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“A Covenant Church in Contemporary Times”

Well, once again the Lord has given us the privilege to coming into His house, to worship Him in spirit and in truth. Every time we come to church, we are really making known to the world that God is alive and well in the planet Earth. When we come into church, we are really celebrating Psalm 100, “Make a joyful noise unto the Lord all ye lands! Serve the Lord with gladness; Come before His presence with singing. Know ye that the Lord He is God; It is He that has made us, and not we ourselves; We are His people and the sheep of His pasture. Enter into His gates with thanksgiving, and into His courts with praise. And be thankful unto Him. The Lord is good. His mercy is everlasting and His truth endureth to all generations. That’s Israel’s marching song. And it should be our marching song this evening. I thought I would throw that sermon in first free of charge and then go on to the next one in just a moment.

But I thank you for the opportunity to share with you today and I appreciate the wonderful hospitality that has been shown to Carmelita and to me and I’m grateful to God for those of you who have arranged your schedules to be here today in very busy times and be here tonight. And I thank the Lord for what He’s doing in your midst and for the way that you have rallied behind Pastor Page and you’re moving forward in the Kingdom. Knowing some of your

plans for the future, I'll be praying that God will see them come into fruition as you move forward.

And you know any time that a minister comes to a pulpit that he's not preached at a great deal, he always has one desire and that's to be relevant. The word relevant is a buzz word that we use in our society a lot today. Probably means a little different something to every person, but to be relevant is to communicate in some meaningful way that will trigger thought and bring about meaningful behavioral action. And what we're interested in is triggering thought and bringing about meaningful behavioral action.

I heard the story told of a young seminarian just graduated from seminary. Had not preached very many times. But was given his first church way up in the mountains of Kentucky and his whole desire was to be relevant. He had been told for three years of seminary that's what you've got to do when you preach is be relevant. So he went to preach his first sermon in that church and he decided to be relevant he would preach on the evils of smoking. So his first sermon was on the evils of smoking. When the service was over, the elders came around and said, what are you doing talking about smoking? Haven't you ever heard of Kentucky tobacco? A third of this congregation makes their living off of Kentucky tobacco and you've alienated a third of this congregation. You've got to be careful. He apologized and said that he would try to do better the next Sunday.

He still wanted to be relevant. So the second Sunday, he preached on the evils of drinking and after the service was over, the elders came over and said haven't you ever heard of Kentucky bourbon? Said, a third of this congregation makes their living off of Kentucky bourbon and you've alienated another third of the congregation. Now, you've got to be careful. So he

apologized and thought he would still be relevant the next Sunday and he preached on the evils of gambling. After it was over, they came around and said, haven't you ever heard of the Kentucky derby? A third of this congregation makes their living from the Kentucky derby and you've alienated the entire congregation. Now, next Sunday if you don't do better, we're going to fire you and get us another pastor. So the next Sunday, he came to the pulpit and said, my subject today is on the migrating patterns of killer whales off the coast of South Africa. Now, I think that's being pretty safe, wouldn't you think by a large?

Well, in my desire to be relevant this evening, I'm not going to preach on the migrating patterns of Orca whales, but I am going to talk with you a little while on the covenant church in contemporary times. Because I think we find ourselves in the most challenging times the history of the church has ever talked about. We've been given the greatest mandate that any period in church history has ever been given. We're really called upon to be a covenant church in these contemporary times. I don't think that it is possible for us to really be able to prognosticate what God is going to do in the future. And what he does in the future will largely be dependent upon our availability for Him to use us because if we don't make ourselves available, the very rocks are going to cry out and he'll make somebody available. So, it's important for us, I think, to take a look at this subject this evening.

If you have your Bibles, you want to turn with me please to Matthew the sixteenth chapter, the eighteenth and nineteenth verses, very familiar verse of Scripture where Jesus Christ is sitting down with his disciples at the foot of Mt. Hermon in Israel at a place called Caesarea Philippi and He's preparing them for what is going to come. Now you have to get the picture because they don't really know what all Christ is going to do. They've got just a little smidgen of

an idea. They know that something great is going to happen, but they don't have it all put together. The result of that is that it's very important that we see what Christ is preparing them to be so that we can see what Christ is preparing us to be. So when you hear that verse of Scripture and we know it very well. Upon this rock, I will build my church and the gates of hell will not prevail against it. And I will give to you the keys of the Kingdom of Heaven. Whatever you bind on earth will be bound in heaven and whatever you loose on earth will be loosed in heaven.

