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“A Covenant Church in Contemporary Times”

Well let's give the Lord praise. Shall we? He's worthy of all of our praise. Amen. He is worthy of all of our praise tonight. I want to know, was that good worship music or was that good worship music? Thank you very much. Well done, Kevin. Appreciate that. I just want to say to all of you what a wonderful week it has been for me to have the opportunity to come and share in California again. It always brings back a lot of memories that go way back because we're looking back at the fifties and when I beat up and down these roads about forty to fifty thousand miles a year and wore out two automobiles for more reasons than one. Some are reasons that you know about. I hold the record in California. I got eleven speeding tickets in one year. It's really hard to drive without your license. I'm saying you can read between the lines there, can you not? I've slowed down somewhat in there because I just didn't have anymore money to pay the fines. So that will do a lot for you. But it's really been a joy to be with you this week and I want to thank each of you for the opportunity to share and the kind of reminisces that we shared in the fellowship and partnership that you brought to this meeting. Now we've been giving praise to a lot of people, but I think you have a great deal of appreciation and gratitude for your administrative bishop, your state overseer. Do you not? Well let's hear it for Dr. Lynn Stone.

Stand up Dr. Stone. Let's hear it. Amen. Yes. He and Mary Ruth have certainly made an impact on the west and I know their heart for ministers and pastors and their desire to help all of us to be more efficiently trained for the kingdom of God to do better jobs in the kingdom of God. It's good to be with Dr. McMahan during this week and we were blessed by his ministry today and challenged by Grant Thesan and we were blessed by what God has done through the week. It's been a good week for me to just kind of lay back and be a part of this and I thank God for it. Now I know this is the last night of the campmeeting. The last day, the great day of the feast, the Bible talks about. And I know some of you are on G, for go and you've got everything ready to roll out of here. And you're probably wondering if he's going to be long-winded or short winded tonight. And some of you are praying for a short winded sermon, but some of you have moved into your long winded positions. I'm kind of reminded of the mother who had a little boy in church one time and he got restless and bored with the proceedings during the service and was creating a disturbance. And people were looking and people were glancing and people were making it known they weren't too happy about his behavior. So she tried to get him quieted down by looking at things around the sanctuary. And this was a historical liturgical church, so she pointed out the stain glassed windows and pointed out the hanging chandeliers and pointed out the pipes to the pipe organ on the place of the chancel. And he looked up there and spied three flags. He said, mother what are those three flags for? Well, she said, son that flag on the left, said, that's the Christian flag. That flag in the center, that's the American flag. And that flag on the right is in honor of the boys who died in the service. He said, in which service did they die? The morning or the evening service? Now hopefully we'll have no deaths here this evening and you can feel free to keep everybody awake that you can think about. And tonight we're

challenged more so than any church in modern history. In fact, in all of church history since the beginning of time since Pentecost, we have the greatest challenge and the greatest responsibility that any church has ever had. Namely because we believe that Jesus is coming soon. Do we not? And we are challenged in this nation more so than any church has ever been challenged in this nation because the fastest growing religion in America is Islam. Mormonism doubles every fifteen years. And we are doing our best in evangelical circles and Pentecostal circles just to survive. That means that we've got to take a hard look at who we are and where we're going and what we're doing. Somebody say, amen. And we come together like this and it's a great wonderful time for us to be lifted up in praise and worship and that's very, very necessary in this day that we can have the kind of strength we need to face what we have to face each day head on with the power of God in our lives. But we have to learn that we are a covenant people. And that we're not in this by ourselves and being a covenant people, I think it's important for us to take a look tonight at the fact at being a covenant church in contemporary times. A covenant church in contemporary times. In Matthew chapter sixteen verses eighteen and nineteen is where we'll find our text for the evening, a very familiar text that you have heard many times, and that you've heard preached about many times, but is really the heart of what God is calling us to do. Matthew chapter sixteen verses eighteen and nineteen. Where Jesus Christ says to his disciples at the foot in Caesarea Philippi at the foot of Mt. Herman, he says to them, upon this rock, I will build my church and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it. And I will give to you the keys to the kingdom of heaven and 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 for your spirit that hovers in this place tonight. I thank you for the fact that we have been raised up by your Holy

Spirit to sit in heavenly places with you. Now I pray that you would help us to focus so that when the time comes for us to truly be the church and leave this place, that we'll be the church in a greater measure than ever before. I pray tonight that every pastor would be enriched and inspired and every lay person that is here tonight would be brought into a new knowledge of who you are by your grace which is always sufficient. So may your anointing rest upon the words that are spoken that they would be the words that you would have spoken and I ask it and pray it in Jesus' name and for his sake and amen. Perhaps, the most important question that we would ask tonight is, what is God doing in the world today? If I were to ask each of you individually, I would probably get a variety of different answers. But I think most of us would agree that what God is doing in the world today is confirming the covenant that he has made with his people. God made a covenant with Abraham and God made a covenant with Israel and God made a covenant with the spiritual church which is spiritual Israel that we are a part of today. When we use this word covenant, we know that, that is really what the Bible is. We use the term in the Old Testament and it is really the old covenant. And we use the term New Testament and it is really the new covenant. And whatever happened in the old covenant was a shadow and fore bearer to bring us into all that Christ is in the world today in the new covenant. So what is God doing in the world today? He's confirming the covenant that he has made with his people. He's confirming the covenant that he made with Eve and he's crushing the head of that old serpent called Satan. He's confirming the covenant that he made with Noah and he's keeping the rainbow in the sky. He's confirming the covenant that he made with Abraham and he's restoring his people, Israel. He's confirming the covenant that he made with Moses and he's keeping all of his precious promises. He's confirming the covenant that he made with David and he's establishing

