

Seven Pillars of Ministry

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Pillar 1 – God’s Pattern for Ministry

1Corinthians 12:4-7

Lord, in my weakness will you be my strength. Will you speak to us? Let this series not just be for information, but for transformation. May we understand, Father, that ministry is not what we do for you, but what you do in and through us. We love you and praise you in Jesus name. Amen.

Turn with me, if you will, to 1Cor 12:4-7. We’re going to be talking today about God’s Pattern for Ministry. I guarantee you that there is not a single person in here today who is a believer who doesn’t want to be usable to God. I promise you that. You may not be walking after the Spirit right now, in the Spirit; you may be walking after the flesh. But in your heart of hearts, the heart that God gave you in Christ Jesus, that participation in the divine nature causes us to want to be usable to God, to be about the desires of God. But here is the question: “How? How do I go about it? What is the ministry all about?” Well, today we begin a seven part series on what we call the “Seven Pillars of Ministry.” Let me help you see if you can understand that.

The word “pillar” is something that holds something else up. Something rests upon these seven pillars. So therefore, we have to know what these pillars are, if something rests upon them. Everything that we will do, when it comes to ministry, missions, whatever, are going to rest on these seven pillars. I hope it is not just a concept of where the church is going. My prayer is that each of us will understand that anything God does in and through us rests right here on these seven pillars that we are going to be looking at. These seven pillars define our philosophy of ministry.

Now I hope that you understand there are at least two philosophies of ministry very apparent today. One is that philosophy that says, “We will do all we can do for Jesus until He comes back and we will ask Him to bless the process.” That’s one of the philosophies. How many of you, besides me, grew up on that philosophy? I grew up that way. “But if it is up to you, son, if you don’t do it, it will never get done.” As if God is somehow shackled by my unwillingness to obey. The old hymn—and I have to apologize even before I say it because it probably wasn’t written to irritate me. It is just my flesh that gets irritated with it. Got irritated with it when I first heard it and been irritated with it ever since—that old song that says, “We’ll work till Jesus comes; we’ll work till Jesus comes” I got so tired of that song; no joy, just get out there. And you better work, because in heaven you’ll find your joy one day. As if salvation is getting us into heaven. Salvation is far more than that. Salvation is getting heaven into us, and being able to participate in the divine working of what God is already doing.

But there is another philosophy; that’s where we are going to rest. That philosophy flows out of the understanding of living grace. And that living grace, again, you should know it by now, “Let Jesus be Jesus in me, no longer me but thee; resurrection power, fill me this hour, Jesus be Jesus in me.” The philosophy, which says, “I can’t do anything for Him, other than surrender to Him and let Him do, what only He can do through my life.” In other words, I get to join what He is already doing.

That’s where we are headed with these seven pillars as a church. This last philosophy of ministry is where we will be as a church. We, as elders and staff, are committed to lead the church to have an intimate relationship with Christ so that we might be the conduits through whom the life and work of Christ might flow. We will focus much more on intimacy with Him than we will be focusing on doing for Him. And sometimes you may think that is an imbalance; if I am imbalanced anywhere, it will be right here. Because if I have to err, I am not going to err on the side of “do, do, do” I will err on the side of “become —be what God wants you to be.” If

becoming is what God says it truly should be, then the doing will take care of itself.

That is what the book of James is all about. If faith is real, then it will produce the works that it seeks to produce. We will seek to daily surrender to Him and to His word, knowing that it is only when we are saying “yes” to Him, yielded to Him that we can participate in that which He is doing already on this earth. We will discover in this series in God’s word that all ministry, no matter what facet we are talking about, is not achieved for God, but scripturally it is received from God.

Now let me get to the message today, and I’ll show you that. In fact this is the passage that nails it as clearly as any passage that we’ll look at. In our message today, we have to remember that when you think of ministry you have to think of three things:

- The gift, or the ability and motivation to do whatever it is that needs to be done.
- The ministry itself, the actual taking part in that which is going on. That is the second part of it, the ministry.
- The eternal effect that has on the people that are recipients of that ministry.

That is what we want to look at in 1 Corinthians 12, because Paul deals with this. Does it come from man? Does man come up with it? Does man come up with the ability to do? Does man come up with the ministry? Does man come up with the effect? In many people’s thinking, they do. Man does. But we are going to see that man doesn’t; God is the one who originates the gift; He originates the ministry; and God is the one who originates the effect. We will see this, without question, in our passage today. True ministry is a supernatural activity, not just something that you can do, grit your teeth and bear it, is a supernatural activity. When it originates from God, and a believer, the results will be eternal. They will be felt for all of eternity. Only God can burden a person’s heart to minister to somebody else to do good for that person without any thought of credit, of any appreciation from people, applause of men. Only God can cause this to happen.

So our first text is 1 Corinthians 12:4–7. I have to do this because any text without a context is a pretext. You never want to get into a text, unless you wrap it around where it comes from so that you know you are hearing from God’s word. In 1 Corinthians 3, Paul calls them ‘babies.’

I shared with the group last night, I used to have a little barrel, actually a clear container, of pacifiers. I bought them at Sam’s; they were adult pacifiers. I kept them in the pulpit. When people would come up and just “yak, yak, yak,” I would just say, “Would you take this and go over and suck on it for a while. When you come out of the nursery will you talk to me?”

Well, the church at Corinth had never come out of the nursery. This is their problem; the indictment of 1Cor 3:1-3. In 1Cor 5, to show you the results of that kind of thing, there was a man who was sleeping with his father’s wife, which was probably his stepmother, committing adultery and incest in the same act, and nobody would deal with it as a church. They just let it go, they did not want their reputation to be harmed, by knowing that someone in their midst was doing it.

In 1Cor 6 they were suing each other over money. At a drop of a hat. Can you imagine two believers suing each other over money, when we are going to walk on streets of gold? That really got Paul’s attention. He wrote the sixth chapter to address that. In the seventh chapter, they thought physical intimacy in marriage was sinful. This was how far off center they had gotten. Paul sort of says, “good grief, people!” It took him a whole chapter to work the family out there in chapter seven.

In 1Cor 8-10, they were eating meat sacrificed to idols, and they were using their liberty in Christ to walk all over their weaker brother who did not understand. In chapter eleven they were desecrating the Lord’s Supper; it was a shame what they were doing to it. In chapter twelve, they thought that anything that was emotional and experiential must be “spiritual.” In 1Cor 13, it is not a chapter on love, really, it is a rebuke to a church that had no idea on what Christianity was all about. In chapter 14, not only was their practice of speaking in an unknown tongue wrong, their whole premise was wrong. It wasn’t for believers, it was for unbelievers. In chapter 15, they did not believe in the bodily resurrection of Jesus. In chapter 16, he closes the book. Wonderful study! If you lived in Corinth, you would not want to join this church; it was a totally upside down church.

So, in 1 Corinthians 12, he is not teaching gifts, he is correcting error. In 1Cor 12:1 he says, “I don’t want you to be ignorant, brethren of spiritual things”—not spiritual gifts, that is written in italics—pneumatikos. I don’t want you to be ignorant when it comes to spiritual matters. The word is in the present tense; I don’t want you to continue to be ignorant when it comes to spiritual matters. With that mindset, he comes into verse 4 though verse 6. He wants to show them the same thing God wants to show us today: Ministry is not something that we come up with in a committee and ask God to bless. Ministry only comes out of a life that is lived in intimacy with Him, in surrendered yieldness to Christ. Ministry is what He does through us. We can join Him in what He is doing, when we are willing to say “yes” to Him in our everyday life.

1Cor 12:4-6, he says: “Now there are varieties of gifts, but the same spirit, and there are varieties of ministry and the same Lord; there are varieties of effects but the same God who works all things in all persons; but to each one is given the manifestation of the spirit for the common good.” Now let’s look into this context and see the pattern of ministry. Let’s see where the gifts come from,

where the ministries come from, where the effects come from. Let's just see some principles that will help us as we want to be usable to God. The key is intimacy with Christ, daily, moment by moment, so that true ministry can happen in our lives. If we are not getting to know him through His word, walking with Him; then ministry is something that is a foreign language to our experience.

These five principles that we want to share today in this message, hopefully, will be a blessing to your heart.

First of all, Paul shows us that all ministry originates from God, and there is no question about it. I'll show you that in a second. It is interesting how the apostle Paul, with a lot of grace, gently moves these people to thinking sanely in this insane world in which we live. The Corinthians were focused on man and they were not focused on God. We know that from the text. If you have studied the first four chapters of 1 Corinthians, they talk about man's wisdom, man's ways. Paul has to come against that. In fact, in 1 Corinthians 1:11 he says, "For I have been informed concerning you, my brethren, there are quarrels among you." Now I mean this, he is saying: "each one of you is saying, 'I'm of Paul' and then others are saying, 'I'm of Apollos,' and others are saying 'I'm of Cephas,'" and then there is the worst group, "I'm of Christ." You would think that would be the best group, but no, they are like that group in Heaven, when Peter is walking around with us in Heaven and he says, "be real quiet, shhh; there is a group over here that thinks they are the only ones up here." But the whole thing was, they were about men. They were men pleasers, they were men followers they worshiped the wisdom of men; therefore, they were all about what men could do and they were enamored with it. They were not about what God could and wanted to do in their lives.

In 1Cor 12:4-6, to get into this really deeply, he contrasts two words. You have to see that right away. The word "varieties" and the word "same" He uses it in all three verses. He says in verse four: "There are varieties of gifts, but the same spirit; there are varieties of ministries, but the same Lord; there are varieties of effects, but the same God who works all things in all persons." Now, that word varieties is the word diairesis. It has to do with the way something is divided up, when you put something into categories, or cutting a piece of pie, and you give this smaller piece to this one, and this bigger piece to somebody else. It has to do with the way in which it is cut up or distributed.

For instance, for many people, at first glance they think it's talking about the fact that the gifts are different, varieties of gifts, or the ministries are different, and the effects are different. And they are, but that's not what the word is talking about. It's only used two times in the whole New Testament. The second time it is used is down in verse 11, and it's talking about how they are distributed, not how that they are different. We will address that in a minute.