Shall we pray? Father, I thank you this evening for the presence of Your Spirit in this place. I thank you because where two or three are gathered in Your name You are there. And anything we ask on touching the earth, it will be done for us by You who are our heavenly father. Now, I pray that You would give us ears to hear, You would give us eyes to see, You would give us hearts to receive, minds to perceive, lips to speak the word that You would have in this congregation tonight. Now, I thank you for it in Jesus' name and for his sake, amen and amen.

Perhaps, the most important question we could ask ourselves this evening is, what is God doing in the world today? If I were to ask each one of you individually, I'd probably get a variety of answers, but I think in reality when we look at God's word, we would all agree that what God is doing in the world today is confirming the covenant that He has made with His people. Because anyway you look at it, we are a covenant people. When we read the Old Testament, it is the old covenant as God revealed Himself through Israel, His people. When we read the New Testament, it is the new covenant where God has revealing Himself through the new Israel, the spiritual Israel, the church and we are a part of that covenant. And the Bible talks about a covenant, it talks about it as an agreement. He talks about it as a contract. He talks about it as a

partnership. So we find ourselves tonight if we're going to do what God would have us to do, we have to be in agreement, we have to be in contract, we have to be in partnership with Him.

And so what is God doing in the world today? He is confirming the covenant that He has made with His people. He is confirming the covenant that He made with Eve and He's crushing the head of that old serpent, Satan. He's confirming the covenant that he made with Noah and He's maintaining the rainbow in the sky. He's confirming the covenant that He made with Abraham and He is bringing back His people, Israel. He's confirming the covenant that He made with Moses and He is keeping all of His precious promises. He's confirming the covenant that He made with David, and He's establishing His throne forever. But more than that, He's confirming the covenant that He made with Jesus Christ and He's building a church and the gates cannot prevail against that church. If you believe that, give God praise and give Him glory in this place this evening.

Now when we talk about the fact that He is building a church then we understand that what He did at Pentecost was the inauguration of the church. What he did here at Caesarea Philippi was really the investiture of the church. It was the initiation of what He wanted to do in the world.

We stand here today on the other side of Pentecost and we know that when Christ went back to earth in John 14:16, He said, I will pray the Father. He will send you another comforter, another counselor that He may abide with you forever. Even the Spirit of Truth whom the world cannot receive because it seeith Him not, neither knoweth Him. But you know Him for He dwells with you and shall be in you. I will not leave you alone. I will not leave you comfortless. He is going to come unto you.

And then we know on the day of Pentecost, the church had its great advent and we tonight know that we are a covenant people because it's been confirmed by the power of the Holy Spirit. When the Holy Spirit came into the world, He came to impart spiritual truth. He came into the world to glorify Christ. He came into the world to endue us with power. He came into the world to fill us with all the fullness of God. He came into the world to pour out God's love into our very hearts. He came into the world to enable us to live a holy life. He came into the world to make intercession with groans that words cannot express. He came into the world to impart to us spiritual gifts. He came into the world to strengthen us with power that we might stand under any circumstance and He came into the world to give us an anointing that in Jesus Christ, we might live and move and have our being and through him we are more than conquerors regardless of the circumstances. Amen, amen and amen. Well, give him praise. And give him glory in this place tonight.

Now when we begin to understand that, then we see what Christ is talking about in Matthew 16:18 and 19. He was getting His people prepared for what He was going to do on the Day of Pentecost. So He gathers the disciples together around Him and He gives them a test. And He says to them, who do people say that I the Son of Man am? They give him all the stock answers. They say, well some folks say you are John the Baptist. Some folks say you are Elijah. Some folks say you are Jeremiah or one of the prophets. Then I think he looked right into the face of Simon Peter.

Now I like Simon Peter. I can identify with Simon Peter. He was always sticking his foot in his mouth. He was always chewing on his sandal, saying the wrong thing at the wrong time in the wrong place. I think that may be why God loved him. He just didn't have any errs. Now

Paul the apostle had a few errs, but he didn't have any errs. He was just down to earth Simon Peter, transparent and open before God.

And then I think He probably looked at Peter and I think He implied, but Peter who do you say that I really am. Well, Peter said, that's easy. I know who you are. You are the Christ, the son of the living God. But then I think that Christ would have implied to Peter, you're not that smart. You don't have that much spiritual ingenuity. You don't have that much spiritual revelation. Flesh and blood has not revealed this to you. But you've learned this from My Father who is in heaven and you are petros, a piece of the rock, but upon Petra, the whole rock, I'm going to build a church and it won't be just any kind of a church, but it will be a church that the gates of hell cannot prevail against. Amen, amen and amen. Well praise God.

