to her testimony, martyrs.

In Acts, chapter 22, verse 15, when Paul was apprehended by the Roman guard under the oppression of the Pharisees, Sadducees, the Sanhedrin's and the chief priest and they were deciding what to do with him, he talked to the crowd. He said, what I am doing to you is fulfilling what God called me to do, to be His witness to all men, everywhere of what I have seen and what I have heard.

In chapter 23, verse 11, when He was thrown into prison, and I imagine Paul felt imprisoned just like we feel. I imagine he was depressed. I imagine he was down. I would suppose that he was feeling, my ministry is over. Is this end after all that God's done for me? Is this the way this thing's going to end up? Then an angel of the Lord came to Him. The angel said, "Be of good cheer, Paul." That's always incongruent, isn't it, when you find the people in the Bible in the worst place, the first thing the angel say is, "Be of good cheer." That says something about the gospel, doesn't it? "Be of good cheer." You don't measure your life by the jail. You don't measure your life by the circumstance.

You don't measure the life by the pain. You measure the life of the promise of the living God and the Word that He's put into our heart and that Word last forever. Amen, amen and amen. That's how you measure your life. Hallelujah.

Then He says, "Paul, just as you've testified for me in Jerusalem, so you're going to bear witness for me in Rome." You're going to talk about what you've seen and what you've heard. The problem is, if you haven't seen anything and you haven't heard anything, you don't have anything to witness to. Hello, hello, hello.

That's the problem with many people today. They don't ever see anything. They never hear anything.

A few weeks ago, I told you about the young prostitute that came to our church and she was a basket case. She'd been on the streets since she was 12. She'd been a drug addict, been in and out of hospitals, a heroin addict. She'd been an alcoholic. She'd been in prison, 3 abortions, tried suicide 5 times. Her life was just out of joint and somebody brought her here and she found the Lord and she told us about having a new mind. You may remember me telling you that.

Just this past week, I got a call from a man who was in a restaurant and he said, "Do you know so and so?" I didn't recognize it at first, but when he told me the story, I knew who he was talking about. He said, "I use to go to Mt. Paran but I fell away." Said, "I got back into alcoholism, business went bad, had a divorce", and said, "my life just got all out of whack and I left

my resource and I was really feeling down, went in the restaurant to eat. The waitress came and waited on me and when she brought me the food, she said, 'You know sir, you look awful depressed.'" He said, "Well, I am depressed." She said, 'Well I use to be depressed. In fact I use to be a prostitute.' Said, 'I use to be a heroin addict.' Said, 'I went to Mt. Paran and God gave me a new mind and God can give me a new mind, He can deliver you from your depression.' Said, "She sat the food down, laid her hands on my head and just briefly said, 'God, in the name of Jesus, deliver this man just like you delivered me', and she patted me on the back and went on her way." Patted him on the back and went on her way.

He said, "That made such an impression on me, when I got home, I got to thinking about it and I got to remembering how God saved me, first of all, as a young boy and what that had meant for me for many years and the blessings I use to have when I came to your congregation. So I got down on my knees and repented and found Jesus Christ as Lord. I'm going to be in your church Sunday." I don't know if he's here somewhere or not or whether he's at North because he might not know where to have gone. He may be at West and he may be trying to decide which one he wants to go to. I don't know, but I do know this, when you've seen something and you've heard something and it's come from the finger of God, you can't keep your mouth shut, because if you do, the very rocks are going to cry out. Amen. The rocks are going to cry out. Hallelujah. Amen. Hallelujah be to God.

You're a witness in testimony, believer in faith, a friend in

privilege, a witness in testimony, but then we're stewards in trust. God's given to us a great ability and great abundance and great resources to use. He says, I want you to be a steward in trust.

In I Peter, chapter 4, verse 10, He uses this word, oreconomous, which really means a steward. It means a manager. It means an administrator. It means a care taker. It means one who looks over things. It is that person who does all and utilizes all the gifts that God has given Him. He said, "Each one of you has received a gift. You use that gift to minister to one another. The reason that you want to minister to one another so you can be good stewards of the manifest grace of God." The manifest grace of God, good stewards of that grace that He's given you.