But how they are distributed: what it is talking about is that God does not give the gifts, ministries and effects like man would give them. If you told me today that I had the power to give everybody in here the gifts, I would make sure that every single person had exactly the same amount of gifts. I don't want anybody to go lacking. But that's not the way God did it. For instance the verb form is found in verse 11, diaireo. It means to distribute, and it is in the present tense.

Look at 1Cor 12:11, "But one and the same spirit works all of these things distributing to each one individually just as He wills." So, in other words, it is totally the prerogative of the Spirit that gives the gifts, or Jesus gives the ministry, the Father that gives the effect. It is totally at their prerogative as to how they choose to do that. It may not be the same, and rarely is the same from person to person.

You say, "Why would he bring this up in Corinthians?" Because in Corinth they were jealous over the gifts they thought were the greater gifts. As a result of that they were overlooking that the other gifts were just as important to the body. And the apostle Paul is trying to say, "What are you doing?" It is interesting to me, how when we get our eyes off the giver and we put them on the gift and the ministry and the effect, what happens is we become jealous of gifts or ministries or effects. But when we have our eye on the giver, I'm just glad to have a slice of the pie; what about you?

Anything less than hell is grace in our life. But when we get our eyes off the giver, that all of sudden floats out of the window. Suddenly we are jealous of this gift or that gift, this ministry or that ministry. What Paul is trying to do here is to take these carnal minded, fleshly minded Corinthian believers, get their eyes off men and what men can do and what happens to men and get their eyes back on the Lord Jesus. They were attached to men, they were not attached to Christ, and he is trying to bring them back to what normal Christianity really is.

Well, individual believers can get caught up when they are looking at men and not looking at the giver, they can get caught up in being jealous of other people's gifts, or their ministry, or their effect. Has anyone ever had a jealousy in their heart that you did not get a gift like somebody else? Get a life. I've done it.

Dr. Stephen Olford, who I love so much, is in Heaven, rejoicing. Heaven is sweeter, but the earth has a big hole in it, since he has left us. I had to speak with him several times. I probably spoke with him 15 or 16 times. The first time they ever put me with him, scared me half to death. They were going to let him speak first and me speak second. What?? He was the greatest preacher I ever heard; he was the apostle Paul of our day. Don't put me behind him, put me first, and then everybody will truly appreciate him when they hear him.

I begin to realize why they put me with him anyway. When Dr. Olford would get up and preach, every preacher and everybody there that wanted to aspire to what God had called them to do said to themselves, "I can't do that." And then they had me come up, and they would say, "Yeah, I can." "Wayne can do it, anybody can do it." He was the prince of preachers.

We were at a men's conference. About 450 men were there from about 27 different states and I am supposed to go second. I am sitting back in the back, looking down over the group, sweating. He gets up and starts preaching, oh my goodness, how he literates every text; there is just a glow on him; there is just something so spiritual about him. I'm watching him, thinking, "What am I doing here?"

God brought my eyes down to the group and I looked about three rows down to an old boy from Knoxville, TN, who chewed tobacco and deer hunted. He is just there because he liked me because I deer hunt. I've been doing this conference 15 years, a lot of camaraderie build over the years. I looked down here and saw another. I watched all these good old red-necked boys, and I watched them, watching Dr. Oldford. They were sitting saying "Golly, what's he saying?" Then I looked at the rest of the group. They were taking notes, tears streaming down their face. God was ministering to them.

It was like God said to me, "Wayne, don't ever think that you need to have someone else's gift or be somebody else. Wayne, there are people in this room he can't touch. I can't get them through him, but I can get them through you. Now, when you get up, you do what I tell you to do, you just be who you are, full of Jesus. That's all I've called you to be."

That's what Paul is trying to tell these Corinthians: "Quit being jealous of somebody else's gift; quit being jealous of somebody else's ministry; being jealous of somebody else's effect. Just be who you are, satisfied with Jesus, letting Jesus be Jesus in you. Let God work through you what He's chosen to work through you. You got a little piece of the pie? That's fine. You got a big piece of the pie? He that's given much, much is required. Maybe you got a little piece. Thank God for the little piece. He's going to hold all of us accountable for that.

Well, not only do individuals get caught up in this, but also churches get caught up in this. I think the biggest problem in churches today in America is a little phrase called, "The Mega-Church." As a result of it, because of numbers and because of bigness, you've got little bitty churches in places just dying because they can't be what that big church is. It is driven by numbers, and it feeds an ego, in many situations. To me, churches are supposed to be what God wants them to be where they are, just full of Jesus. If that's big, it's big; if it's small, it's small. It doesn't mean one's right and one's wrong.

It's incredible. Churches get involved in that. "Oh, you must be a spiritual church, because you are big." Not necessarily. God is not impressed with numbers. He's impressed with hearts that love Him. Well, ministries get involved in it. Ministries with this wrong thinking that they have to compete. Everything is measured by bigness and numbers and dollars. It can happen easily.

But Paul is saying, "Would you quit doing that? Would you just be what God wants you to be? Would you just get your eyes back on the giver, and let the giver be who He is in your life? And if that's small, thank Him for it every day; if that's big, thank Him for that every day. Just be the piece of pie God orchestrated for you to be."

Well, the Spirit who gives the gifts, see, is the same. There are varieties of gift, ministries, and effects; and God does not distribute them in the same way. But the Spirit that gives them, He is the same. His character never changes. He loves us just the same. Anything short of Hell is grace, as we said a moment ago, so whatever He's given me is out of His beautiful love for me, and out of His divine understanding of me, and of you, and of all of us here today.

First Corinthians 12:18 says, "But now [[God]] has placed the members, each one of them in the body [How?] just as He desired." It's all His business. Then it says in 1Cor 12:11, "But one in the same Spirit" we read a moment ago "works all these things, distributing to each one individually just as He wills." So I guess the question would have to be to all of us today, "Who do we think we are, when we seek to tell [[God]] what we're going to do for Him, and then ask Him to bless it as if it comes from us, and not Him?" There is no gift; there is no ministry; there is no effect, without Him. He and He alone determines all of these. So all ministries originate from [[God]].

Secondly, unless love is present, there is no ministry. There are a lot of people who say they are doing a lot of great things for God, but there is just no love there whatsoever. The love is the key; the love is the clue.

First Corinthians 12:4: "Now there are varieties of gifts but the same Spirit." That's the Holy Spirit. Varieties of gifts, but the same Spirit. Now wait a minute. Let's talk about the Spirit of God. It is the Spirit of God that gives the gifts, and they are different. As we will see in a moment, they are multi-colored. It's kind of like, I have a shirt on today, and I guess it's one fabric, they mix them up so much; let's just say it's one fabric. But it's one color, pretty bland. Looking out amongst you, you have some pretty creative clothing on today. Some of yours is the same fabric, but multi-colored. Same fabric, the Holy Spirit is the fabric, but the colors; however, in there are different.

If you want to talk about how the gifts are different, this is where you look at that. For instance, you say, "Wayne, what are talking about?" Look over at 1 Peter 4:10, and I'll show you. He says it very clearly. He's talking about gifts. He says, "As each one has received a special gift, employ it in serving one another." That's what gifts are for. "As good stewards of the"—and it's translated "manifold grace of God." I don't know why they translated it that way. Maybe it meant something different in that day, I don't know, but the word is *poikilos*. It means multi-colored grace of God. That's beautiful. Just like our trials are color-coded; the wisdom of God is color-coded, used over in Ephesians, so are our gifts; they are color-coded. They are different.

Oh, could I give some illustrations of the fact that they are different, big time. My wife has the gift of mercy. She is mercy from her head to the end of her toes. I believe God put some mercy in me somewhere, but with her, it's just total mercy. I'm telling you, that gift of mercy. We'd be on a plane and if you were sick, she'd get sick with you. You die; she'll die with you. It's incredible.

Went into a hospital room one day to see a woman who had been in there three weeks. When we walked in, she started groaning. I'm thinking, "Now, wait a minute." I picked up on that, she's riding this thing far as she can ride it. She wasn't groaning when we walking in. I walked over, and I said, "You need to get up out of that bed and get out of here! Other people want this thing; you've been in it three weeks!" My wife is saying, "No, No" and she went over and fluffed up the little pillows and got her a little glass, put the straw in her mouth and patted her cheeks and said, "Are you okay?" As if to say, "Don't pay any attention to him." I kept saying, "Come on." When we got out of the room, we started laughing. You know what we started laughing about? She said, "Why did you do that?" and I said, "Well, why did you do that?" And it dawned on us, two different gifts.

Now hear what I'm saying, folks. Working together, and she needed both of us. She checked out the next day. But you see, gifts are different. Gifts are different.

It is so important to realize that the spirit is the same. The same spirit that gave my wife the gift of mercy did not give it to me, but gave me the gift of exhortation and teaching. The same Spirit is the fabric. But He didn't give the gifts the same color. So often in our church, we have people say, "This is wrong, and this is wrong." But they are beautiful people, they are walking with God; they are seeing through their strength. Anytime God allows you to see through your strength, usually He wants you to be the solution to whatever it is He's been faithful enough to reveal as the problem. But the gifts are different.

Now where am I going with this? You say, "What's this got to do with love?" Well, if the fabric of the gifts is the Spirit of God, my friend, He is also the producer of the love and the fruit. He can never act apart from any of His attributes. If He gives the gifts and the divine ability to trust God in those gifts, then He gives the fruit, which is the wrapping to that gift. He is the same Spirit. When a person is ministering, and there is no love in him, when a person is ministering, and there is no caring for other people, they walk over everybody else, there is no ministry being accomplished. It's just whatever they've come up with in a religious mindset, and have asked God to bless.

The love is the key. You can fake all of the gifts, but you can't fake the love. That's what God produces, and that's what motivates others to be drawn to us. Galatians 5:22-23, "But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control, against such there is no law." The key to that whole verse is that first word, love. Everything else in it characterizes that love in relationships. When are we going to understand that God is not impressed with a good idea we offer to Him? God already has the idea, and if we bow before Him and say yes to Him and to His will—and that doesn't mean perfection; that means when I sin, I run to the cross, and I confess and I chose to trust Him; that's all built in to it—but when I'm willing to live predictably that way, then I can get in touch with what He truly is doing and then He uses me just as a conduit to touch other people. And it will be different because the gifts are different; it will be framed according to the individual gifts He's given to each person.