Well then we have to see that this covenant was established. And the church was off and running and out of that rag tag group of people, that 120 then who were empowered at Pentecost. We begin to see it unfold until in a world of two billion believers, one billion being Catholic and another billion being Protestant, non Catholic, six hundred and fifty million of them claim to be filled with the power of the Holy Spirit and that number is growing every day because I believe as God raises us up as a covenant people, he's getting us ready for the greatest revival the world has ever known. When that revival sweeps the land then the greatest event that the world will ever know will take place for the Lord himself shall descend from heaven with a shout and the voice from of the ark angel and the trump of God and the dead in Christ shall rise first and we which are alive and remain shall be called together in the clouds to be with the Lord in the air. And so shall we ever be with the Lord and the message is wherefore comfort one another with these words. Amen, amen, and amen. I just feel like praising God. Can you do that with me in this place?

Amen, amen, and amen.

So He said, here's what a covenant church ought to look like and here's what it ought to be. First of all, He says this covenant church functions in faith. Upon this rock, upon the fact that you have faith in me Peter. Upon the fact that you have faith in who I say I am. Upon the fact that your faith has revealed you to Me, Me to you, then it is that I can build My church on that kind of a faith, a church is only a covenant church when it functions on faith. The thing that makes us different from any other group meeting anywhere in the world tonight is the fact that we are people of faith. We are the community of faith and that faith distinguishes us from all else. Faith is more than belief. Faith is more than trust. Faith is more than confidence. When the Bible talks about faith, it's a release of all the God like qualities that are in each one of us. So therefore when we live and function by faith, the church becomes the function of faith.

Hebrews 11:1 says faith is the assurance of things hoped for, the confidence of things unseen. Verse six says, without faith it's impossible to please God. He that comes to God must believe that He is and He's a rewarder of those who diligently seek him. Romans 14:23 says what's not of faith, that's sin. Galatians chapter five verse six says in Christ Jesus it's not circumcision or uncircumcision that means anything. In Christ the only thing that counts is faith expressing itself in love.

In I John five and four says whatsoever is born of God overcomes the world and this is the victory that overcomes the world even our faith. I like that term. Even our faith. Everybody say it with me. Those three words. Even our faith. One more time. Even our faith. That's the distinguishing characteristic of a covenant church. People of a covenant have faith. Now we can't talk about faith without talking about prayer because faith and prayer go together. They are

interlocked. You can't pray without faith and you can't have faith without prayer because that's the way that we communicate with God. That's the way we make known to God that our faith is alive and well. That's why Mark eleven and twenty four says, whatsoever things you desire when you pray, believe that you have them and you shall receive them. Believe, faith and pray. They go together.

Now when we talk about prayer, what are we really talking about? Prayer is more than just mouthing words. It is more than just saying things to God. Faith is God inviting us into that prayer. Prayer is God inviting us into that faith relationship and faith covenant with Him because when He talks about it, He begins to tell us that He wants us to come to that faith part that we're having fellowship with Him. First Corinthians chapter six verse nineteen. And so many people today go through their whole Christian experience and their life of discipleship never really feeling that sense of fellowship with God.

It also means that we really, when we begin to do this, that we participate with Him. We're partners with Him in what He's doing. This is what Paul was talking about in Galatians two and twenty. He said, I am crucified with Christ, nevertheless I live, but yet not I, but as Christ who lives in me. And the life that I now live in the flesh, I live it by the faith of this man of God who loved me and gave Himself for me. So He said, when you have faith and in My covenant, you participate with Me. You are in partnership with Me. But when we have this faith alive through prayer to Him that also means that we represent Him. We cannot represent Him until we live in this function of faith as built upon the rock as we really become a people of prayer and faith as they go together.

In Second Corinthians three eighteen, when you listen to the Philips translation, it says but

all of us who are Christians have no veils on our faces. But we reveal like mirrors the glory of the Lord. And we are transformed at every increasing splendor into His own image. And this transfiguration comes from the Lord, who is the Spirit. Now that means that when we pray, things begin to happen and when we pray in faith, things really begin to happen. When Moses prayed, the Red Sea opened. When Joshua prayed, the sun stood still. When Daniel prayed, the lions fell asleep. When Samson prayed, the heathen temple was destroyed. When Peter prayed, his shadow brought healing. When Paul prayed, the Holy Spirit fell. And when we pray, the demons flee. When we pray, the devil is bound. When we pray, the miracles occur. Because by faith, we can move the mountains. Amen, amen and amen. Well give him praise and give him glory in this place. Hallelujah be to God.