his throne forever. And he's confirming the covenant that he made with Christ and he's establishing a church and the gates of hell cannot prevail against it. You believe that? Give him praise and give him glory in this place this evening. That then brings up the question of what is the church? When we use this term church, what are we talking about? We know what we think we mean when we talk about the church, but I'm wondering if that's always what God means. When God talks about the church, he may have something very different in mind than what we are thinking about in this modern age. If we look into the New Testament, there is certain Greek words that God has given to us that give to us an understanding of what he sees the church as being. The church is ecclesia, those who are called out of the world into fellowship with Christ. The church is laos, the people of God. The church is litergia, the work of the people of God. The church is coinanea, the fellowship of the Holy Spirit. And the church is the karuso, those who go back into the world and proclaim repent for the kingdom of heaven is at hand. So when God talks about the church, it is more than a denomination. It is more than an institution. It is more than an organization. It is more than a geographical location. It is more than just a group of people who meet to worship. When God talks about the church, he talks about those people who have been called out of the world into fellowship with Christ to become the people of God, to do the work of the people of God, as the fellowship of the Holy Spirit and go back into the world to proclaim the greatest message that the world has ever known, repent for the kingdom of heaven is at hand. That's the work of the church. Well give him praise and give him glory here tonight. That's what Paul the apostle was talking about in the book of Ephesians when he talks about the church and he tells us who we are. In chapter one, we are the body of Christ. In chapter two, we are the temple of Christ. In chapter three, we are the revelation of Christ. In chapter four, we are

the new humanity of Christ. In chapter five, we are the bride of Christ. But in chapter six, we are the army of Christ. And what makes us different than any church in modern history is the fact that we are being raised up as a mighty army and God is mobilizing us to go into the territory of Satan, to tear down the gates of hell, and bring back into his kingdom those things that Satan has tried to steal because he that is in us is greater than he that is in the world. Well give him praise and give him glory for he is worthy of all of our praise and glory. And this is what Jesus had in mind when he sat down that day with his disciples and he asked them a very important question. He said, whom do men say that I the son of man am? And they gave him all of the stock answers. They said, well some people say that you're John the Baptist. Some people say that you're Elijah. Some say, you're Jeremiah. Some say that you're one of the prophets. But then I think he looked right straight in the eyes of Simon Peter. I like Simon Peter. I can identify with Simon Peter. He was always sticking his foot in his mouth. He was always saying the wrong thing at the wrong time. But I think Jesus Christ had a special feeling for Simon Peter because he was so open. He was so transparent. He didn't play any games. Now I know that sometimes the apostle Paul gets higher billing than the apostle Peter, but when you read the New Testament, there's more said about the apostle Peter than there is the apostle Paul. And I think Christ looked at him and intimated but, who do you say that I am, Simon Peter? And he said, I know who you are. You are the son of the living God. You are the Christ, the son of the living God. And I think that Christ must have looked at him and said, but Peter you're not that smart. You just don't have that high of IQ. You're just not able to come up with that answer. Flesh and blood has not revealed this to you, but you've gotten that revelation from my heavenly father and you are petras, a piece of the rock. And upon the Petra, the whole rock, I'm going to build a church and

it's going to be a church that the gates of hell cannot prevail against. Now give him praise and give him glory. Hallelujah be to God. Amen and amen. So then he started the covenant church. That's where the church had its inception. Now it had its inauguration on the day of Pentecost. But it had its beginning right there at the foot of Mt. Herman at Caesarea Philippi probably in a little eucalyptus grove. I've been to Israel some twenty eight times. We've taken close to three thousand people to Israel ever since the early seventies. And I've watched Israel develop and seen God prophetically bring it to pass. On numerous occasions, I have been in what could have been the spot or what could have been the place. I remember preaching there on one occasion and we were talking to the group that we had. We had about seventy five or eighty people there and I was talking about this very Scripture and I noticed a man who had a long beard came over and got in the group. And he listened to the message and then he left and disappeared. We went to lunch at the cafeteria at that particular site and a man came over to me and said, do you know something miraculous just happened. Said, I've got a man with me on my group whose wife is a Christian, but he has been an agnostic and for some reason, he just wandered over and listened to what you had to say today and God got a hold of his heart and I just led him to Jesus Christ right back here under a tree. Because we know that God is able to do exceeding abundantly above all we ask or even think. Do you believe that? Well give him praise and give him glory. Hallelujah. Hallelujah. That is the inception of the church at that time. So what is he talking about if we're going to be a covenant church? A covenant is a partnership. A covenant is an agreement. A covenant is a contract and when we come together, we are coming to him in agreement, in partnership and in contract. It's a mutual sense of obligation. It's a mutual responsibility. It's a sense of mutuality. And first of all, Christ says, if you're going to be a covenant church, you have

to learn how to function in faith. Upon this rock, I will build my church. And upon this rock, he's saying that upon the fact that you recognize by faith who I am. Now what makes us different tonight is that we are a community of faith. How many of you know that? We live in a world of doubt. But we are people who have been called to faith. And the thing that makes our fellowships different. The thing that makes us worship every Sunday morning or Sunday night or whenever we worship is the fact that we are people of faith. We need to learn once again that without faith, that means we live in fear. Now the learning theorists tell us that with every stimulus that we encounter everyday, we react to that stimulus either in faith or in fear. And that's why so much of the world is under duress today. They've never learned how to respond in faith, but when you have a church that is a covenant of faith, then that means that wherever we go, whatever we do, whatever happens, we know that we are able to do that which God has called us to do regardless of the circumstances because he always has the answer. Amen, amen and amen. Well give him praise and glory. But you see you cannot talk about faith until you understand faith and you can't understand faith unless you understand hope. In First Corinthians thirteen and thirteen, it says, now remains faith, hope and love. But the greatest of these is love and that's a trilogy that goes together. You can't have faith if you don't have hope. And you can't have hope if you don't have faith. And you can't have faith and hope if you don't have love. All three of those things have to work together. Faith is not just acquiescence. It's not just sense of belief. It's not just a sense of confidence. It is a release of the very power God has put in us by the resurrection of Jesus Christ. Because we live in resurrection power when we have the Holy Spirit. Amen, amen and amen. And that's why the Bible tells us that we have to understand hope. In Romans chapter eight verse fourteen, in Romans chapter four verse eighteen, it tells us