What is it that's causing the division in most churches today? It's not the fruit; it's the gifts. It's causing division like you wouldn't believe. Some of you may even get irritated with me this morning, because you have another thought about the gifts. I'm telling you, I don't care what another person tells me his gift is. We've made it much too important. The key is, where is the fruit? And are we attached to the Giver and not just the gift? God's love does not divide the body, it unites it.

So all ministry originates from God without the love produced by the Spirit, there is no ministry. No matter what we think we are doing, it's not ministry. He is the fabric of the gifts, but He is also the producer of the fruit.

Thirdly, ministry is not for our benefit. 2Cor 12:5, "And there are varieties of ministries, and the same Lord." Now, the word Lord here is referring to the Lord Jesus Christ. In a context, when you have the Spirit and the Lord and God mentioned all together, you are talking about the Trinity. We'll see God the Father in a moment. It's so interesting how the whole Trinity is involved in what goes on down here on Earth: The Spirit giving the gift; the Lord Jesus giving the ministry; and the Father taking care of the effect, as we'll see. The word ministries in verse 5 tells the whole story. The word is *diakonia*. We get the word deacon from it. It means to serve others, no matter what it cost me, is the idea of the word.

This word was never translated into English, it was transliterated, which means they took a word and made a word out of it. That's

convenient. When the Bible was put into English, the powerful church at that time had deacon as high offices of power who made decisions for the whole body, which is never in scripture. So they did not translate the word, for fear of getting their heads translated, they transliterated the word, and made a word out of a word—Can I shine your shoes? I mean, your grass looks like it needs cutting, can I help you? Uh, is there anything I can do for you?—that’s the word diakonos. So ministry at its very heart is for the benefit of others. It wouldn’t even be there if it was for our own benefit. It’s always, “what can I do for you?” Never for my own benefit.

Ministry is something that has the heart of God in it. Jesus, who initiates all ministry, who lives in us, was the greatest servant of all. It says over in Mathew 20:28, “Just as the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give His life a ransom for many.” That’s the heart of ministry, because it’s His heart in us. The greatest minister, the greatest servant, is the one who patterns this for us in our life.

2Cor 12:7 really cinches it, “But the manifestation of the spirit is given to every man for the common good.” One translation says “for the profiting with all.” So everybody is blessed by it, not for somebody’s own personal edification. True ministry does not allow hidden agendas. True ministry does not allow self-gratification to be figured into it. When we make the mistake that the Corinthians made, then gifts, ministries and effects becomes all about us, not about others.

Now, I love drama when it is done right. True scriptural, Biblical drama that helps enhance and bring out what you are saying, I don’t have any trouble with that at all. What I do have trouble with are people that bring drama into the church for their own self-gratification. They get a bigger kick out of making people laugh than they do edifying and lifting up the Lord Jesus.

Years ago there was a group of about 16 who wanted to have a drama ministry. Well, I’ve never had any trouble with that, as long as it doesn’t contradict what we’re doing in the pulpit. Don’t do it while I preach. Well, it got to where it was just going nowhere. I mean, you could turn on the television set, they could be on it and you wouldn’t even know it was Christian. So I called them all aside, and I said, “Hey, guys, we’re going to have to shut this down. Something is all wrong. In my spirit, it doesn’t resonate.” You know what they said to me? “Oh, that’s okay, we’ll just take our group and go to some other church and do it.” Now what have they just told me? What they were doing, calling ministry, was for their own personal gratification. It was not under the accountability and Lordship of Christ. Because, you see, when God tells me to stop preaching, I’m going to sit down. I’m not going to keep standing up, because I get a gratification out of doing what I’m doing.

We’ve got to remember something, joy is not in something that you do, joy is in who He is. The very moment we start fighting for what we can do, look out. You’re missing the point. If it’s received, where He guides, He provides. Where he puts a burden for a desire, He gives an opportunity for a door. So all ministry originates with God. There is no ministry without the love, whatever people call it. And ministry is not for us. It is for the benefit of others.

And fourthly we cannot measure the results of ministry. We tapped on that a while ago. Let’s look at it a little further. There is always an eternal effect when God, through the gift, gives a ministry to other people. There is always an eternal effect. And God is the one who determines that. 1Cor 12:6, “And there are varieties of effects but the same God who works all things in all persons.” You see, only the father knows what the effect is going to be. The word effects is the word energema, which means energize. The little *-ma* at the end of it means the actual result of what God has energized and empowered in a person’s life. Only the father knows what that result is going to be. The effects of all gifts that truly come from the Spirit minister to others are energized by God the Father, and therefore, He determines how it is measured. It won’t be measured here on earth. When we allow God the Father the prerogative of doing only what He can do, only He knows the eternal effect.

I’ll tell you what, to give you a proof text, ask Stephen in the New Testament in Acts, and ask Peter, if they can say amen to that. Stephen preached the same sermon Peter preached, and they stoned Stephen to death, but Peter saw 5,000 to come to know Christ. Of course, Stephen was a whole lot better off, because he got to go see Jesus. But I bet you right before he got there, he was saying “Do what?? Wait a minute.” The effects are going to be different. The effects will be what He chooses. He’s in control.

2Cor 12:6 again: “The varieties of effects, the same [[God]] who works [now watch] all things in all persons.” The term “all things in all persons” is in italics, why? Because he uses it again at the end of the chapter to refer to the fact that he’s not just in control of persons, he’s in control of everything. [[God]] is in control of everything that is going on in this world, but He is especially in control of the believer and the effects of what [[God]] chooses to do in the life of that believer. There’s a tendency that we always have of measuring everything that we do. I’m telling you that when you are hung up in gifts, ministry and effects, it will be numbers and noses and nickels. That will be the way that we measure everything that goes on. That’s not the way [[God]] does it.

Roy Hession said to me one day, “Wayne, let me ask you a question.” He said, “You’re preaching the same message over here that I’m preaching over in England, but you’re gaining people, and I’m losing them. Which one of us is doing it right?” Folks, we’ve got to get out of this mentality of thinking you can measure everything God does.

You can’t measure everything. Ask Dorie Van Stone. For eight years she never saw a convert. Twenty three years later she finally found out that those seeds that were planted deeply and watered, God had now finally given the harvest, and 250,000 believers had

come as a result of her work. Twenty-three years later.

You see, God is not on our timetable. He doesn't have a watch and says "Oh, my, it's 3:00 and I better do something, because Wayne's going to get upset." As a matter of fact, I can't see anywhere in scripture where it says "Wayne, I'm struggling up here, can you give me your opinion of what I need to do?" It's incredible how much we think of ourselves. In Romans 12:3, "Let not a man think more highly of himself than he ought to think." I tell you what it does to me, and I don't know how it affects you at all, what affects me is that every day when I drive home, when I go through the day, it overwhelms me that God would give me even the time of day. I'm telling you, if you knew me, and my flesh and how wicked it is, and how every day I am desperate for God to replace me and overcome me.

Hey, crawl off that altar of pride and say let's get good and honest here. God says, "You think I needed your intelligence to bring you into the Kingdom? You think I needed your creativity? I don't need anything about you except your surrender, because I didn't come to make you better, I came to replace you." I tell you, the older we get, the more we become conscious of desperate need for Him in our life; the more this message of grace and the sweetness and the kindness of the love of God means to us. When I was in my 30's from time to time needed it. I need it every day.

Finally, the last point. True ministry unifies the body. If you find division in the body, you don't have true ministry, because true ministry draws people together and to Christ as a wonderful ending to all of this. When God is in full control, the gifts, and the ministries through those gifts to others and the eternal effect it just brings the body together. By the way, I'm so encouraged to see that happening. It blesses my socks off. It's fun to get out of the bed in the morning. I'm seeing God move; I'm seeing the church come together. I just want you to know that.

2Cor 12:7 says, "But to each one is given the manifestation of the Spirit for the common good." The word manifestation, *phanerosis*, is the idea of being able to see something clearly. How do you know the gifts are working? Somebody asked me the other day in another setting, "Do you think that we really need to know our gift?" I'm going to answer that, "Not really." I think it's helpful to some degree, but I think that we have put so much focus on gifts, ministries and effects that we have completely taken our focus off of the giver. If we were walking and saying yes to Him, moment by moment, minute by minute, ministry would be flowing like a river that could hardly stay in its current. But we have somehow made it about us, instead of about him.

"But to each one is given the manifestation of the Spirit for the common good." The word is a Greek word, *sumphero*. It means seeing; it means together. It's a beautiful thing. Only God can do this. "Phero" means to bring people into a oneness, not only with themselves, but first of all with God. When that unity of the Spirit is there, and he talks about it in Ephesians, and when that spiritual fellowship is there, and he talks about it in Philippians, the people of God come together. There is not all this garbage that goes on, it is beautiful what happens.

The aura of the Holy Spirit is sweet fragrance unto the Father. People can sense it when they walk in a place. They can sense the power of the Holy Spirit. My prayer is before I die, hopefully that I'll get to see it, that this church will be a church that is not about themselves, but so much about God that we would do whatever He says in a given second. We'd be a reflex of what He wants us to be down the road.

Well, when we focus on the Giver, that's what happens. As if to drive his point home, Paul does something here that he doesn't do in any other context of gifts. But when he says, "to each one is given," it's interesting. You see it is in the present passive voice. You see in every other place you look at it is, they've already been given that at the time of salvation. But what it saying here is, He is continuing to choose how He gives the ministry, the effect, and the gift. What he is saying is He is in control of it. I don't go someplace and hang a sign on my door, "this is my gift and I have it and can enact it at any time." No, sir! What he is saying is this gift is never active until my heart is surrendered to Him, in abandonment to Him and to His will. Therefore, we must be surrendered to Him at all times.

When the Spirit of God is moving, it's not about a preacher, it's about a God who lives in all of the people. We're all ministers when we say yes to God. And where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is liberty. The Spirit is free, through the giftedness of people, to affect the ministry and effect that only God can do.