So the first thing we say of this covenant church is it functions in faith. But when you look at our text, the second thing you see is that we're to focus on the founder. Christ said, I will build My church. Now that's a fantastic statement. That may be the most tremendous statement we read in all of the Bible. Christ said, I will build My church. Now I mentioned to you this morning that I've been in the ministry now for fifty one years. This is my fifty first year. Forty two of those years in the pastorate. Thirty seven of those years in one church. When you stay that long in one church, you often refer to it and I've referred to it a hundreds of times as my church. I'm sure that your pastors here refer to this church as their church. You say that I want you to come to my church. I've got news for you tonight. You don't have a church. Hello. You don't have a church. Look over at your neighbor and say, you don't have a church. I don't have a church. There's only one person in this world who has a church and His name is Jesus Christ. He said, I will build My church. Amen. Hallelujah.

Now you see that means that we're not building. We build programs and we make programs that are okay. We have strategies. We have methodologies. We have philosophies. And all of that goes with it. We have doctrine and all that's very important for us to build this institutional church. But while we're building programs and plans, God is building people and the church is made up of people. The church is who the people are. The church is where the people are. The church is what the people do. The church is what the people say. We are the church and Jesus Christ is the head of the church. Amen, amen and amen. Hallelujah be to God.

Now that means what we have to understand is we don't worship the babe of Bethlehem. We don't worship the man of Galilee. We don't worship a man who is hanging on the cross. We don't worship the one who resurrected from the dead. We worship the one who is at the right hand of the Father making intercession for you and me and He is preparing us for the work He has for us to do. And we are the conscience of this world that makes known that Jesus Christ is alive and when the time comes, He is going to rapture us that we can be with Him that where He is we can be also. Amen, amen and amen. You believe that tonight? Give him praise and give him glory.

Now what that says to us is that we have to understand His role. Now many people don't really realize what Christ is doing today. To really see it in the historical, theological and the fullness of its context. For instance, what is Christ doing? When you read the gospels, we see what Christ was doing on the earth. But when you read the book of Hebrews, we see what Christ is doing now. Hello. The book of Hebrews tells us He is our chief priest. He is at the right hand of the father. And Hebrews is a very important book for our times because it tells us the role that

Jesus Christ has. Now sometimes we have to back off. We just have to take a look at where we are and perspective. The reason so many people often are blown apart by the winds of the world, we talk about backsliding, losing out and all of those kinds of things is because we don't understand fully the role that Christ has in our lives. When He says I will build my church, He's talking about building Himself in us individually.

So we have to ask ourselves, why was Christ born? Why did He even come into the world? Why was that even necessary? John chapter one verse eighteen says, no one has ever seen God the father except the one and only begotten son and He is at the right hand of the father and He is to make known to us who God really is. That's why he was born and came into the world. Then we have to ask the question, why did Christ have to die? Galatians one and four tells us He died to save us from our sins to rescue us from this evil world according to the will and the knowledge of God so that we could be saved from this sin. That's why He died. Why did Christ resurrect? First Corinthians fifteen and fourteen says that if Christ is not risen from the dead, then our faith is in vain and our preaching is useless. He came to validate our faith and to empower our preaching. If we didn't have a resurrected Christ, there would be no reason for us to be here.

Well, why did Christ descend to heaven? Why did He go up there? He went up there to be the head of the church so that he could do from heaven through the power of the Holy Spirit what He needed to do as the head of the church. And at the right hand of the father, we read the book of Hebrews, Hebrews chapter four verse fourteen says therefore, since we have a high priest, who has gone to the heavens, Jesus the son of God, let us hold firmly to the faith that we possess. For we do not have a priest who is unable to sympathize with our weaknesses, but we have one who was tempted at every point just as we are, yet without sin. Therefore since then, so

for, we can do certain things. We can come boldly, we can come with confidence into the throne of grace. And we can receive mercy and find grace to help us in the time of need. Now therefore, when we look at the book of Hebrews, and we see what Christ is doing, the great word brings Him up above every other being who has ever been on the face of this earth. Now we're living in a time when Jesus has fallen into bad company. Did you hear me? We're living in a time when folks have forgotten that He is Lord of all. We're living in a time when He is no longer given the place of honor that He really deserves. That's why we're weak. That's why we're malnourished. That's why we don't see the power of God. That's why we don't see his miracles. But when we make him the founder of the church, then the church really becomes the church. Amen, amen, and amen. Well, give him praise and give him glory in this place.