It's hard for us to understand it, but we don't own a thing. Where we got all fowled up is we decided we owned everything. Like Nebekenezzer, we went out and said, "Look at great Babylon which I have built", and we wound up in the pasture eating grass. Hello? You don't own a thing. I don't care if you're a billionaire, it doesn't belong to you, it belongs to God. I don't care if you've only got one loaf of bread and you're living in a rented apartment and it's two months behind. Whatever you've got, you don't own it. It was given to you by God. It was given to me by God. When you learn it belongs to Him and we're just the stewards of it, then you don't worry about it. You let Him worry about it. You just utilize it to it's fullest extend and when you utilize it under the Lordship of Jesus Christ, then the blessings flow. Amen, amen and

amen. Hallelujah be to God. Amen. Hallelujah. Hallelujah.

Whatever we've got here is because people have used their gifts as stewards of God.

I had a man fly in here once on his own private leer jet. He came into my office. He called me from California, said he needed to see me. I had ministered out there and apparently he felt like I might could help him and came in his leer jet, drove up in the Limousine that had met him at the airport and he came into my office, sat down. I looked at him, he looked at me and he said, "I've got enough money to live the rest of my life without ever working a day. My children will never have to work. My grandchildren will not have to work, all succeeding generations will never have to work if they look after the money." He said, "I'm depressed and I want to know and I want you to tell me, why am I so depressed?" I thought, well I really don't know but I'd sure like to try your lifestyle and see just how it is. It would be interesting to find out if it's like you say it is, how could you be depressed?

I found out he's depressed because he was afraid he was going to lose it all. Hello? Once you get it, staying king of the hill is not easy, particularly if you think you're king. All he had to do was change kings. He didn't know Jesus Christ was his friend. He didn't know that none of that stuff belonged to him. He didn't know that he didn't have to worry about it. He didn't know that it was a gift from God. He was to be a good steward of that gift and minister to those who are in need and to help all that he could

help. He didn't understand that.

After we talked for 30 or 40 minutes, he began to get the light. He said, "You mean I don't have to worry about it?" I said, "No, let God worry about it." I said, "You're a good businessman, aren't you?" He said, "Well sure I'm a good businessman." He said, "Well what if the times get bad." I said, "Well so what." I said, "What if you lose it all? What would you have lost?" You know what, he thought a minute, he said, "You know I would have lost a lot of convenience." Hello? That's the difference, isn't it? You can lose one car and still, if you have 2 cars, and still get by with one car, couldn't you? Hello? If the car won't run, you could use a bicycle or ride a bus, couldn't you? Hello? If you didn't have as many pairs of shoes, there'd be more room in the closet for other things, ladies. I'd better hide, it's going to get tough here in a minute.

Stewards in trust. Corrie Tin Boom was talking to Billy Graham once and they were going to do the film, "The Hiding Place", and they didn't have enough money. Billy said, "We need a hundred thousand dollars. We can't start. We're due to start in 2 weeks. We don't have the money." She said, "Well Billy, I'm going to go back to my hotel room and pray ask the Lord tonight to sell a few cattle. He owns a cattle on a thousand hill, sell a few cattle and see if he can't arrange for us to get this film started."

She went home and prayed and about 3 o'clock in the morning, she got a long distance call into her hotel room from a man who had been a supporter of Billy Graham's and a supporter of her ministry

and said, "I don't know what's going on Corrie, but the Lord just woke me up and got me out of bed and said to call you and to tell you whatever you're doing, to give you a hundred thousand dollars."

She met Billy Graham the next morning and said, "Billy, I just thought I'd tell you, the Lord sold some cattle last night and a hundred thousand dollars will be coming in her this week." He owns a cattle on a thousand hills. Amen. He is the victor over the dark domain. He is the one in whom we live and move and have our being. Praise God. Amen.

They were called christians first at Antioch, believers in faith. Say it with me. Believers in faith. Friends in privilege. Witnesses in testimony. Stewards in trust. Awe, but the last one is their lights and influence. The word here is fos, fia, omega and sigma. A little three letter word, fos and it means light.