You want to be usable to God? Then don't look at ministry, and don't look at gifts, and don't look at effects. Go to the Giver, get your Word out and get to know Him, and learn to say yes to Him. And ministry and affects, and even gifts, will take care of themselves. They will flow right out of you like a river. Be careful, be careful when you start defending ministry, and beating up people because of effects. Be careful. Because when God is doing it, He draws people together, He doesn't divide them.

Pillar 2 – God's Power in Ministry

Turn with me to Isaiah 6. We're talking about the Pillars of Ministry. Seven of them. Today, we are on Pillar number 2, and that is simply God's Power in Ministry. What God initiates in His power, God anoints with His power. That's what we want to be looking at today, particularly from Isaiah 6. Studying these seven Pillars of Ministry, I don't know about you, but they kind of bring us back to square one. It's kind of like a refreshing breath of air when we begin to realize what ministry really is all about. These seven messages on the seven pillars represent the philosophy of ministry that we have in this church.

Last time we saw that all the gifts, all the ministries, all the effects totally come from God. They originate only from Him. They are God-given. I asked last week how many of you grew up, like I did, in that work mentality; that performance mentality; that "we needed to work harder because it is all up to us; if it doesn't get done, then poor old God, He can't do anything". Three fourths of the congregation raised their hands. That's exactly the way we grew up. I just want to help you understand what we are going through is like deprogramming the mind. It's doing what Romans 12 says we have to do. It is renewing our minds so that the Spirit might transform our life.

Well, in our pillar today, number 2, what God initiates—the gift, the ministry, the effect—God anoints. We're going to talk about this, the power that God has in ministry. Now that word "anoint" needs to be understood. You need to know where I'm coming from, when I use the word anoint. It's been made a mystical word in many circles—"he has the anointing" —and, of course, sometimes people act as if it is something way out there somewhere. But it is not that way at all if you understand the word.

Actually in the New Testament, there are two words for anoint. There is the word that was used for massaging someone. It was a physical thing. For instance, they did not have a lot of doctors in the New Testament. How many can you name? "Well, Luke." That's good, now who else? They did not have a lot of doctors, elders, in the day that the scriptures were put together. They ministered physically, as well as, spiritually to the people they would come to. So the word, as used in James 5:16, "the elders anoint" is the word for massage. It was a therapy they would use. Today we would call it Christian doctor.

But there is another word for anoint. It always has a spiritual connotation; that's the word we are looking at as we talk about "He anoints;" that's what I'm talking about. The word has to do with enablement; God's empowering us to do what He has gifted us to do. See, God initiates ministry. He sets apart a man or a woman, and He has a gift there, He has a ministry he wants to effect. But he also empowers. He anoints, He enables, that person to do what he's called to do. It has to do with, first, setting apart, and then through the giftedness, and then the empowering.

Now it is spoken of Jesus. The word anoint is used of Jesus in His humanity. Obviously we know He was God, the God-Man. He said Himself in Luke 4:18, "The Spirit of the Lord is upon me," quoting out of Isaiah 61. He says, "Because he anointed me to preach the gospel to the poor." He "anointed me." In other words, He was not just man, He was the God-man, and within Him was the power to do what He came to do. "He has sent me to proclaim release to the captive, recovery of sight to the blind, to set free those who are oppressed." And then it is even clearer in Acts 10:38. He says, "You know of Jesus of Nazareth how God anointed him with the Holy Spirit and with power. And how he went about doing good and healing all who were oppressed by the Devil, for God was with him."

It's not only spoken of Jesus, having that anointing upon Him, being the God-Man to accomplish that which He came to do, but it is also spoken of believers. In 2 Corinthians 1:21, the apostle Paul says, "Now he who establishes us with you in Christ and anointed us is God." The "establishes with" and "anointed" have to, in the Greek construction, have to be put together. So what he is saying is that we don't just have the anointing to do what God's called us to do, you also have that anointing if you are a believer.

The apostle John is even clearer in his epistle. In 1 John 2:20, "But you have an anointing from the holy one, and you all know." In 1Jn 2:27 he says, "As for you, the anointing which you received from him abides in you and you have no need for anyone to teach you; but as his anointing teaches you about all things and is true and is not a lie and just as it has taught you, you abide in him." The anointing that John is talking about there is the Holy Spirit that has come to live with us.

It says in 1Jn 2:20, "your anointing from the Holy One" the "Holy One" is the Lord Jesus Christ. You find that Jesus is the Holy One. In Mark 1:24, Luke 4:34, John 6:69, Acts 2:27, Acts 13:35, 1 Peter 1:15. Everyone of those identifies Jesus as being the Holy One. So, Jesus, in the person of the Spirit, sets us apart to Himself; He anoints us with His power, the power of the Holy Spirit to accomplish what He has assigned for us to be about on this earth.

So the Holy Spirit who gives the gifts is the anointing. You see, this is where people mess up. They pray that God will give them the anointing. No, if you are a believer, you already have the anointing. The Anointed One lives within you. The key is not getting Him; the key is learning to release Him in your life, by surrender to Him.

Now as 1 John tells us, "He teaches us." That's who reveals scripture to us, the Holy Spirit, the anointing that the Holy One gave to us. The Spirit of Christ that lives within us. We also know from Ephesians 5:18, "He empowers us as he fills us." He must fill us daily, as we yield to Him. We know from Galatians 5:22 that He "produces the character of Christ in us."

So the anointing from the Holy One is the Holy Spirit, the Spirit of Christ. He is the anointing. He is the enabling. God initiates, and God anoints. He not only sets a man aside, He not only gives him the gift and the ministry and the effect, but He gives him the enablement, the power to be about the things He's told him to do. As the priests of old were set apart unto God and anointed with the power of God, we have to remember that we are priests in the Kingdom of God. Now, that may go against some people's religious understanding, but that's the word of God.

Peter says in 1 Peter 2:9, "But you are a chosen race you are a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people for God's own possession so that you may proclaim the excellencies of him who called you out of darkness into his marvelous life." So it is God who initiates ministry. That is one of the pillars we are going to stand on. It is not something that we achieve for Him out of our own ability and desire and creativity, it is something that we receive from Him. He initiates, but He also anoints that which He has initiated.

Today, we want to look at an example of this initiation and anointing in scripture. There is not a clearer example of it than what we are going to look at in Isaiah 6. The first five chapters, if you have ever studied Isaiah, he pronounces, particularly in chapter 5, the woes of God's judgment among the people. Judah has gone the route of her big sister, Israel and the Ten Northern tribes, and they have just desecrated everything that God has given to them. So therefore, he pronounces some woes, "woe be unto you; woe be unto you" in chapter five.

In chapter 6, however, he goes back—it's not chronological—he jumps back and he wants the people to understand "the only reason I'm able to stand here" he says "and pronounce judgment on you is because those woes fell on me first." Chapter 6 is the calling of Isaiah as the prophet of God. He wants them to understand that he's already been broken, and he does what he does out of a tender heart. He pronounces the woes out of a heart that's already been broken in the presence of God. God initiated the call on Isaiah's life. It was at a very low time for Judah with the call came, the anointing to be His prophet, one of the greatest prophets of the Old Testament.

Well, the picture of God's initiating and God's anointing, as I said, could not be clearer than what we are going to look at today. Isaiah 6. The four things that I want you to see in this are how God raised up a man, set him apart, initiated this ministry and how God anoints this man by even giving him the ability to say yes back to Him.

Isaiah 6 begins with, "In the year of King Uzziah's death, I saw the Lord." King Uzziah reigned over Israel for 52 years. His name indicates that he really started well. He started off trusting God in everything that he did. Uzziah is the name mentioned in Chronicles, but in Kings he's called Azariah. It's the same person. Both names show his spiritual character at the very beginning. Azariah means "the Lord has helped;" Uzziah means "my strength is in the Lord." So we see that both names characterize this man as being a man who depended upon God when he began his reign as king over Judah. He's the tenth king over Judah.

Well, in both Chronicles and in Kings it says he did what was right in the eyes of the Lord. The best way that most people figure this out is that Azariah was probably his given name and Uzziah was his throne name. He came to the throne at the age of 16, in very difficult circumstances. His daddy had committed apostasy; therefore, was put to death by rebellion so he had to come immediately and take the throne. Under Uzziah, Judah had prospered; in fact, more so than they had known before.

He was a military genius. Matter of fact, we think we started the draft system, in the Army; no, he used the draft system back in that day. There's nothing new under the sun. Got an army of over 370,000 fighting men, broke down the walls. The biggest thing he did was to defeat the Philistines. He broke down the walls of Gath, Ashdod and Jabneh. He even built his own cities in Philistia. The Philistines were the fiercest enemies that Israel had. He also loved to work the land. Some of the historians say that he loved to pick up the dirt and say, "Ah, how I love the dirt." He loved to work the land. Therefore, he taught them cultivation, farming. Judah prospered greatly under his leadership: militarily, economically, every way you can think of.

But here is the problem: all of that prosperity went to his head, and he became proud and arrogant. Proverbs 16:18 says, "Pride goes before... a fall." And boy, did he ever fall. Uzziah was so audacious that he went into the temple and said, "I'm going to offer incense to the Lord." What? You can't offer incense to the Lord. That's a priest responsibility. The High Priest stood in his face and rebuked him in front of everybody, and God struck him with leprosy. He had to move into exile and shame. He died in exile because of having sinned before the Lord.

Jotham, the next King, actually had to step in. Just like Uzziah had to do with his daddy, he had to step in and take over the throne until the time that he could actually be King. You know, some interesting things happen. God was taking His hand of blessing off of Judah. He'd already taken it off Israel and the ten Northern Tribes. And now He's taking His hand of blessing off of Judah.

In fact, only a short time after Uzziah was born, there was another man born, and his name was Romulus. And Romulus was the legendary founder of Rome. Just after Uzziah died, the Roman Empire came into being. Remember, if you study history, the Romans were the ones who caused the greatest affliction upon the Israelites. It was a bad time for Israel politically, nationally, every way you can think of. It was a bad time. It seemed God was taking His hand of blessing off of His people.

But in the midst of that very bad time God, being rich in mercy, was raising up a prophet. He was initiating a man, setting him aside. He was going to give him a ministry and anoint him with that ministry. He was going to be one of the greatest prophets that Israel had ever known. What happened when King Uzziah died? Very bad time for Israel. God lifted the fog from Isaiah's eyes. Why did He do that?