Now what we have to understand, what it really does, is reveal to us who God really is. Now as you know I was many years in the counseling ministry. I counseled with all kinds of people. I used to counsel every year with forty or fifty preachers from all over the country, from all denominations, all sizes, shapes and models. Often I would hear a very distorted view of God. I would ask them what does God mean to you? And I would get back some strange understandings. Maybe if I asked you tonight, who is this God that you worship? You see the founder of this church reveals to us who God really is and he tells us that God is more than the man upstairs. Hello. He is not just some kind of a transcendent theological concept. He gives to us the understanding that the Bible says God is El Ohim. Two thousand five hundred and seventy times or seven hundred and twenty times, it tells us that he is El Ohim, the strong and the mighty one. He is Elyon, the strong and mighty one who demonstrates his power. He is El Roai, the strong and mighty one who sees all things. He is El Olam, the strong and mighty one who is from

everlasting to everlasting. He is El Shaddai, the strong and mighty one who really cares. But six thousand, eight hundred and twenty three times, he reveals to us a God who is Jehovah, the self existent one. The one who reveals Himself. He is Jehovah Jireh, the Lord who provides. He is Jehovah Shama, the Lord who is near. He is the Jehovah Shalom, the Lord who is our peace. He is Jehovah Nicci, the Lord who is our banner. He is Jehovah Raha, the Lord who is our shepherd. He is Jehovah Raffa, the Lord who is our healer. He is Jehovah Sitkinu, the Lord who is our righteousness. He is Jehovah Saboith, the Lord of hosts. No wonder the psalmist said, lift up your heads of ye gates and even be lifted up ye everlasting doors. And the king of glory shall come in. Who is this king of glory? The Lord of hosts strong and mighty. He is the king of glory. Amen, amen and amen. Now's the time we ought to be praising him. We ought to be praising him. He's alive. He's the God of all Israel. He's the creator, sustainer, redeemer and father.

And so He says I'm going to build a church. And I'm going to build a church and in that church, I'm going to reveal to you who my Father really is. So when we talk about a covenant church, it functions in faith. It functions on the founder. Then it fights the fight. The gates of hell shall not prevail against it. Now there are a lot of churches today that don't have to worry about the devil. They're not doing enough for the devil to spend his time with them. Somebody say amen. I mean the devil is not going to mess around with people who aren't doing anything for Christ. He talks about tearing down the gates of hell. He says a church that is really a covenant church fights the fight. It's in spiritual warfare.

Now you have to understand that in the last five years of General Overseer and now in the role that I have, I'm preaching in a different church practically every Sunday. Large churches, small churches, intermediate churches. I go into some churches and say, well they don't have to

worry about the devil here. There's nothing going on here for the devil to have to worry about. Hello. There's a difference between a church and a social club. You do understand that? And some so called churches have never made that differentiation because they don't really get in the spiritual battle. Now when the Bible talks about spiritual warfare, he doesn't talk about the kind of warfare that we can reach out and grab the devil. I'd like to do that. That would be my highest hope to choke him and go ahead and throw him into the fire and let's get it over with, but that's not God's process as we all know.

But when the Bible talks about spiritual warfare, it's an inward battle. Romans seven, a lot of people keep reverting back to Romans seven. And he says there's a spiritual struggle going on inwardly in me. The law of my members is at war with the law of my mind and the law of sin in my members is trying to bring me under domination to the law of sin that's in my members. Who's going to deliver me from this body of death? But thanks be unto God who gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ. There is therefore no condemnation to those who are in Christ Jesus who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit because the law of life in Christ has set us free from the law of sin and death. Amen, amen and amen. You know a lot of folks have not figured that out yet. Because they don't really understand the spiritual battle, but he says it's really a spiritual battle. It's an inward battle, but it's a spiritual battle. When you look at Second Corinthians ten and four, it tells us that what are we to do? We are in spiritual warfare. That we'll be found in the Lord the ability to bring down the strongholds and when we bring down those strongholds, we know that those are spiritual strongholds and when we begin to understand that bringing down of strongholds, we see how we grow in grace and knowledge of Jesus Christ. And when we grow in grace and knowledge of him, the strongholds are broken within us. Hello.