When you read Matthew, chapter 5 and you look at verses 14 through 16, it tells us, "You are the light of the world. The city that is set on a hill cannot be hidden." Said, "Men don't take a light and put it under a basket. You don't light a lamp and put it under a basket, but you put it on a lampstand and it gives light to everyone that's in the house." He said, "Even so, you do likewise. You let your light so shine before men that they'll see your good works and glorify your Father which is in Heaven."

Light is an influence. Light is a symbol of rank and power and authority. Light penetrates. Light illuminates. Light draws. Light shows us the way. He says, "I want you to be a light that draws. I want you to draw people." He said, "If I be lifted up,

I'll draw all men to me. If you lift me up, I'll draw all men to you."

James 1:21 and following says, get rid of all of the filthiness of the flesh. Get rid of all of the overflowing wickedness. You receive with humility the implanted word and you be doers of the Word and not only hearers.

In James 4:7, James tells us, he says, "Submit to the Lord. Resist the devil and he will flee from you. Draw nigh to God and he'll draw nigh to you. Humble yourself in the sight of the Lord and He will lift you up. He'll lighten you up." Light, it draws.

My father-in-law and I use to fish a lot when he was alive and we were fishing one time in a large lake in Florida and we had gotten way out and it was getting dark and we were catching fish. He is an addict to fishing. He's a fanatic. I kept saying, we better go. It's going to get dark and we won't know the way, but he said, "No, there's still fish here." I think he thought we were emptying the lake that time. We kept fishing until it got dark. All of a sudden, we don't know where we were and how to go. We saw light. He said, "What do we do?" I said, "Let's follow the light." He said, "O.K." So we just followed the light. We finally got to the shore, to the dock. It was the wrong dock, but by following the shore line, we'll get to our place, but that light drew us. It was light in a dark place, see.

What this world is looking for are lights. There's enough darkness, enough darkness.

I got to watching the news yesterday sometime. I got so

depressed. Violence after violence after violence, inhumanity to inhumanity to inhumanity, selfishness, greed, unethical, immorality. It wasn't anything good. I thought, oh God, what kind of world are we building for you? I looked over at the picture of our grandchildren in our den and I thought, what kind of world are they going to have? What kind of world are they going to have? What He's asking for are lights of influence.

On the one hand, it's the worst of times, but on the other times, it's the best of times. The greatest opportunity for us to be lights and influence. He's saying to you, what I'm really asking for you to do if you're going to be christians first in Antioch, the Antioch accent, I want you to be a light in influence.

As long as there was an automobile, Henry Ford lives. As long as there's an airplane, the Wright brothers live. As long as there's a light bulb, Thomas Edison lives. As long as there's electricity, Benjamin Franklin lives. As long as there's a christian, Christ lives. We become His hands. We become His heart and we become His eyes. We become the influences. A bell's not a bell until you ring it and a song is not a song until you sing it and love was not put in the heart to stay. Love is not love until you give it away. A light in influence. You never know. You never understand.

John Calvin was worked to death nearly and he felt like that he was burnt out and he was going from Paris to Strausburg and in Strausburg, he was going to take some time off from public preaching and go back into the private life for a while. He was

tired. I've known that kind of fatigue. He stopped in Geneva on the way to the friend's house called William Farrel. William Farrel tried to persuade him to stay in Geneva and build a virtual city of God. Calvin said, "No, I'm headed to Strausburg. I'm giving it up for a while." Farrel prayed all night that the Lord would lay it on Calvin's heart and the next morning, Farrel said to him at breakfast, said, "Calvin, God has told me to tell you to stay in Geneva and build a city of God." Calvin said, "God's not saying that to me."

He went on to Strausburg and got back into private life, but the Lord dealt with him in such a way until he couldn't stand it any longer and he went back to Geneva and got involved in a life there and built that impactful, influential city of God that we all know about. He said, "It was as though that words of Pharaoh were the very words of God to me, but He was a light in influence." You never know. You never know.

I was at the airport last Sunday night. I preached in Charlotte last Sunday for Loran Livingston who will be preaching for us on our Anniversary Sunday. The only way I could get him is if I would go there. A fine young minister with a great church. I've known him for many years.