You see, when God moves in our lives, folks, when ministry becomes what it really ought to be and not something that we have fabricated and asked God to bless; when God lifts the fog right off our eyes. Back in Romans 12 when he says, "I beseech you, therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God that you will present your bodies a living sacrifice," and he goes on. Then he says on down just a few verses later, now let me show you what the church is really all about, it is not an organization it is an organism. It is made up of gifts that must function together." God has to lift the fog from our eyes. He did the same thing with Isaiah. You see, God wants to show Isaiah who is really in control.

Several years ago, I spoke on the International Congress on Revival Team for about ten years. My wife got to go with me quite a bit, and we were able to go to Slovenia. When we landed in Slovenia, the only way I knew we were in Slovenia, was because they said we were in Slovenia. And I took their word for it. It was foggy, it didn't look very good to me. We went to the hotel where we were having the conference. I could tell there was a lake out back with ice on it, because every now and then I could see somebody go across it, walking across that lake. But I thought, "What does this place look like?" For a whole three days we were in the fog; I mean, in the fog. We could not see what was really there. Oh, my goodness, on that fourth day, when that fog lifted, it took everybody's breath. Oh, my goodness, there's the Alps, right there right on the flip side is Austria, Switzerland. I mean it was the most beautiful country I had ever seen in my entire life. That lake that was frozen over looked like a Christmas card. There was a foot and a half of snow everywhere and people right on the lake skating, ice skating across, and holding hands. It was just like one of those Christmas cards that you get. What a beautiful place, but we couldn't see what was already there because we were in the fog.

Understand what I am saying. If you are not walking, yielded to the Anointed One who lives within you, you are living in the fog. You can't see what reality is all about. You hear what we say from the pulpit, and it sounds like a foreign language until God lifts the fog. And then, then, you see what ministry is all about. God had to lift the fog for Isaiah; and when He did, it changed his life forever. God lifted Isaiah's eyes from the fog of uncertainty of what was going on in that country in that day. He lifted the fog to see the One, the reality of sovereignty of who was really in control of what was going on. Isaiah needed to see that because down on this earth it was foggy and looked pretty chaotic. But when God lifted the fog, then Isaiah was able to see what he couldn't see before.

Isa 6:1: "In the year of Uzziah's death, I saw the Lord sitting on a throne, lofty and exalted with the train of his robe filling the temple. Seraphim stood above him, each having six wings: with two he covered his face, with two he covered his feet, and with two he flew."

Do you realize what God did? God took Isaiah into the throne room of heaven. In order to do what God had set Isaiah apart to do, Isaiah had to have this understanding. He had to lift the fog. He had to show him the majesty, the sovereignty and the holiness of God, so that everything that Isaiah would do from that point on would be based on what realness really was.

He "saw the Lord sitting on a throne, lofty and exalted, with the train of his robe filling the temple." Only a few in scripture have been able to see that. The apostle Paul was able to see it, but couldn't speak about it for 14 years. John was able to see it and even to pen what he saw; and therefore, we have as the last book of our Bible the book of the Revelation, not the book of Revelations; no, sir, the book of The Revelation of the Apostle John.

When he saw the Lord sitting on the throne, the word "sitting" indicates total rest and total control. God was not standing up, wringing His hands and saying, "Oh, my goodness, look what's happening to Judah. I don't know what I am going to do." Even though the times were chaotic and bad on earth, God was at rest in Heaven, because He was totally in control of what was going on.

He was sitting on the throne; it says "high and lifted up." The throne was evidently elevated. A better translation would be "a lofty and an exalted throne." He's looking up at the one sitting on the throne. It's as if he was standing there in amazement. It had to be a ways back, because the scripture tells us in the New Testament that God dwells in unapproachable light. The brightness of His being on that lofty and exalted throne must have been something he had to contend with as he tried to get a grasp of what he had been allowed to see.

The temple in which God was seated was the original of the copy that was made and dedicated down here in the Old Testament. The actual word for temple in Isa 6:1 is the word palace. It is the word that signifies this is where God rules in the Holy of Holies of the heavenly tabernacle.

My first trip to Albuquerque, NM, was when I was 15 years old. I was with the Boy Scouts, and I was going to Philmont Scout Ranch. We stopped in Albuquerque and stayed at Kirkland Air Force Base. They were so nice to us, back in those days and they let two of us at a time—listen to this—we got to go up into the Control Tower. I never realized how chaotic that looked when you were up there. Here is a big screen, and planes everywhere with little numbers or something on them, little boxes indicating the plane. I looked at that and said, "Man, that is the biggest mess I've ever seen in my life; this is chaotic. Somebody is going to fly into

somebody." I mean, every little space there represented an altitude. The guy, who was in control, was just sitting there talking to each one as if he knew them personally. And he says, "Okay, number such and such, yeah that's good; and number such and such, down a little bit. Yeah, okay." And he would bring them in right on time. It was as if in all that chaotic mess somebody was sitting there absolutely in control.

And that's what God allowed Isaiah to see. "Isaiah, it's a big mess down there, isn't it?" I might say that you and I, we're coming into an election year, "big mess down here, isn't it?" I don't know what party you have, that's between you and God. But I'll tell you one thing, when you look around, it's not good. Lines are clearly drawn. Oh, my goodness, God, do you know what's going on down here? And God just leans over and says, "What are you wringing your hands for? I'm the one who is in control. I raise up kings, I establish kingdoms. I'm in control. Isaiah had to see that or he'd never be the prophet God wanted him to be.

God's robe was so magnificent that the train of it filled the whole temple. Can you imagine that? Can you imagine a robe that filled this whole auditorium?

In Isa 6:2 it says "seraphim, stood above him, having six wings: and with two he covered his face, and with two he covered his feet, and with two he flew." The word "flew" there has more the idea, yes, he could fly, but it was more like hovering. They hovered. They hovered above the throne.

Actually, they would not have hovered above Him on the throne. As you will see in a moment, there was much more reverence for Him than we've ever had down here on earth. They would have hovered over His train of His robe. Their humility before God is breathtaking. They hovered there, but with their other two wings, their upper two wings, they covered their face, because they did not feel worthy to look upon the one who sat upon the throne.

And with two wings they covered their feet. These angels who hovered around the throne were so in respect of who God is. Don't you wish, just for one day that we could have a church full of people with this kind of respect for who God is? That they wouldn't even dare to look upon Him because of who He is and the holiness that He is?

Well, the angels were mentioned as Seraphim and that's the only place in Scripture they are mentioned, Seraphim. Not the Cherubim, but the Seraphim. The word Seraph is the word in Hebrew that comes from flame or fire. There are many who suggest that their wings were flames of fire, as they would hover; and the flames cover their eyes and the flames cover their feet.

Well, Isaiah is being set apart. But to be set apart, he had to see the holiness of the God who gives him the gifts, and gives him the ministry and gives him the effect. The absolute purity of God. Before Isaiah could ever begin to be a prophet, he had to understand who was in control every moment of every day. God was raising up a man who would be one of the greatest prophets in scripture. To do so, God had to set him apart. He was set apart as a man who had seen and been in the presence of God. God was initiating a ministry.

Ministry will only occur in your life and in my life—and you think about it for a second—think about how we play games with ministry: I want it this way, and I want it that way, and if you don't do it the way I want it, I'll go someplace else; and all of the stuff that comes out of the people who are supposed to have a respect for God. And I want you to know that when you get in His presence you'll never again try to hold on to a ministry with your hands. You'll understand the purity of the one it flowed from, who initiated it, who anoints that ministry.

My prayer is today, "Oh, God, lift the fog; oh, God, lift the fog. People can't see for looking. God lift the fog.

Second thing, not only did he lift his eyes so that he could see, he opened his ears so that he could sense. Now you say, you don't sense with your ears, even though it's one of the senses; you hear with your ears. Oh, no, I haven't finished yet. He wanted him to hear something, but by hearing something, and seeing something, there was going to be a sense of the holiness and the humility and the respect that the heavenly creatures had for God. He had to get that down, he had to understand that. God was initiating a ministry in his life. He had to understand the respect God would desire from him and command from him, because in Heaven it was there; but on earth it was rare to be seen, especially in Judah, who had completely walked away from who God is. Ministry will only occur in your and my life when God has opened our eyes to realize how holy and how pure He is. He wants him to hear something.

What Isaiah was allowed to hear was respect of all the beautiful creatures in Heaven and what they were singing. It says in Isa 6:3, "and one called out to another and said, 'Holy, Holy, Holy is the Lord of Hosts. The whole earth is full of his glory.' And the foundation of the threshold trembled at the voice of him who called out, while the temple was filling with smoke." Theologians tell us that this an antiphonal response here. Antiphonal simply means that one group is saying one thing, and another group is saying back, they responded back.

When it's written it looks as if there is only one angel, but actually what's happening here is there is a whole chorus of angels, sounding as if it is one. As they are hovering there above the train of His robe, they are singing back and forth, one to the other. One

group sings "Holy, holy, holy is the Lord of Hosts." Then the other one sang out, "The whole earth will be filled with His glory." "Holy, Holy, Holy is the Lord of Hosts," "and the whole earth shall be filled with His glory." In one study on angels I came across when I was studying this, says there are nine choruses of angels. They say the first rank was the Seraphim, that we're looking at, and the cherubim and throni. I'm not sure how all that works out, but one group, in reverence and humility, were singing, "Holy, holy, holy is the Lord of Hosts." The other one would sing out, "And the whole earth shall be filled with His glory."

You know what they were doing? It's a different song when John went into heaven, because it was a different day. What they were doing was giving a prophecy to Isaiah. Isaiah needed to hear this prophecy. "Holy, Holy, Holy is the Lord of Hosts." He'd seen and witnessed that. But the second part of that, "The whole earth shall be full of His glory." At the time he was taken into Heaven, this earth was surely not full of the glory of God, with all the chaotic things that were going on in Judah, and all the things that were going on in the world; Rome coming to exist as a powerful, pagan nation. But God would bring it to pass. This is the piece of prophecy that Isaiah had to understand.