Then he talks about spiritual warfare, he talks about an invisible battle. Ephesians six and twelve. For we wrestle not against flesh and blood, but principalities, powers, rulers of darkness in this present world, spiritual wickedness in high places. It's a faith battle. First Corinthians six and twelve. Fight the good fight of faith for unto thou art called. He has made a good profession before many witnesses. It's a lifestyle battle. Second Timothy two three and four, endure hardness as a good soldier as anyone who serves as a good soldier does not entangle himself with civilian affairs, so he can please his commanding officer. And so Satan is alive and well on the planet earth. Now, he's subtle. He imitates everything that God does. He sows terrors among the wheat. He instigates false doctrine. He tries to pervert the very truth. He has to hinder people from doing the work of God. He tries to blind us to what God is doing on the earth. He tempts us. He allures us. He accuses us. He afflicts us. He undermines us. But we have to understand is that the devil is not omnipotent. He is not omniscient and he is not omnipresent. What we have to understand is he's a liar and a deceiver from the very beginning. We have to understand First John three and eight, Christ said, I've come to destroy the manifest works of the devil. We have to understand First John four and four, He that is in us is greater than he that is in the world. We have to understand there's only one place for Satan. No place for Satan in your mind, no place for Satan in your family, no place for Satan in your home, no place for Satan in your church, no place for Satan in your job, no place for Satan in your business. Romans sixteen and twenty says the God of peace will soon crush Satan under our feet and that's where he belongs. Amen, amen and amen. Well give him praise and give him honor and give him glory.

But you see some people have given up on spiritual warfare and we wonder why we don't have any strength, we don't have any power. A covenant church fights the fight. You know

when I first started in the ministry, I was what, nineteen years old and being reared in the minister's home, I had grown up with preaching all of my life and said to myself, I'll never preach. Serious mistake to ever say that. So I started preaching and had preached around a few times and went to my first revival. My father was in the ministry some fifty or sixty years before he died in 1975. I guess sixty years and he had all kinds of sermons. I'd learned to typed in high school and so he made a deal with me, if I typed all of his sermons, he'd give me a copy of all of them.

So I went to the first revival loaded for bear. I was in Del Barton, West Virginia. The sun shines there three hours a day whether it needs to or not. It's down in this hollow and I suppose W.H. Compton who pastored there fifty sixty years has the longest itinerate of a pastor of anyone, longest itinerary of a pastor of anyone. So I went there and the first night of that revival, I preached on the highways of heaven and which way are you traveling. We never found the highways of heaven and we never learned which way we were traveling. That sermon set back preaching twenty years. It took years for preaching to overcome that one sermon. I went home that night really disgusted and you know I'd always heard about the devil, I had seen some manifestations of it here and there and yonder. But I had never had the honor of being introduced to him personally. When I got home in the bedroom of that little old mining house, shack down there in the parsonage and Satan visited me and I had never been so discouraged or depressed in all of my life. And it was like he came to the edge of the bed and just filled the room with evil. Looked at me and said Paul Walker, you are an absolute idiot. Look at what you've given up. You know you've had an opportunity to be a professional baseball player. You had that little dance band called five hits and a miss and it's got great promises for the future. And here you are in this god forsaken little coal camp and you just preached the worst sermon in the history of

preaching. You are a miserable failure.

And you see that's exactly what the devil wants to say to you. You are a miserable failure. I don't care what your position is. I don't care how important you are. If he can get you to feel like you are a miserable failure, he's got you where he wants you. Now's the time for somebody to say amen. And he had me feeling like a miserable failure and I made a decision in my mind. I'm going to get out of this deal. I'm going to get up at four o'clock in the morning, load my car and I am on the road. Out of here. I'll go get my band back together. I've been offered two hundred fifty dollars a week to take that band to New York then. And I thought I'd get that group back together and we're going. But about the time I got to my lowest ebb in the bedroom next to mine is where the pastor and his wife were sleeping and she began to speak in other tongues and he began to interpret and to come against the devil and to command him to be out of there and to deliver me. And right there, across that little petition, we had a little revival and that revival started in my heart and the devil had to flee and I was filled once more with the fact that you are mine and I've called you to preach and I was in the fight.