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that we believe in hope as Abraham believed in hope. Romans chapter eight verse twenty four tells us that we are saved by hope. And Romans chapter fifteen verse four, it says, through the confidence in the Scriptures, we have hope. In First Peter three and fifteen, it says, we're to give witness to the fact of the hope that is within us, with meekness and in fear. In First John three and three, we are purified by hope. That's why Hebrews eleven and one says that faith is the assurance of things hoped for and the evidence of things not seen. In verse six, it says, without faith it is impossible to please God. And he that comes to God must believe that he is. When we believe that he is, then he is the rewarder of those who diligently seek him. In Romans fourteen twenty three, it says, whatsoever is not of faith, it is sin. In Galatians five and six, it says in Christ it's not circumcision or uncircumcision that means anything. The only thing that counts is expressing love through faith. And we express that faith in love. In First John five and four, it says, whatsoever is born of God overcomes the world and this is the victory that overcomes the world even our faith. Amen, amen and amen. Well give God praise and give him glory in this place. Hallelujah be to God. And we start with this function of faith. Upon this rock. I want everybody to say those three words with me please. Even our faith. Say it together. Even our faith. One more time. Even our faith. Now you know faith works in a lot of ways. And when we come together as a body of believers and we have faith and we have hope and we have love that distinguishes us from any other group that is meeting in the world. A church that does not have faith, does not have hope, does not have love, is a church where God really can't do his fullest. But when we come together in faith and hope and love, then God begins to work in marvelous ways. When we begin to see that, then we understand that we are a covenant people that function in faith. Speaking of Israel, one year several years ago. Now I guess it's been about

eight or ten years ago. We took one of our choirs to Israel to sing on Christmas Eve at Bethlehem Square on Christmas Eve and the great service that they have there. So we had about two hundred and sixty five members of the choir and some other folks went with us. There were about three hundred and ten people. We had a lady that went along that was a Catholic in background. She was dying with the cancer. They had only given her about six months to live. But she felt as though she had come into our church, she had been filled with the Holy Spirit and she had found the Lord real in her life. And she thought if I could just get to that Christmas Eve service at the church of the nativity in Bethlehem. If I could get to that Catholic service somehow, God would heal me. She said, do you think that you could work it out that I could get into that service? Because you only get in there by ticket only. So we went to Bethlehem Square with our choir. We sang that night. There were about two thousand people gathered in the square. And the Lord seemed to honor what our singing was. And then they had the service in the church. And there were three churches there that were having simultaneous church, the Greek orthodox, the Catholic and then there's a Protestant church nearby where they were having these services going on. Many of them internationally televised. But they were so crowded, she couldn't get anywhere near. And she was so disappointed. She had a nurse with her looking after her because this was probably going to be her last trip unless something miraculous happened. But the next day after Christmas, we visited the garden tomb. Now if you've never been to Israel, then you may not understand what I'm talking about. But if you've been there, there's the Garden Tomb with a tomb that was just like a tomb in which Christ was buried and then resurrected from the dead. We don't know if it was the same tomb or not, but we do know it was a tomb just like that. And when you look at it geographically and demographically, it could very

well have been that very tomb. But it's a beautiful place. We were having a service and we were having communion. Where we were sitting, you could look down and see that open tomb. That is a wonderful experience. My father, who was a minister for many, many years, who only started sixty seven churches during his lifetime, we took him to the Garden tomb. I couldn't get him out of the tomb. He would just go back and forth and back and forth. We all got on the bus and I couldn't find my dad. I asked my mother, I said, where is Dad? She said, I don't know. I went back and he was still in the tomb. It had made such an impression on him. So we were having communion and while we were serving communion, all of a sudden, I heard a commotion in the back of the group. And a voice that kept getting louder and louder and louder. And all of a sudden, I recognized what was being said and this woman stood up with both hands in the air and said, I am healed. I am healed. I am healed. I am healed. Well we all rejoiced with her. But you know doubting Thomas here. I was really concerned, maybe she got caught up in the excitement. Maybe she got caught up in the enthusiasm. Maybe she got caught up in the setting and I'd hate for her to go back to the states and find out that she wasn't healed of this cancer and that would be disastrous and that would be so disappointing and discouraging. I did everything in my power to kind of dampen her feeling. So I said, now when you get back, I want you to go to the doctor and as soon as you go to the doctor, you give me the results. Well I didn't hear anything from her for over a month and I thought, oh my goodness, I hope that she is not given up the ghost so to speak. Then I got a call from her one day. She said, I just got out of the hospital. They've been running tests on me for nearly ten days and they are baffled. Said, they've gathered around my bed and said, we don't understand this. There's not a sign of cancer in your body. This must be one of those miracles that we hear your pastor preach about on television. And that's not the

miracle the pastor preaches about. That's the miracle that comes from God almighty because we are a community of faith and by our faith we see God work. Amen, amen and amen. Well give him praise and give him glory in this place. You see it's that covenant of faith. Upon this rock. But then we have to understand that not only do we function in faith, but we've got to focus on the founder. Christ said, I will build my church. Now that is a fantastic statement that only he has the authority to really make. Now when you really understand that, that gives you a whole new understanding about the church. Now I pastored in Atlanta for thirty seven years. We had twelve thousand members in that church. We had one church in five locations. I suppose several thousands of times, I've referred to that Atlanta church as my church. I would imagine every pastor here has referred to the church that he or she pastors as his or her church. I would imagine all of you persons who belong to certain churches, you've said that's my church. I know this choir has said, I want you to come to my church. Well I've got bad news for you tonight. You don't have a church. Did you hear me? You don't have a church. I don't have a church. When we start thinking we've got a church, that's when we start making a real mess. There's only one founder of the church who is qualified to say, my church and that's Jesus Christ who says, I will build my church. Amen. Hallelujah be to God. Well praise him in this place. Praise him in this place. That's our problem now too many people saying, it's my church. Now we know there's a lot of different delivery systems in God's church. One delivery system is the Church of God. Another is the Assembly of God. Another one might be the Pentecostal Holiness, Baptist, Methodist, Presbyterian, you name it. What they may be, there all delivery systems. But we made the delivery system. Did you hear me? We made the delivery system. When God looks at the church, he's only got one church. Did you hear me? When God looks at the church, he's