You see, Isaiah was going to be given a message that nobody would ever listen to, and he needed to know that some time in God's divine prophetic future there would be a time when the whole earth would be full His glory. The design of the perfect one, the whole earth would be filled with His glory.

And, by the way, His glory is His manifested presence. And what the angels were singing was a prophecy they already knew from being in Heaven. They were saying to Isaiah, "Isaiah, one day, the one you see on the throne will be down here on this earth and the whole earth will be full of His glory. So when you are giving your judgment and you are pronouncing your woes, understand that it's going to be bad for a long period of time. But there is going to come a day that the whole earth will be filled with His glory."

Well, "holy, holy, holy" is a Hebrew way of making a point, singing it three times. Some theologians also say it represents God the Father, God the Son and God the Holy Spirit; the whole Trinity is being heralded as a revered the one sitting on the throne. The words of the chorus of angels, think about it for a second. I love to hear our music and I'm so grateful for it, but the words of the chorus of the angels was so profound, it shook the very temple where he stood. It was so awesome to hear this myriad's of angels singing and reverencing God and prophesying about the future that would come.

Isa 6:4 says, "And the foundations of the threshold tremble at the voice of Him who called out." And then it says, "while the Temple was filling with smoke." Have you ever studied Revelation? Right before the last judgment, how the holy of holy fills with smoke. It's almost as if he is saying the day will come when the whole earth can be filled with His glory. The Temple will be filled with smoke.

When I was studying Revelation, I had a thought, I can never prove it, but you know why I think it's filled with smoke? I think the Father is weeping because He desires that none should perish, none should not come to know His Son. There's going to come a day when the Temple fills with smoke and the judgment will fall upon this earth but after that, it says the whole earth will be filled with His glory.

Well, Isaiah had a vision. God let him see, opened his eyes, lifted the fog, and he saw the holiness and the majesty and the sovereignty of God who is absolutely in control. He heard the reverence and the humility of the angels as they sung about the one who set on the throne and what He was going to do in the future.

Well, Isaiah would never be the same again. And, again, my prayer for us, "Oh, God, lift the fog. Help us to see you and in seeing you, Father, help us to see the wickedness of our flesh. Help us to understand why the confession of sin is important. Help us to understand the way we talk about each other and the things that we say callously as if you are not there, as if you don't even exist. Oh, God, lift the fog."

He opened his eyes that he might see, he opened his ears so he could sense. But the third thing I want you to see is that God opened his lips so that he could speak. God had to cleanse him. Once he saw the Lord, he saw himself. Isaiah was to be a prophet. Prophets proclaimed a pure message from God, but God had to purify his lips.

Look what happens, when Isaiah saw the holiness of God, when he witnessed the reverence of the holy creatures, look what he said: Isa 6:5, "Then I said"—he wouldn't have said this before then; he didn't even see it, didn't even recognize it before then—"Woe is me, for I am ruined! Because I am a man of unclean lips, and I live among a people of unclean lips; for my eyes have seen the King, the Lord of Hosts."

In that moment of having seen God for who He is, in that moment he saw the sickness of what he was apart from God. I wonder, when he said "I'm a man of unclean lips," I wonder if he had been criticizing God for the chaotic experience that he's having to go through down here on earth. You remember another prophet did that, Habakkuk. "Lord, what do you make me see these things for?" I wonder if he'd been criticized. I wonder if he'd been bemoaning the political situation. I wonder if he'd been bemoaning the economic downfall that was going on in his country.

I wonder if he had been a man who suddenly, when he suddenly saw the purity of the praise that flowed out of the heavenly creatures for the one who set upon the throne, I just wonder, I wonder if he didn't then see what came out of his mouth that revealed the sickness of his life. He says, 'Woe is me, I'm a man of unclean lips.' Boy, that would be a tough situation, wouldn't it? To be in heaven and suddenly realize what you're not and the fact that you don't even belong there.

But look at the mercy of God, Isa 6:6: "Then one of the seraphs flew to me with a burning coal in his hand which he had taken from the altar with tongs, touched my mouth with it, and said 'Behold, this has touched your lips and your iniquity has been taken away and your sin is forgiven.'" The angel in that act was purifying his mouth, his lips. The angel was enabling him now to be the prophet of God. It was the enabling through cleansing.

Do you realize when God lifts the fog, every one of us is going to be on the floor? Every one of us is suddenly not going to be pointing fingers at everybody else. Suddenly we're going to realize the overwhelming message of grace; we're going to understand what sin really is. Before we can ever be usable to God, it's going to have to be through an act of cleansing through the blood of Christ. For us to be what God wants us to be, there has to be a cleansing; God has to purify our lives if ministry is ever going to take place. So many people are seeking to do for God, with unclean lips, which reveal nothing more than unclean lives. That's what religion propagates. God opened his eyes to see, his ears to sense and he opened his lips to speak.

But there is one more. Finally, God opened his heart to serve. When Isaiah had been cleansed, humbled and changed, that's the first time he could hear God's call. You know, there is a scripture in the New Testament that says, "Where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is liberty." To me that means the gifts are free to operate, the service gifts in the body. Why? Because people are finally hearing the call. They are understanding what it is God's put them on this earth for; they are beginning to understand they were gifted in the body of Christ and there is a function for them and they begin to hear his call.

When God intervenes in a believer's life, perhaps in the study of God's word, perhaps in a service where God's word is being preached, perhaps in a difficult circumstance, like in the days of Uzziah's death, He humbles that believer with the understanding that it's not about you. I imagine that when Isaiah stood in Heaven, in the presence of God and the holy angels, I imagine that when he stood there, he felt about as insignificant as he had ever felt in his entire life. Until a man has that kind of attitude toward God—as a matter of fact, there's a word tapeinophrosune in the New Testament means, the attitude a person has. It is a man who has been in the presence of God and now has seen himself for what he really is.

And the word tapeinos means that he gets down on the floor and he gets down as far as he can get and if he can find another hole, he'll dig it a little deeper, because he knows that there is not one single thing about himself that is impressive to God. Not one single thing; not his business experience and how well he built his company, not the money he has in his bank or his retirement portfolio. That is not at all impressive to God. When he is in the presence of God, he understands ministry is in the hands of God and whatever he does must be handled carefully, because God initiates ministry and God anoints ministry.

Isa 6:8 says, "Then I heard the voice of the Lord say, 'Whom shall I send, and who will go for us?'" And then Isaiah said, "Here am I, send me." Boy, the marvelous anointing that happening right now. God even gave him the ability to say yes to Him.

Now, here is a man of unclean lips who had to go through the cleansing in Heaven, and now he is able to stand up on his own two feet and say, "Here am I, Lord. Send me," when He says "Who will go for us." Certainly the Trinity, but also the heavenly host: They couldn't come down; it had to be a man down here on earth that God was looking to raise up. The message that Isaiah would proclaim would never be heard. If you read on in the chapter, he says, "For how long, Lord, do I have to preach a message that people will not listen to?" And God says, "Till the end, son; till the end." Tradition is that he was sawn in half as he was martyred for his stand for God. But God would enable him. What God initiates, God anoints. Don't ever, ever miss this.

We're in a different covenant than Isaiah. You see, God anointed us with His power by sending the Holy One, the anointed one to come and live in us. You realize the better covenant that we're in? Built on better promises. And do we all understand this morning that all we have to do is bow before Him and He will overwhelm us with who He is. And then He begins to raise ministry up in our life. He lives in us to enable everything He commands us to do. He sets us apart in the uniqueness of our gifts, and the uniqueness of ministries and effects. And we can actually be usable to Him in our day. All the ingredients are there. All that God is looking for is our willingness to yield to Him and He will divinely use us for His purposes. What God initiates, God anoints.

Can I ask you a question this morning, what's God doing in your life? Is the fog still setting in there? Everything is chaotic? Nobody is right in the body of Christ, but you; and if people would just listen to you, things would be better? Or have you finally come to the place that God has lifted the fog. There is not one single thing He's impressed with about us, except when He looks at us and sees Himself. I want you to capture this moment this morning. I want you to capture this message:

In the year that King Uzziah died, I saw the Lord seated on a throne, high and exalted, and the train of his robe filled the temple. Above him were seraphs, each with six wings: With two wings they covered their faces, with two they covered their feet, and with

two they were flying. And they were calling to one another:

“Holy, holy, holy is the Lord Almighty;
the whole earth is full of his glory.”

At the sound of their voices the doorposts and thresholds shook and the temple was filled with smoke.

“Woe to me!” I cried. “I am ruined! For I am a man of unclean lips, and I live among a people of unclean lips, and my eyes have seen the King, the Lord Almighty.”

Then one of the seraphs flew to me with a live coal in his hand, which he had taken with tongs from the altar. With it he touched my mouth and said, “See, this has touched your lips; your guilt is taken away and your sin atoned for.”

Then I heard the voice of the Lord saying, “Whom shall I send? And who will go for us?”

And I said, “Here am I. Send me!”

Pillar 3 – God’s Platform for Ministry

John 11

True Ministry Flows from our Walk with God

Turn with me to John 11. That’s where we are going to be camping out today. We’re going to be talking about the platform of ministry. What is that platform? That ministry is received from God, not achieved for God. Can I just ask you a question, if you’re like me, how many of you grew up the exact opposite? We’ve been achieving for a long time, haven’t we? Isn’t it awesome, we don’t have to achieve. God takes that burden off of us. We simply receive. We join Him in what He’s doing in this world.

Well, we’ve been studying the seven pillars that make up our philosophy of ministry. I’m so encouraged by so many of you. Matter of fact, I got a little note the other day that said, “the deprogramming is going great.” And that’s exactly what we are doing, we are being deprogrammed. Because if you will look in scripture, it’s not about what we can do for God, it’s about what He can do through us. Galatians 2:20, “It’s not me who lives but” what? “Christ who lives” where? “in me” It’s all about Him, it’s not about us.

Each week we’ve been adding one more piece to this puzzle. Now, I want to emphasize, don’t try to figure it all out based on one message. Each message builds on the one previous.