I was in the airport and I was tired. I had preached three times and I was ready to catch a plane that night. I was sitting in the airport and there was a man sitting down 2 or 3 seats and he looked very depressed. The Lord just spoke to me, go talk to that man. I said, Lord, I'm tired. I've talked to all the people I

want to talk to today. The Lord just laid on me, go talk to that man. I kept hoping, you know, that the plane would be called and then I'd say, Lord, I don't have time. I've got to get on the plane. The Lord would say, there are other planes.

So finally, I figured the only way I was going to get over this burden on my heart was go talk to him. I sat down and talked with him. I introduced myself, struck up a conversation and so happens, he lived here in Atlanta at one time and was still living in Atlanta but had been in Charlotte over the weekend. He knew who I was, knew about our church. I said, "You look like you're really hurting a little bit and I thought I'd just come over and talk with you of something about it." He said, "What do you do on the day that you've buried your wife?" She had died and they had taken her to Charlotte for the graveside funeral that day and he was flying back to Atlanta at night. His wife had died suddenly with a heart attack and he was devastated.

Suddenly I got the picture. I began to talk to him about what the Word of God could do in his life and I introduced to him to the Father of Compassion, the Father of all comfort. He comforts us with a comfort so that we can comfort others who are going through the same thing we're going through. I could tell him, look, "I've been there. I've felt death. I know what it is to get that sudden call. I know what you're feeling. I know what you're ache is." Big tears streamed down his face. I led him in a prayer for God to save his soul, for God to comfort his life, for God to give him the power to overcome. Light and influence.

I'm not telling you to be a Bible thumper. I'm not telling you to dump 5,000 tracts on your neighbor's house. I'm telling you what have you seen and what have you heard? Draw. Draw. Draw. Then when we stand before Him, well done thy good and faithful servant. Enter into the Kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world. Shall we pray?

(Message in tongues) (interpretation) Let the spirit of God just speak to your hearts now. Everyone quiet and before Him. I am doing a new thing in this age. I am raising up my church as a bride without spot, without wrinkle or without blemish. As a bride, I am preparing a wedding party, for soon, I shall come and receive my church unto myself. Be ready, for such an hour as you think not, my Son shall come. Come unto me all ye that labor and are heavy laden. I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you and learn of me, for my burden is light. My yoke is easy and you shall find rest for your souls. Come, for all things are ready. The table is spread. Delight yourself in the fullness of that which I have prepared and you shall be made whole, saith the spirit of the living God.

As we sit in the silence of this moment, the Lord is doing a great thing. The renewal that we talk about in June is already starting. If you're sitting here this morning and say, Pastor, I don't know, I'm not sure just where I am in this whole thing called, quote, christianity. I don't know if I have that antioch accent or not, the believer in faith, the friend in privilege, the witness in testimony. I don't really know if I'm a steward in

trust, a light in influence and I really need you to pray for me. I want to be restored. I want to be renewed. I want to be on the cutting edge. I want to be used of God in a new and a special way. Please pray for me, would you let me see your hands please? Put it up good and high. God bless you. God bless your hearts. God bless you all in the balconies. Thank you very much.

I'm going to ask you to take a second step in just a moment and to ask the elders to come, take their places quickly please. We're going to sing a song, "In Moment's Like These, I lift up a song to you, Father." As we sing and you raised your hand or you feel the need, I'd like you to come. Those of you that might like to join our church, this is new member Sunday. I know it's Memorial Day weekend, so that possibly, the people who would ordinarily join me may not be here, but if you're here and you want to become a member, we want to give you the opportunity. When I give the alter call, if you would just come down and join us at the alter. Then we'll give you instructions to go to the chapel and tell you about what membership means, or if you have questions about membership, would you come? I'd like to pray for you.

If you've raised your hand this morning, I would be remised if I didn't take time to pray with you today.

As the congregation stands please, would you come please if you raised your hand. Just want to anoint you with oil and pray for you. (In Moments Like These)

As our heads are bowed and our eyes are closed, could we just please take a moment. I just feel the presence of the Lord here.