only got one church. That means there are no little churches. There are no medium sized churches. There are no big churches. There's no mega churches. We make those categories. We talk about little churches and medium churches and big churches. We've got categories upon categories in the Church of God. But when God looks at the church, he's only got one church and that church is made up of born again believers all over this world and that's the church that the gates of hell cannot prevail against. Now give him praise and give him glory in this place. You don't have a church. Look over at your neighbor and say, you don't have a church. So quit worrying. God's going to look after his church. I see pastors all hung about their church. You ain't got no church, so quit worrying about it. And let God help you pastor your church. Amen, amen and amen. How's that for good grammar? Now's the time to give God praise and give him glory. He's the founder of the church. We don't focus on the program. We focus on the person. And when we get our eyes on ourselves and what we're doing, get all caught up in numerology and what category and where we are in the hierarchy of the state paper. God could care less about all that. He wants to see what you're doing in the lives of people because he builds people. We build buildings and we build programs and we build plans and God says I want you to get in the people business. Is this alright? Is this alright? Well give him praise and give him glory. Now that will change your whole idea of ministry. You know I really did such a good job when I went to Atlanta from 1960 to 1962 that I came down with ulcers. Isn't that wonderful? You know people talk about burning out for Jesus. That is absolutely stupid. God's not going to get a thing out of you burning out for Jesus. He doesn't get any glory out of you being sick, glory out of you being in the hospital, glory in you having a nervous breakdown, glory out of you living in anxiety and worry and depression. Come on now. And what bothers me so very much is that

comes out of a sense that this is mine. It belongs to me. And I was in this category. I had ulcers. I couldn't sleep at night. I had to sit up at night to sleep. The doctor told me if you don't get out of this stress load that you're in, you're probably going to have to give up your ministry because you can't go this way much longer. And one Sunday morning during communion service, the elders were passing out communion and a couple of them came up to me and said, pastor we think we ought to pray for you knowing your condition. And I was sitting on the platform. And so they gave me the elements and then they just took over the service and called the church to prayer. And that church began to pray and those elders anointed me with oil and laid their hands on me. They didn't have any ordination certificate. They didn't have any exhorter's certificate. They didn't have any license certificate. They had never been to Bible school. Are you all starting to get the drift here? Are you starting to get the drift here? Isn't there something in the book about the universal priesthood of believers? Isn't there something in the book that each one of us has access to the throne of God? You don't have to have a lot of props and people helping you to get there? Isn't there something about that? And they laid their hands on me and the Holy Spirit struck me and the power of God went through my very being. I went back to the doctor the next week, went through all the x-rays and found out that my ulcers were all gone. I've not had a touch of that since that time since 1962 because Christ said, I will build my church and I had to decide that it was his church and it is not my church. Hallelujah. Hallelujah. Hallelujah. But we're so hung up, so hung up. We put God in our little boxes and we stack him on our little shelves and then we wonder why nothing happens. It's time for you to kick out the traces and understand that the head of the church is Jesus Christ himself and it's not Cleveland, Tennessee. Is this alright State Overseer? He's not getting very excited about it. Did you notice that? We

don't worship the babe in Bethlehem. We don't worship the man of Galilee. We don't worship the man hanging on a cross. We don't worship the one who was resurrected from the dead. We worship the one who is at the right hand of the father making intercession for the saints.

Hallelujah be to God. That's why the book of Hebrews that Dr. McMahan has been preaching about is so important because it tells us what Christ is doing now. You read the gospels, that's what he did while he was on earth. You read Hebrews, that's what he's doing now and he's making intercession for you and making intercession for me. He is the high priest and he is the founder of the church and that is why I can say, upon this rock, I will build my church and the gates of hell cannot prevail against that. When you read Colossians chapter one, you know that he is the representative image of the invisible God. He is the first born of all creation. He is the creator of all things. He was before all things. In him, all things do consist. And he is the head of the church. And all things, he has the supremacy. And the wonderful thing about it is, that he reconciles all things to himself. No wonder Matthew said, he's the king of the messiah. Mark said, he's the wonder worker. Luke said, he's the friend of publicans and sinners. John said, he's the lamb of God that takes away the sin of the world. Acts says, he's the risen Lord. Romans says, he's a peacemaker. When we get to Corinthians, it says, he's the lord of glory. Galatians says he is the liberator. Ephesians says he is the supreme prize and life struggle. Philippians says he is the goal of character. Colossians says he's the head of the church. Thessalonians says he is the Lord himself who descends from heaven with a shout. Timothy says he's the only judge. Titus says he's the redeemer. Philemon says he's the heavenly kinsmen. Hebrews tells us that he is our high priest. James says he is our healer. Peter says that he is the chief shepherd. John says he is the advocate. Jude says he's coming with ten thousand of his saints. John the revelator says