For instance, we looked at Pillar number one, which was the Pattern of Ministry. Now when you have a pattern, everything is cut according to that pattern. That’s why we started there. In 1 Corinthians 12:4-7, we discovered the gift, the ministry and the effect all originate from God. They don’t originate from men who sit around a table on a committee. They are born in the heart of God, they come from Him. Now, ministry doesn’t come from man’s ability, doesn’t come from his creativity, it doesn’t come from his intelligence. That’s not where ministry is born. But true ministry flows out of a believer’s walk with God. That’s why our emphasis is on being, so that the doing can take care of itself. It springs forth; true ministry springs forth out of our availability to God. Pillar number one shows, as I said, the pattern, and everything comes from that.

Pillar number two shows that what God initiates—the gift, the ministry, and the effect—God anoints with His divine enablement. We move from the source of true ministry to the force of true ministry. God initiates it; God anoints it. We looked at Isaiah, how God initiated the ministry of his being a prophet in Israel at that time. Now, granted none of us will ever, probably before the Lord comes, be taken into the throne room of heaven; unless we die and get to see Jesus first. None of us will be taken like Isaiah was. That was not the point of the message. It’s not where God took him, it’s what God did to him when he got there. That was the point of the message. What did God do? He revealed His holiness, and in that revelation, Isaiah saw the sinfulness of his own flesh. I want to make sure that we understand this. True ministry comes out of the one who understands the holiness of God; and therefore, understands the sinfulness of his flesh, which will be religious if given a chance. We must understand that.

God broke Isaiah of ever thinking that he could do anything apart from God’s empowering him in his life. It was there in that throne room, when he saw the Lord sitting on a throne high and lifted up. He heard the chorus of the angels. It was there that Isaiah made the statement, “Woe is me, for I am a man of unclean lips, and I dwell among a people of unclean lips.” How could he be a prophet with unclean lips? So the angel went over to the altar and took a coal and touched it to his mouth. In the cleansing of that moment, God opened his lips so that he could be the prophet He wanted him to be, and could speak the things that God wanted him to speak. God cleansed him.

But you say, “I’m not Isaiah. I haven’t been in the throne room of heaven. How is God going to reveal to me His holiness and the sinfulness of my flesh?” Oh, listen, we so often overlook this; we overlook that God, today, doesn’t have to take us into the throne room. He takes us into His word and in His word His spirit reveals to us what we need to see. Paul says in 1 Thessalonians 2:13,

“For this reason, we also constantly thank God that when you receive the word of God that you heard from us, you accepted it, not as the word of man, but for what it really is, the word of God, which also performs its work in you who believe.” The word of God performs a work in us. And God uses it to reveal to us what He had to take Isaiah into Heaven to show him. He shows us right in His word. Through preaching, the teaching and the studying of the word of God, God can clearly reveal to any heart that’s open to hear the sinfulness of our flesh and the holiness of God. We don’t have to be taken into Heaven to see this.

At a conference, when Dr. Stephen Olford, our dearly beloved man, who has gone on to be with the Lord, was preaching, the anointing of the Lord was so on him, the passage was so real and so alive that a man in the midst of it, a preacher, stood up and cried out, “Oh, dear God, there is sin in my life.” Dr. Olford stopped his message and said, “Oh, my dear brother, bow down and pray ‘Oh, God, bend me, bend me.’” I’m telling you, a touch of glory; we didn’t have to go into Heaven. Heaven came into that place. He saw exactly what Isaiah saw. When you preach these passages out of the Old Testament it doesn’t mean that we have to have their exact experience. God does the same thing, if we will just avail ourselves to Him and to get into His word.

Dr. Jerry Vines preached a message once called “The Ascended Christ.” I’ll tell you what, when I heard it the first time, and every time I’ve heard it since, I wore the tape completely out. I’ve had to pull off the road at times to just weep before God, as he talked about Jesus going back into heaven when he ascended off the Mount of Olives and when He saw His Father for the first time. It was the most awesome message I’ve ever heard.

I didn’t have to be Isaiah and go into Heaven. God took me there by listening to His word being faithfully preached. That’s how God does it. He doesn’t have to give us Isaiah’s experience, or Paul’s experience, or John’s experience. Oh, no, when man realizes the holiness of God and he understands the sinfulness of his own flesh, at that moment he approaches ministry in a totally different way. He doesn’t want to touch it unless God is a part of it. He understands whatever his hands touch is going to be impure. It’s got to be the hands of God. It’s got to be a Spirit of God doing through him.

It like they said about the Titanic, when it was built. It will never sink. And a man said, “Yes, it will. It was built by the hands of man, it can sink.” That’s exactly what happened. What man does, it burns one day at the judgment seat of Christ.

Men who understand this do not approach ministry lightly. He understands he is about to enter that which God is up to. The reflection of who’s doing it is God, and not himself. Until a man has seen himself in the light of who God is, there is no humility in that person’s life; no matter if he’s a Christian, no matter how religious or how spiritual he is. To an unbroken man, life is all about himself or herself. Ministry is something he can and will endeavor for God. That’s his arrogance. That’s why in Romans 12:3 Paul says, “Do not think of yourself more highly than you ought to think.” Then he begins to show how God’s orchestrated ministry in the church. Sadly, most of what we see in Christianity today is nothing more than man’s pride. It is man, in his element, doing for God out of his own ability.

Well, today, we are going to look at Pillar number three. Now that we’ve seen Isaiah and what God had to in his life and how he can do that in our life, we’ve seen where ministry comes from. Today we’re going to talk about the Platform of Ministry. The platform is that true ministry is not achieved for God, it is received from God. It is joining Him. You say, “Where is that in scripture? I just wish you’d be a little bit more clear.”

I’m so glad you said that. Acts 20:24, the apostle Paul says, “I do not consider my life of any account as dear to myself so that I may finish my course and the ministry which I received from the Lord Jesus. I testify solemnly of the grace of God.” He said again in 2 Corinthians 4:1, “Therefore, since we have this ministry” and then he says when he received it, “as we received mercy” —in other words, at the moment he was saved, is the moment that ministry began in his life—“we do not lose heart.”

And then writing to the Colossians, he said in Colossians 4:17, “Say to Archippus, take heed to the ministry which you have received in the Lord that you may fulfill it.” There’s so many passages, as I was studying this I was thinking, “Where in the word am I going to camp out?” Every one of them has a text behind it and this could be a series right in itself, just in this one pillar we’re looking at.

But there was something as I was praying I want you to see about joining God in what He’s doing. I want us to understand why this truth is so difficult for the human brain to comprehend. I want us to see why. We’re going to see ourselves today. We’re going to see ourselves in a story in John 11. We’re going to see ourselves in Mary and Martha. We’re going to see ourselves in the disciples. Why it is that we fail so often to join Him in what He’s doing. Why is it we would rather do what we think we can do and ask Him to bless it? I think we’ll understand ourselves better, hopefully, after today. Why is it such a foreign language to preach this message? Why is it that people hear it and say, “Why haven’t I heard this before?”

Well, let’s look into the story. I think these characters will help us all to understand the difficulty. I’m telling you this message is not something that is just taught, it’s caught. Until the Holy Spirit reveals it to the heart it’s not comprehended in a good way.

There are four things I want you to see from the characters in John 11. First of all, here’s the first thing that is a reason why it is so

difficult for us: We haven't yet learned the difference between the obvious and the actual. You say, "What are talking about?" Well, hang on.

John 11:1-3: "Now a certain man was sick, Lazarus of Bethany, the village of Mary and her sister Martha. It was the Mary who anointed the Lord with ointment and wiped His feet with her hair whose brother Lazarus was sick. So the sisters sent word to Him saying, 'Lord, behold he whom you love is sick.'"

None of the characters in this story, not one of them, could have realized that the event that was going to take place with Lazarus was going to be the event that was going to pull the trigger on Jesus being crucified. None of them could have understood that. Matter of fact, chapters 10, 11 and 12 of John depict the events that lead to the Upper Room discourse, but ultimately to the crucifixion of the Lord Jesus Christ. Christ had the big picture all the time. Everything He does in chapter 11 is working out of a bigger picture, the actual. He's not going to be caught up in the tyranny of the obvious. He's not going to do that. He has the big picture. Mary and Martha have the little picture. They see what they think is obvious. They don't understand there is a much bigger picture involved.

Well, Mary and Martha knew that Lazarus was sick to death. Isn't that obvious? So they immediately sent a message to the Lord Jesus to tell Him about it. Now, Mary and Martha were sisters of Lazarus.

John takes great pains in making sure that we understand this family. In Jn 11:1 he says, "Mary and her sister, Martha." Jn 11:2 says, "It was Mary whose brother was sick." So you see a little family here, Lazarus and his two sisters, Mary and Martha. John even identifies Mary as the one who anointed Christ's feet with oil. That doesn't even pop up until the 12th chapter of John.

So here is a little family who has a real problem. In their minds it is the actual situation. They want Jesus to know about it. More than that, they want Jesus to do something about it, now. So they send a message to Jesus. Now, obviously, somebody had to go and tell Him. Whether it was written or spoken, I don't know. But they sent a message to Him. The message said, "Lord, he, whom you love, is sick." The word love there is an interesting word. The word is *phileo*, and it means to cherish somebody. In other words, "he whom you cherish, Lord, your dear friend is sick."

Now at first glance there is nothing wrong with the message. I mean, my goodness, they just want Him to be aware of it. But after reading the whole passage through, if you read the whole chapter, there is definitely something they were saying, without saying it, by sending Him this message. Not one time did they ask Him to come. But, buddy, they were saying that big time. You say, "You're reading that into scripture." Now, wait a minute, wait a minute. You're saying to me, 'Maybe they are like the centurion, who had a servant that was paralyzed and he came to Jesus. He said to Jesus, 'You don't have to go there, just speak the word and it will happen.' And certainly it took place. That's what they were doing. That's why they didn't ask Him to come. They just wanted Him to speak or do something from where He was, and that would cause Lazarus to be well, to be saved from death.'

Well, that sounds logical, and I really wish I could believe it. But when He gets there He runs into Martha. Listen to what Martha says to Him in Jn 11:21, "Martha, then said to Jesus, Lord, if you had been here my brother would not have died." In Jn 11:31, Mary says the very same thing. Ah, no, Mary and Martha wanted Jesus there. When the message was delivered they fully expected Him, because that's His cherished friend, to come immediately and to heal Lazarus. "Lord, if you don't come Lazarus will die."