(message in tongues) (interpretation) Hallelujah. Be strengthened in your spirit by my might, saith the Lord God. Be lifted up and know that I am the God of Abraham and Isaac and Jacob and I am the God who knows you because I have numbered the hairs of your head and I know when a sparrow falls to the ground. Be not afraid of that which you see round about you. Walk not in the arm of the flesh, but walk in my spirit. Walk not by sight, but walk by faith. Know that I, the Lord, will make a way for you. You will not be tempted beyond that which you're able to bear, for I am faithful and I, the Lord, will deliver you out of the enemy. I will give you a way of escape and I, the Lord your God, shall fill you with the fullness of my spirit that you might be made whole, for you are mine. I have bought you with a price. Therefore, glorify me and I, the Lord, will remove from you that which hinders and I will give unto you a new heart and a new mind that you might walk in my ways, saith the spirit of the living God. Hallelujah be to God.

Father, we just praise you. We just magnify your name. Let's just praise the Lord. Praise the Lord in this place. Hallelujah. Hallelujah. Hallelujah be to God. Hallelujah be to God. Blessed be the name of the Lord. Praise be the Lamb of God. Praise be the Lamb of God. Blessed be the Lamb of God. Hallelujah.

Father, I just bring you each one of these who are kneeling at this alter. I just pray in the name of Jesus Christ that you'd touch each one of them anew and afresh. I pray that you would restore those years that were lost because of the problems and the

trials and the difficulties. I pray that you would help each one to know that you are the God who shuts out the past. You remove our sins as far as the East is from the West and you put them in the sea of your forgetfulness as we repent, as we confess, as we express the sorrow for our sins and commit ourselves into new life in you, then you do the work in our hearts. Right now, we believe the work is already accomplished, not by might, nor by power, but by your spirit, we believe the work is done, in the name of Jesus Christ, our Lord, amen, amen and amen. Hallelujah be to God. Hallelujah be to God. Praise God forever. Praise God forever. Amen. Amen.

I'd like for those of you kneeling at the alter just to stand, would you please? Would you join hands, in the alter and all over the congregation, right across the aisle where it's convenient. Where it's not convenient, don't you worry about it. I want to pray with you and I want you to pray with me. I want a corporate prayer here. Right after this corporate prayer, we're going to sing a song. Those of you that would like to join the church, I'd like you to turn to your right. Just follow right out that door there. Hold your hand up good and high there Ken. Just follow him right out that door. As we're singing, if you'd like to join our church. If you're in the audience, haven't come down and you want to go to the chapel, come down through the door, to your right and there'll be people there to show you the way.

The Lord has done a work here. I have felt some burdens lift here. It's hard to explain. I've been a shepherd of this flock a

long, long time. I've had a lot of good people helping me, a lot of you, all of our lay ministers and everybody involved in all of our many volunteer points, but I can sense and I just feel this morning that some of you have just let it go. You've let it go. Turn over to your neighbor and say, let it go. Just let it go. As far as the East is from the West. Let's say together, it is finished. It is finished. One more time. It is finished. Let us say, with His stripes, we are healed. With His stripes we are healed. With His stripes we are healed.

Repeat this prayer after me everyone please as we bow our heads before the Lord.

Oh God my Father, in the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth, I come to you believing that the promises are mine. I repent of my sins. I confess my rebellion and by faith I know I am restored. I receive your grace. It is sufficient for me and I commit myself to walk by your Word according to your will. By faith, I receive my healing. By faith, my problems are solved. By faith, I live a new life. By faith, I have new joy and peace. By faith, your power is mine and I walk in newness of life. I praise you now for the victory is mine in Jesus name, amen. Hallelujah. Just praise the Lord in this place. Glory be to God. Glory be to God.

Here's what I want to do. There's a chorus I want to sing. How many of you want to join the church? We've got people wanting to join the church. Would you go right now please? Take them right there, if you will. Come this way if you'd go. If you had your roast in, it's already burned anyhow, so forget about it.

Just forget the time. Look over and say, forget the time. If anybody starts to leave, just grab them. Don't let them out. I want to sing, "Make me like you Lord, make me like you."
(congregation singing)

Praise God. I just feel like they felt on the Mount of Transfiguration. Let's just build some booths and hang around here for a while. I don't know if we've gotten to that point and I'm afraid to test it out. So as we leave here today, I want you to leave here knowing that you are a believer in faith, you are a friend in privilege, you are a witness in testimony, you are a steward in trust and you are a light in influence because you're called a christian first at Antioch. You're dismissed in the name of the Father, Son and the Holy Spirit, amen and amen.