he's alpha and omega, the beginning and the ending, he's the lion of the tribe of Judah. He's king of kings and lord of lords and we say, even so come Lord Jesus. Amen and amen and he's the head of the church. He's the head of the church. Well praise him in this place. Give him praise in this place. He is worthy of our praise. Hallelujah be to God. Hallelujah. And I just took a burden off of your back. You don't have to get all caught up in that ego stuff of how proud you are of what you're doing or what you're not doing. God could care less about that. He wants to know what's going on in the hearts of my people that I've made you a shepherd over and you can get out of worrying about them. Let him do the worrying and you do the work. Amen, amen and amen. Now bless God this is good preaching whether you like it or not. Amen. Praise God in this place. Praise God in this place. So a covenant church functions in faith, focuses on the founder. Then it fights the fight. And some churches don't have to worry about this. They're not doing enough for the devil to bother them. He's not going to mess with you if you're in your comfort zone. He's not going to mess with you if there's nothing going on that's disrupting his plan. The gates of hell shall not prevail against it. When we talk about the fight of fight, you know the other night I talked about spiritual warfare, but we know that the devil is alive on the planet earth. Do we not? We do understand that? We're aware that he's making his last ditch stand and what we have to understand is what the devil uses are the things in our own lives. He uses defeat. He uses discouragement. He uses depression. He uses disasters, physical, emotional, financial. He uses demons to try to detour us from what God would have us to be. We are created in the image of God. Satan wants to take us away from the image of God. He wants to sit on God's throne. He wants to dislodge God. He tried that once. Was kicked out of heaven. Showed up in the Garden of Eden. And we've had a mess ever since. When I get to

heaven, I want to find Adam and Eve. There are three people I want to find when I get to heaven and give a piece of my mind. Adam and Eve and anonymous. When I get to heaven, if I can just find anonymous and ask God to let me backslide for about fifteen minutes, I'll appreciate it. You need to be General Overseer if you want to learn about anonymous. I don't know if he's one or legion, but he's around. Let me tell you that. But what Satan does, see, is he imitates everything that God does, he has a counterfeit for it. He sows tears among the wheat. He instigates false doctrine. He tries to pervert the truth. He tries to hinder us from doing the work that God would have us to do. He tries to blind us to what truth really is. That's why we get into so many errs, and we have so many problems. You get all hung up about the problems you got in your church, read the New Testament. I don't know of a church in the New Testament I would have liked to have pastored. I sure wouldn't have wanted Corinth. You talk about a mess, now they had a mess. It would have taken a whole lot of investigating committees to have got Corinth straightened out. Somebody say amen. Are you getting the picture here? You know we whine and gripe so much until I know that God gets tired of our whining and griping. We ought to be just thankful that we have a place to preach and let God be God and do the work that God calls us to do and stop the whining and the griping. Amen, amen and amen. Good preaching Pastor Walker. Good preaching Pastor Walker. Give him praise and glory. So Satan comes at you that way. He attacks us. He tempts us. He allures us. He comes as an angel of light. He gets us at our most vulnerable point. You know I'm in my fifty first year of ministry. And I started back in the dark ages. I grew up in a minister's home as most of you know. And so I went off to Lee College and got called to preach in a revival that lasted fifty seven hours. So I had spoken around at various places. Went to my first revival. I was eighteen years old. Went to my first revival in

a place called Del Barton, West Virginia. In the middle of the mountains. Daylight was there at least three hours a day if you were lucky. But it was a good strong church. The man who pastored there must have stayed there sixty years, W.H. Compton. So I went to that first revival and I had spoken here, there and yonder. I'd had public speaking in high school. I knew something about putting a speech together. I had just come out of my first year of junior college. So I should know something. Right? My father had been preaching all those years and he had all those outlines and he made a deal with me. If I would type all of his outlines, he would give me copies of them. I figured I wouldn't have to prepare a sermon for several years. So we went to that service that first night and I preached on the highways of life and which way are you traveling. We never found the highways of life and we never did find out which way we were traveling. That sermon set preaching back at least twenty years all over the world. I was staying in the parsonage, a little old mining house and I went in that night and went to bed and man, was I discouraged. And the devil showed up. Evil came into that room and started talking to me and said, Walker, you are an idiot. You had a good dance band called five hits and a miss. And they just invited you, even though you had gone off to college and left it there and you had some new personnel, but they wanted you to go to New York where they had a gig and it would have paid you back then two hundred and fifty dollars a week and here you are in this God forsaken place preaching like an idiot. You had an opportunity to play professional baseball and you turned down a two thousand dollar bonus for the Old Brooklyn Dodgers and fifty bucks a week at a farm club and you're in this place preaching like that. And I made up my mind about that time with that evil presence. What I'm going to do, I'm going to get up before daylight and get out of this place, get in my car and head out of here. Anybody know, anybody ever been in this case or are

all of you just on the mountain top all the time? You just jump from Mt. Shasta to Mt. Herman. Us Pentecostals, we play such games with each other. It's like something is bad if I feel human. Look over at your neighbor and say, it's okay to be human. It's okay for you to be human. This will take a great load off of your shoulders. So about that time when I had made up my mind, right in the next room was the pastor and his wife and the Holy Spirit spoke to that woman and she began to speak in tongues and he started interpreting it and rebuking the devil and telling me what I needed to do. And where the devil was, suddenly the light of glory filled the room and the whole scene changed. Does anybody know what I'm talking about? And I was rejuvenating right then. So I thought, oh I've got this thing now. So I went through the outlines and I found an outline there on the seven dispensations of God's grace with the hand of God and the trail of the serpent. I did not know that it was a seven message series. The next night, man I got on the trail of the serpent, but we never found the hand of God. I can tell you that. And what made it so bad is that the pastor went down and sat on the front bench and he fell asleep. Now I can handle that alright, but his head went back and his mouth came open. It really was distracting. I'm having enough problem. You know how it is. You start to sweat and cotton mouth and you start praying for your own private rapture. Just somehow Lord if you just take me on, you can leave the rest of these folks, but take me on and get me out of this place. What always bothered me when I was struggling preaching, too, I used to have a bunch of little old ladies down on the second pew and they would start going, Jesus, Jesus, Jesus, Jesus, Jesus. I wanted to slap everyone of them, but it would not have been good PR. It was terrible. I even start sweating now just thinking about it. In the middle of that sermon, however, all of a sudden in the back pew, there came a scream like a Comanche Indian. It scared all of us nearly to death and the