Well, I thought I had it made then. Hello. So I went through my father's outlines. I said I'll do a much better sermon the second night and I found the sermon there that looked like it would do the job. It was called the trail of the serpent in the hand of God or the seven dispensations of God's great grace. I didn't know it was a seven part series. Looks like he would have told me. I hit the sermon the next night and man I got on the trail of the serpent, but I sure couldn't find the hand of God and it got worse and it got worse. And I don't know, you start to sweat. When you're really striking out bad, you sweat. You know when you preached as long as I did at Mt. Paran, there were times you just didn't have you're a-games. Used to have a bunch

of little ladies on the front row and when I was struggling, they would go Jesus, Jesus, Jesus, Jesus. What bothered me in that sermon is that the pastor went down and sat on the front pew and went to sleep. He didn't just go to sleep. His head went back and his mouth went open and that's distracting when you're on the trail of the serpent and trying to find the hand of God when the pastor is asleep with his mouth open. That will bother you any time. And I started praying for my own individual rapture. Boom. Take me on. And in the middle of that thing, though, all of a sudden in the back of that little church. It would seat maybe a hundred and fifty, maybe two hundred. There came a blood curdling scream like you've never heard before. It scared the living daylights out of all of us. The pastor woke up. And coming down the aisle was the most disheveled woman you've ever seen and she fell in a heap about half way down the aisle and the people all gathered around her and began to pray and I found out that this was the only town prostitute. They had been trying to get her saved for twenty years. She had been to at least five hundred revivals in that twenty years and this was the first time that she ever made a move. And they prayed her through not only to salvation, but she got filled with the Holy Spirit and the revival was on. At the end of that two weeks, seven members of the first string football team of Del Barton High School had come to Christ and three of them are still preaching today because the devil is a liar and we can overcome him through the power of God in us. Amen, amen and amen. Well give him praise and give him glory in this place. Hallelujah. So when we talk about a covenant church, now it functions in faith, not only does it function, it focuses on the founder, it fights the fight and then what it does is it fulfills the formula. Says I'll give to 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. Now this is the formula. It's the keys to the kingdom. Now the

thing that bothers me a lot today is so many people don't see themselves as kingdom lovers. You live in the kingdom. You're a kingdom person. They ask Christ, where is your kingdom? He says, it's not here. It's not there. Luke 17:21, the kingdom is in you. You are the kingdom. Not a question of whether you want to be or not. If you know Christ and he is alive in your heart, you are the kingdom. You're the kingdom and with that kingdom there are certain keys that he gives to you, certain formulas that can be yours. Romans 14:7, he said, the kingdom is not eating and drinking, but it's righteousness, peace and joy in the Holy Spirit. That's the kingdom. That's why we say the joy of the Lord is our strength. The joy of the Lord is our strength. Why? Because that's the kingdom and have you ever noticed in the New Testament the worst things were the more the people rejoiced. Dumb. Really stupid. But the harder it got, the more persecution there was, the more they praised God. Paul and Silas in jail. Should have moaned and groaned and griped and wined like most people do today. Hello. Good preaching Pastor Walker. Amen, amen, and amen. But what did they do? They had been beaten. Hands and heads in stocks. Paul looks over to Silas and says, let's sing. You talk about Homer and Jethro. None of you ever remember him. You're all too young here. How many of you remember brother Homer and Brother Jethro? We've got some old folks here. I'd like to have heard that duet. Wouldn't you? But they sang hymns to God in the middle of all that mess. You see that's what makes the church the church. The tougher it is, the greater the joy. Hallelujah be to God. I preached here this morning on Acts chapter five. I ran out of time so I left this out. I'm going to put it in now. I hate to prepare it and not preach it. You look at Acts five beginning with verses twelve and you look down through about verse, I mean about twelve or fifteen, you have a subtitle that says, the apostles heal many and things were going great for the apostles. Signs and

wonders. They found favor with the people even though there was certain fear. Yet they found favor with the people. And people brought their sick and laid them in the streets. Peter walked by. His shadow brought healing. And all the sick were healed. Really sounds great, does it not? And you look at about verse seventeen and following and you get another subtitle there and that subtitle says, the apostles persecuted. Now that's an oxymoron, isn't it? Hello. All this power God going on, they are persecuted. Now that's paradoxical. It's contrary to perceived opinion. And what happened was they were out there in the temple courts and they were preaching and the people are getting healed and the San Hedrin and the chief priests and all their associates come and arrest them because they are jealous. The Bible says because they are jealous. Now they arrested them and put them in jail and an angel comes and delivers them and they're out preaching again. This time they arrest them the second time and they threaten to kill them. But Hermelio is raised up by God and becomes their advocate, their lives are saved. So they're flogged and warned not to preach on the penalty of death. Now here is the dumb part. Verse twenty nine, they say, we must obey God rather than man. Hello. You see that's what the gospel is all about. It's contrary to everything you think the way it ought to be. It's upside down. The problem with us is we want to keep it upside right. We must obey God rather than man. Verse thirty two, we are his witnesses and so also as the Holy Spirit whom God has given to those who obey him. Verse forty one, now this just really gets you. They rejoice because they were counted worthy to suffer shame for his name. Hallelujah. Now they had the keys to the kingdom of heaven. That means that when you bind and you share the word, those who do not receive it, they are bound. But when you preach the word, they are loosed when they receive it. We share the word and the word does the job because the word is the strength of God in the world today. Amen, amen, and