pastor woke up. And a woman came out of that back pew and started down the center aisle and fell in a heap in the middle of the aisle and that whole church rushed to her and they laid hands on her and began to pray and she didn't only get saved, she got filled with the Holy Ghost sitting right there. And I'm standing up there wondering how in the world did this happen? And that was that little old town's prostitute for about twenty five years. They had been trying to get that woman saved for twenty five years. They had tried to do everything in the world and she got saved and let me tell you something, the revival was on. The revival was on. I stayed in that place for two weeks and at the end of that two weeks, seven members of the first string football team in that town got saved and filled with the Holy Spirit and three of them preach in the Church of God today and God has used their ministries because we know that the gates of hell cannot prevail against it. Amen. Hallelujah be to God. Well give God praise and give him glory in this place. Give him glory in this place. Give him glory in this place. Hallelujah be to God. There are some things we've got to understand. The devil is not omnipotent. The devil is not omniscient. The devil is not omnipresent. The devil is a defeated foe. The apostle John says, he that is in us is greater than he that is in the world. Christ said, I've come to destroy the manifest works of the devil. The devil has no place in your mind. The devil has no place in your home. The devil has no place in your church. The devil has no place in your business. There's only one place for the devil. Romans sixteen and twenty, the God of peace will crush him under your feet because that is where he belongs. Amen, amen and amen. Let the people of God praise him in this place. Let the people of God praise him in this place. Hallelujah be to God. So we fight the fight. So the covenant church functions in faith. It focuses on the founder. It fights the fight and it fulfills the formula. I'll give to you the keys to the kingdom of heaven. And whatever you bind on earth is

going to be bound in heaven. Whatever you loose on earth is going to be loosed in heaven. Now that's a great deal of power. Now what that really means is that we're not little gods just going around making people be things. It means that we have been given the word of the living God and when we spread the word, people have to respond. The word is powerful as a sharp two edged sword. How many of you know that? And see we seek it so matter of factly. You don't have any idea what your ministry is doing. You don't have any idea of how many people you have touched. You don't have any idea of what happens when you share the word. You can't count all the times. God's got the calculator. You don't even need the calculator. Whoa, whoa, whoa. You have no idea. My father one time, they went into a little town in South Dakota, well Fargo, to be exact. I think it was South Dakota or is that North Dakota? Is that North Dakota? Okay. I was born in North Dakota. I ought to remember that. How do you know that Oliver? Oh you were out there, weren't you Oliver? I don't know how a Samoan could ever stand North Dakota, but you did. They held a week revival. They spent two thousand dollars on that tent meeting. Nobody got saved and it was a big bust. They packed everything. And everybody wrote it off as a bad deal. We were in a campmeeting some twenty years later in the Dakotas at the old campground. And there was a man who came up to my father after he preached and said, I know you don't know me, but I know you because I was the twelve year old boy that got saved that night in Fargo and I now pastor a church in California of over one thousand members. Can somebody say amen here? Can somebody say amen? Let's give him praise and let's give him honor and let's give him glory. Are you getting the picture here? Are you getting the picture? We like to sell ourselves so short, but you can't measure. God is doing the measuring. God is doing the measuring. You never know what your words are going to do. When I was the

General Overseer and we were doing those reach twenty one rallies and there were one night after night and I was dead dog tired and I had to go Cincinnati for a rally and so I got on the plane and I got enough frequent flyer points to ride first class and so I just prayed, God put me on this plane and I don't want anyone to sit by me. I'm too dead dog tired. I don't feel like messing with anybody. Now don't look so pious. You have felt that way sometimes too. I sat down and got settled in and here came a lady who set beside me. And she said, hello and I just kind of grunted. We got taxiing out and she said, now, sir, don't feel bad if when we start up, I throw my arms around your neck. Because I'm scared to death on these planes. When they take off, sometimes I just impulsively reach to get security. So please, please understand. I thought, oh God. And she looked at me and she said, by the way, don't I know you? Oh yeah you're on television. I've heard you preach. I want to talk to you. I thought man, I need this like I need a hole in the head. She said, you know, I've never been able to become a Christian. I hear you preaching about being born again. I hear your choir sing. I see your people worship. It looks like it ought to be something real good, but I'm so anxious and I'm so depressed and I have such anxieties. I don't know what to do. She says, why don't you tell me about this? I hear there's a thing called being born again. Do you know anything about that? I said, God why did you do this to me today? So I just decided to jump in. So I started telling her about being born again and what it would take to be a Christian. By that time, we're up thirty thousand feet and she's forgotten we've even gone in the air. And we're going along and all of a sudden, big tears seem to stream down her face. And she says, how do I do this? I said, well we got to pray. She said, well let's pray. So I just reached over and got her hand. I don't know if one of the brethren had been there and saw me holding her hand, I might have gotten kicked out of the church. I don't know. I led her in the

sinner's prayer and the Holy Spirit came into her life. And she said, you know. I've never felt this way before. This is like a big load has been lifted off my back. Said, this must be what is being born again. I said, yes, now you've got to get to church. I'm no longer there, but I'll get in touch with somebody who will get in touch with you. About six months later, I went there to preach and I looked on the front row of the choir and there that lady stood singing the gospel of Jesus Christ. Because, because we have a formula. Whatever we speak is going to bind or loose and the people who receive it are loosed. The people that reject it are bound and God gives us the word of life and it's our job to make that word of life come alive in the hearts of people. Amen, amen and amen. Well give him praise and give him glory. Well hallelujah be to God. Hallelujah be to God. That's the power of the word. 1972, I was commissioned by the Air Force to go into the Pacific into Vietnam to visit all of the air force bases as a consultant for two reasons. The war was winding down in Vietnam at that time and they were getting prepared to bring home the POW's and they had all the hospital ships and planes ready. They had readied them in Clarks air force base in the Phillipines. My responsibility was to go over with the psychiatrist and chaplains on each board, on each base, the bad news folders. People coming home. Wives had died. Children had died. Wives had divorced them. All kinds of problems. To help them prepare to come back into society. You know what a problem that has been for the Vietnam war. The second thing was we had a lot of drug problems on our bases oversea in the middle east and in the far east and in southeast Asia. And so my job, I had just finished the PhD, was recommended to go and when you just finish that, you have everything on the end of your brain. It doesn't last long, but it's there for a little while and so that was my responsibility. I slept about four hours a night and was talking to people all day long and preached in the chapels every

Sunday. Brief stop in Vietnam and they made us leave because they were getting ready for the last raids. And I wound up over in Thailand in Uto Paolo where our bombers were based. I was in the tower for the last two bomber raids we did on Vietnam. I spoke to all of our squadron groups on each plane before they left. I've never had that experience any time before and probably will never again because it was dead silence. There was not a smile in the place because they knew an average of at least two or three bombers would not come back and nobody knew which ones they were and so some of them knew I won't be back. This will be my last run. My last run. And I saw those bombers take off two nights in a row. Talked. In those two nights, we lost five bombers. Had to talk to their friends and their buddies and it was quite an experience. One night we went to a town, two of the chaplains and I, and we were sitting there eating dinner. And there was a young captain who came in, an air force captain, who was a pilot. They said, you see that man. He's got a great testimony. Would you like to hear it? I said yes, and they invited him over to the table. Here's a young man who had done a duty and had been shot down in Vietnam and he had become a prisoner of war. He had spent most of his time in a tiger cage about six by nine bamboo. And where he was imprisoned, there were about forty other air force personnel, some of them pilots and some of them crew members. And he said, we were tortured. We were interrogated. And he said, it was the most miserable thing you could talk about. He said, I got sick. I thought I was going to die. He said, two or three times, I came near to death. I said, how did you survive? He was there for over a year. He said, well every day for one hour, they would let us out of those cages to get some exercise and they would let us come together. Forty of us. And we didn't know what to do because all of us were being tortured intermittently or we would be hazed or interrogated to the point that we were brainwashed. So we decided to

put together a Bible. We didn't have a Bible. So we made our own Bible. Every Scripture we could remember, we put it together and later we learned that a lot of things we said were not Scriptures, but they really sounded good. So we had our own Bible. And we memorized that Bible. We would exercise and walk around and we would quote those Scriptures, he said, when we would go in then to be tortured or interrogated or go through what we had to go through with. He said, those words would come alive in our hearts. He said, we called it the POW Bible. I said, you mean the prisoner of war Bible. He said, no. The power of the word Bible and that word saw us through. Hallelujah be to God. Give him praise and give him glory in this place. Give him praise and give him glory in this place. Now as every head is bowed and every eye is closed, please. Tonight is our last night together. And I have the feeling in my heart that there are some of you today that this week should have been a liberating week for you. And my goal for you tonight was for you pastors to walk out of here recognizing that your responsibility is not to build your church, but to build his church. And that was life changing for me. It took an ulcer for me to figure that out. And I'd like you to lay the burden of the church down. It's not your church to start with. It's the people's church who pay the bills. You're just the shepherd. You see shepherds don't give birth to sheep. Sheep give birth to sheep. Sheep give birth to sheep. So that means that we've got start getting our sheep to give birth to sheep. When the revival in Atlanta got going so big, I just got out of the way. I got a long distance phone call one day from Boston. One of my members was out there and said, look, I'm at the airport. He was the sales manager for a large company and he said, I just got a man here. I've been witnessing to him. He's about ready to receive the Lord and I'm about to miss my plane and I've got to go. So he's on the phone. You lead him to the Lord. I'm going to get on the plane. And I led him to the

Lord over the phone. He was a man of means. He started flying to Atlanta about three times a month and he got so enthused about it, in Boston, he found some people and started his own Pentecostal church and he wasn't even a preacher. Hello, are you all still out there? God is saying, every holy spirit filled person ought to be an evangelist. Look over at your neighbor and say, you are an evangelist. You're an evangelist. Now, say whether you like it or not. You don't have any choice if you've got the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit is not given to you to just make you act weird. It's not been given to you just to make you feel good. It's not been given to you to just to speak in some language. But you shall receive power, not that you'll receive a new shout, not that you'll be able to run faster, not that you'll be able to feel better, but you'll be able to receive power when? After the Holy Spirit has come upon you that you might be what? Somebody say that with me. Somebody say it again. Witness. Somebody say it again. And you see one of the problems is that we've forgotten that the only way the church grows is through duplication. We have to duplicate ourselves. And the responsibility of a pastor is to duplicate himself as much as he can in his own church. Are you all still here? Nobody has fallen out of the hearse? Right? When's the last time that you witnessed to somebody? Do you ever get the ache if nobody is getting saved? I used to get the ache. You know when the Holy Spirit was really moving and we got a bunch of guys saved that used to hit the happy hour every day. You know what the happy hour is? How many of you know what the happy hour is? I was afraid of that. Happy hour in a big city is after work you go into a bar. You go into a lounge and then you drink for a couple of hours and then you weave yourself home and you go home and the dinner is cold and you and the wife have a big fight. It's a problem. That's the happy hour. It's the most unhappy happy hour in the history of the world. We had guys that used to do that every day.

They got saved, they said, what shall we do? I said, go back. Start getting your buddies saved. Now the problem with that was, they didn't know much about it. So, they'd talk to their buddies and finally they said, well we want to meet your pastor. I used to have a happy hour ministry. I'd go to the bar, put up my coat collar so nobody would recognize me. I mean, after all. Now hang on real tight. What's going to happen? We're going to go where the sinners are. Isn't that a shame? It would be awful if we went where sinners were. It would be awful if we did. How many people do we drive by everyday that don't know Christ and we've never even made a response to try to get to know them? How many people in your neighborhood do you drive by everyday? Am I on track here? You want to see church growth, you're not going to see church growth just by coming together and singing a few songs and preaching and going home. That's not the way the New Testament does it. That's not the way a covenant church works. That's not what God has called us to be. I'd go into happy hour. I led one year alone in bars in Atlanta, Georgia, twenty seven men to Jesus Christ. Twenty two of them today are elders in the church of God, Mt. Paran Central. Hello, hello, hello, hello. People used to call me right from this state to go find their children in Atlanta during the hippy days. I've gone in bars, found them in bars, found them playing in bands, found them stoned out of their minds. You had to be careful when the hippies were in there because if you preached about certain things, the words had different connotations. One night, I said, you know Paul the apostle was stoned. They said, yeah, he was stoned. Good, good, good. Somewhere down the line we got the feeling that there was such a thing as architectural evangelism. We built the church and made it nice enough, everybody in the country would come. That is not true. All a building is, is a tool. You need a good sharp tool. That's very important, but that building doesn't mean a thing if you don't have people who have