amen. Well give him praise and give him glory in this place. And you fulfill the formula. 1972, I was commissioned by the Air Force to go as a consultant to all of our bases in the Pacific. I was away from the pulpit for six weeks. Started out at Edwards Air Force Base in California. Went on to Henderson at Hawaii. Went on to Guam and to the Philippines to Vietnam, to Thailand, to Okinawa, to Japan. My responsibility on each one of those bases was to consult with chaplains and with bad news folders about the boys who were coming home from the Vietnam war. They had been in prison. They had no word from home. Some of their fathers had died or their mothers had died. Their wives had died, their children had died. They had been divorced. All kinds of things had happened during their time of being in prison. Also, helping to prepare for the wounded to come home. We rigged up our C130's with special hospital equipment to be able to bring them back to the central hospital in Hawaii and so it was really an exciting time for me. And I was in Thailand at Utipoho and had the privilege if you want to call it that to be in the tower for the last two bombing raids that we made on Vietnam. The war didn't wind down for several months after that, but it was coming to a close and those were the last two bomber raids. Thirty two bombers. A bomber would take off and then a fuel plane. A bomber would take off and then a fuel plane. A bomber would take off and then a fuel plane and they would rendezvous with our fighter planes that came out of the Philippines and they would go make their raids and those two last raids, I was commissioned to speak to the crews before they got on their ships. And they knew there would be at least four or five of the group that would be shot down and they wouldn't come back. It may have been the most challenging time that I've ever had to share. There was dead silence and not a smile in the place. To share with them before they got on their planes and took off. Well I was with the chaplains one evening in Utipa in Thailand. We went to

town to eat in a restaurant and there were three chaplains and I there and a young man came in. He said, you see that young man, he's captain. He's a pilot. Said he was shot down and for nine months he was in a tiger cage. A six by nine bamboo cage. He was a prisoner of war. He said when the allies came and invaded that camp instead of taking prisoners as they usually do or killing them, the people just ran off and left them so they were saved. Said, he's got a great testimony. Would you like to hear it? He was there on temporary duty just as a consultant. He wasn't flying anymore on raids. So he sat down and I asked him, how did you stand it in that tiger cage? Sometimes they were tortured. Sometimes they were starved. Suffered from all kinds of illnesses. Almost died three or four times. He said, one hour a day we were let out of the cage and we were able to congregate and walk around. Said there were about thirty of us, pilots and crew people had been shot down and been captured. And said, we didn't have a Bible, but we made up a Bible. We remembered all the Scriptures we could remember and later we found out a lot of things we had in the Bible weren't in Scripture but they sure sounded good. So we memorized it. Then when they tortured us, we would say those Scriptures to ourselves. When they starved us, we would say those Scriptures to ourselves. When they interrogated us, we would say those Scriptures to ourselves. And that's how we survived. He said, he called it the POW Bible. I said you mean the prisoner of war Bible. He said, no, I mean the power of the word Bible. Now I'll give you the keys to the kingdom. Whatever you bind on earth will be bound in heaven. Whatever you loose on earth will be loosed on heaven. Shall we pray? Hallelujah. Hallelujah. I feel God's spirit in this evening and I just feel led of the Lord that there are those of you that may be going through a difficult time and you may be in covenant with God and the covenant relationship but you need to break through. You need to go into the next

dimension. You either come to that place where you can really function in faith, you can focus on the founder. You need to come to that place where that you can fight the fight and know that you're the victor, where you can fulfill the formula, where the keys of the kingdom are yours and they're in your heart and in your life and you can truly be more than a conqueror. And I think it would be in order for us tonight to pray. Maybe it would be perhaps the best thing for us tonight to do is to have a self prayer. To make it a personal prayer that we pray God help me to be the kind of a person to lives out your kingdom in the world. That the keys to the kingdom can be in my life fully and completely.