enough power and gumption and burden to get out there and bring some sinners in to fill up the altars. Did you hear me? Did you hear me? I'm one of your own boys. I was here in the fifties. I know what we had in the fifties. So you're not talking to a novice. And I'm not talking about something I haven't done. I've been there and I've done that. When I pastored that little church in Newberry, nobody was getting saved. I would get so upset. I would get on the streets and walk down the streets until I got courage up enough to stop somebody and ask them about Jesus Christ. You see that's our problem. Nobody cares. Nobody has a burden. Nobody feels. If this community doesn't get saved, I'm going to die. There's no sense of destiny. There's no sense of urgency. Every time we come to church, it ought to be the most urgent thing that has ever been done. This is not a ball game. This is not a television program. This is not a spectator sport. This is a body of Christ coming together to get a burden so that we can become the church scattered and the church really starts with the benediction. We never understood that. The church starts with the benediction. What you do outside of the church determines what happens in the church. And tonight, God got to break us or we're not going to have a Church of God in about fifty years. And my whole life has been in it. All my life, sixty nine years, I've been in the Church of God. I love it with all of my heart. When I pastored, I gave a million dollars a year to the Church of God. But we're not going to have a Church of God if we don't wake up. And we try every program, every plan, every new fad that comes down the pike. We think that's going to answer our problem. And it doesn't do it because until you change the hearts of your people and get them to see their responsibility and understand that their responsibility is to bring the people in and your responsibility is to do something for the people when they get there. Is this alright? I'm going to leave in the morning so you won't have to put up with me any longer. But my heart has

always been in California. Four of the finest years that I enjoyed were right here. I still look back on these days with great fondness and I'll never forget the kind of support and partnership you gave. But also remember we had a lot more dynamic churches then than we've got now. What happened? Population has doubled or tripled since that time. Hello. I'm one of you. I'm your boy. I've prayed many a prayer for this place. My son was born here. The son that I buried. I preached all over the world. I preached all over the United States. I preached in little churches, big churches, middle sized churches and one thing that bothers me is I see no sense of urgency. I don't see any sense of destiny. I don't see any people saying, you know, we've got to get out and win this community. We got to get people saved, got to get my son saved, got to get my daughter saved, I got to get my husband saved, I got to get my wife saved. I got to get them ready. Jesus is coming soon. I got to get them ready. Where is that urgency? I'm saying to the Church of God and having been the General Overseer, we've got to shake ourselves. And you know what I want you to leave here with tonight and I thank God, I'd like for you leave here with a burden that you've never had before. So what I'm going to do in just a minute is I'm going to open up this altar and I'm going to ask you to take a little bit more time and delay your going for just a little while and I'm going to ask you to pray about how God can use you to duplicate yourself. To duplicate yourself. To duplicate yourself. And that goes for every person here. Can you imagine what would happen? In South Carolina or in Eastern North Carolina, they had a year of the prodical and the year of the prodigal was to try to bring back all of those who had wandered from the way. And in one year, they had seven hundred and the night that I preached in that campmeeting, three hundred and fifty of them were present. We need a round up. We need a harvest. And you can't, we cannot continue just letting it slide by. Romans fourteen and twelve

is still there, so that every one of us will give account of himself to God. Now we don't like judgement. Nobody likes judgement. It's all happy time. But I'm saying to you, California, as one of yours. God has given you one of the greatest fields that you've got perhaps the greatest mission field in the whole world right here. There is not a majority ethnic group in this state. Ten years from now, native born Americans will be in the minority. And three songs and a few choruses and a prayer and a sermon and let's hurry to get lunch is not going to cut it. It will not cut it. And you keeping your trailer in your back yard with a boxes in there so when you hit the first problem you've got, you can move on to somebody else's church, that's not going to get it either. Hallelujah. Now I'm anointed right now folks. You're just now getting preaching. The rest of this was just getting up to where we are now. Now you know what needs to happen. We need some repentance. Some old fashioned, knock down, drag out, God I'm sorry. I've been such a lazy dolt. I'm sorry that I haven't done the things that you've called me to do. I'm sorry that I've just fooled around and fiddled around with this and have not really been the kind of servant that you would have me to be. Now I pray that all the time. I pray that all the time. I learned a long time ago if I'm not under tension, then I'm not doing very much for God. When I get comfortable, I've got a problem. I don't need to be doing this. I don't have to be doing what I'm doing. But if I don't live in that tension, I'm not doing what God would have me to do. I see this whole building, many, many young people. Any of you getting called. Do you have a mission in life? Are you going to do something for God? I want this altar to just fill up tonight with all of us. When we fill this altar up, I want to see every person here seeking God in his own way and preparing himself and herself to be an evangelist, to be an evangelist. The hippies taught me one great thing. They were the greatest evangelists I ever saw. They brought kids in strung

out of their minds. They were strung out. They didn't know whether they were coming or going and we'd pray for them and they would get delivered and I learned a lot of lessons for those kids. But we like it so antiseptic, so sweet, so nice and we never get in the dirt with it. And the result of that is, nothing happens. Nothing happens. Shall we stand? I want you to come to this altar if the Lord leads you. Not another word. Not another song. Just step out and come as God leads you. You in the balcony, make your way down here if the Lord leads you. Let the Lord lead you. Hallelujah.