To them that was the obvious; they really thought that was the problem, and they were so very wrong. This is where we miss it. When God is in charge of something, He does things His way, not our way. They had assessed the situation; they had come to the conclusion that Jesus needed to be there right when they wanted Him.

But Jesus knew exactly what was going on. In fact, I think John 11:4 is a message He sends back to them—it doesn't say that; I cannot prove it. But he says, "When Jesus heard this He said," and, by the way, "heard this" I guess that tells us it was spoken. "This sickness is not to end in death, but for the glory of God, so that the Son of God may be glorified by it."

Now, can you imagine, let's just think for a second. Maybe it was a message he sends back: Somebody had to come and tell Him. He responds, and they go back and say, "Oh, don't worry about it, Jesus said this sickness is not going to end in death." They forgot all about the last part "it's for the Son of God to be glorified." We never hear that when we are caught in the trauma of the moment. We're only interested in what's going on as far as what we think God ought to do in our life.

Lazarus' being sick was a situation that would be used to glorify Christ. It would fulfill His purpose on this earth. Jesus knew how this specific situation fit into a bigger plan, but Mary and Martha were emotionally attached at a moment. What they thought was the obvious, was not the actual, of what was going on.

The reason we fail so often in joining Him in what He's doing is that we're always looking at the obvious. We never seem to back away and say "What's the bigger picture of what God is doing in this circumstance? Why is this being allowed for us to go through in our life?" What was going on with Lazarus was far bigger than what appeared to be the obvious to Mary and to Martha. Our problem

is the same that they had. We do the same thing. We ought to all see ourselves in this from time to time. Matter of fact, daily I'm reminded of this truth. Because what you expect God to do isn't on our timetable.

Years ago, we were trying to raise some money to build an auditorium. A man in the church felt led to give us an 80-acre farm, the house, swimming pool, everything that went with it. It was paid for, but he just gave us the deed. Well, that was great, except now we had the problem of selling an 80-acre farm. He didn't sell it and give us the money, he gave us the farm, so we had to sell it and get the money.

Ten months, at least, went by trying to sell that farm. So we didn't know what to do. We prayed, and we did everything that we could do. We just did everything that we could do.

One night we had a meeting of our leadership, the Deacons, the Pastor and everybody was there. As we got together in that leadership meeting, a man brought up an issue that wasn't on the agenda. "Now come on, folks, get with the agenda. You got something, bring it next time. Don't bring it this time." But, he was an influential man, and he got his way, and so he started speaking, "We've got a man in our church that needs a van, and we have a van we don't use that much. Why don't we give him our van?"

I never will forget the response of one of the guys there, "Hey, listen, let's talk about that next time. We've got a problem, and our problem is we're trying to sell a farm, and we're trying to decide how we do this. Do we lower the price? What do we do?" Boy, he was just adamant that we need to deal with it. So finally, we all consented and said, "Okay." We went around the room, and you could see a lot of confusion. "Okay, let's get on our knees and pray." Everybody got on their knees and we prayed; talked about it a little longer. And suddenly the wisdom began to come.

And that's the way God works, by the way; it doesn't come in with the men, it comes up among the men when they are praying. And the wisdom begins to come to the surface, "Give the man the van." We were totally unanimous with it. We did, called him that night. Didn't come to any conclusion on how to sell the farm.

The next morning he came and picked up the van at 10:00 a.m. At 1:00 p.m. the farm sold.

You see, we fail to connect the dots. "Wait a minute, that's not on our agenda. Come on, we're dealing with this over here." God sees the big picture. And here we are praying for something over here, which we think is the obvious; and the actual is right back over here. And we miss it. This is why it is such a foreign language to us, when you start connecting with Him and what He's doing. His ways are not our ways; He doesn't do things the way we do them. When ministry is pure and flows out of His heart, it takes a whole different dimension in the way it's treated and the way it's experienced. So we must learn the difference between the obvious and the actual.

But the second thing, God's delays are not always denials. It's an interesting thing that Jesus does in the next two verses. It's incredible. Jn 11:5, "Now Jesus loved Martha and her sister and Lazarus. So when He heard that he was sick, he stayed two days longer in the place He was." I'm so glad Jn 11:5 came before Jn 11:6, aren't you? The word "love" in verse 5 is *agapao*, and it means to do what is best for somebody no matter how much pain or cost may come in doing it. Jesus knew they were going to be upset with Him. Jesus understood that, but He was doing what was best for them. He was doing what was not just best for them, but best for all men.

Jesus was loving them in what he did next. Jn 11:6 was a result of His loving them in Jn 11:5. When we join Jesus in what He's doing, we must realize it's not going to happen according to our time clock. Why? Because we don't have the big picture. He has the big picture, and it's not just going to be for us. It's going to be for the benefit of everyone. God will move when He is ready. He's slow, in our calculation, but He's never late. Have you discovered that yet? He's right on time, but His timing and ours is rarely ever the same. He has the greater plan. Therefore, His delays are not necessarily denials. He's waiting for all the pieces to fit before he brings them together.

What did He do in loving Martha and Mary? Jn 11:6, "So when He heard he was sick He ran immediately to be with them because he loved them"? No, "He then stay two days longer in the place where He was." I just know something about Martha from reading about her in scripture. I'm sure the anxiety level is very high at this point, maybe almost to the point of an antidepressant. I mean she is upset, "Jesus now did you hear me when I pray, do you love him? Certainly you love him." One day, two days, three days, "Where is He? I thought He cared, He didn't answer my prayer when I thought He was going to answer my prayer."

This is usually, in church circles, where we form a committee, and we take matters into our own hands. "God doesn't care, so we'll just do the best we can till He shows up." We are slaves—now listen to me, the human mind, and this is why the ministry, the true ministry is such a foreign language—the human mind is a slave to the tyranny of the urgent. "It has to be done now." How do you know that? "Because I figured it out, and I'm right." "God wanted my opinion, and I gave it to Him." That's in *Hesitations* 4:13. We don't understand God's delays. Just like Israel, we've seen His works and we pray accordingly. But we don't know His ways.

And that's why this message is such a foreign language to us. No wonder ministry is something that we do for God; we don't know the difference from the obvious and the actual. We certainly haven't learned that God's delays do not necessarily mean denials. God is not just going to do it for me. He's going to do it for the benefit of everyone. He doesn't work just for one, He works for all. What He does is in His time. He fits it in His schedule. When you join Him, you have to learn these things. It won't work the way you think it's supposed to work.

Thirdly, we operate out of fear and not out of faith. This is our problem. Most of us operate out of fear and not out of faith. We're afraid to get out of our comfort zone. Our comfort zone is so nice and secure. We don't like to step outside of that.

I personally think the disciples are the real comic book illustrations in this story. I just get hope, I get encouragement when I read about the disciples. I don't think they could get a job in the 21st century. I mean, these are characters. They have made up their mind that they are not going to Judea with Jesus. Bethany—and by the way, there are two Bethany's. They were in Bethany, but the Bethany beyond the Jordan. The Bethany where Lazarus was is two miles from Jerusalem, and that's in Judea.

You say, "What's the big deal about Judea? We've gotten off Mary and Martha, we'll leave them alone for a minute. We'll concern ourselves with the disciples. They had just recently been in Judea. There was trouble, trouble. In John 10:22 and following, Jesus was with His disciples in Jerusalem, which is in Judea. The Pharisees wanted Him to admit that He was the Christ, because they wanted to slay Him. In Jn 10:30, Jesus said to them, "I and the Father are one." And, boy, when He said that, they just fumed, smoke came out of their ears. They got rocks and tried to stone Him to death. He eluded them. He spoke to them again. They tried to seize Him and He got away from them.

Now they came over to the Bethany on the other side of the Jordan. While they were there, the disciples have been figuring, "two plus two equal four. We go back there, we go back to Judea, we go back to Jerusalem, they are going to get Him, and they are going to kill Him. If they kill Him, they are going to kill us. We're not going there, No way, Jose!" They figured it out, they are staying where it is comfortable. They are not about to join Him in His wanting to go back to Judea.

Well, follow this comical story with me. Be honest, and see if you don't see yourself somewhere in how they react. Remember fear is unbelief. Let me say that again: Fear is unbelief. Understand that. Jn 11:7, "Then after this, He said to the disciples, let us go to Judea again." Now watch, here are His wonderful disciples who say, "I love you, Lord." Peter said, "I'll die for You, Lord." Right!

Jn 11:8, "The disciples said to Him, 'Rabbi, the Jews were just now seeking to stone you, and are'" notice the next word "are we going" No, it doesn't say that, "are you going back again?" Oh, man, knuckleheads. "Are you going back? Well, great, we'll pray for you. We're not going, no way! We're not going back there." See they didn't even understand who He was. When you begin to understand who He is and when He speaks, you step out. When Peter was on the boat and Jesus said, "Come," he didn't step out on the water, he stepped out on the word because by that time, he'd begun to understand who Jesus was. They continued to struggle with this.

Jn 11:9, "Jesus answered, are there twelve hours in the day? If anyone walks in the day, he does not stumble, because he sees the light of this world. But if anyone walks in the night he stumbles. Light is not in him." Unbelief is fear, and fear is darkness. You say, "Ah, but I don't want to step outside my comfort zone. I know God has spoken to my heart, but I'm not about to do that because I'm comfortable where I am. Leave me alone. I'm going to do ministry my way." That is nothing more than darkness, and it is the essence of what fear breeds in our life. Only when we obey Christ are we walking where we can see. Otherwise, we are floundering around in the darkness. Most churches fall into that trap. They are afraid to take that step. God says, "Step into the water of my will," and they say "No, because it is going to cost me." "No, because I'm afraid of this or afraid of that." "I'm staying here. Now let's get a committee and we'll do it our way, till Jesus comes back." And they stumble around in the darkness.

Years ago, when my son was little, growing up he was always worried for me because I'd go to Romania. For 13 years I went to Romania. Three of those years were under Ceausescu, under communism. We'd go in under cover; if you can imagine me under cover. We also had a Tennessee orange van, we were real inconspicuous. My son would say to me when I'd leave, "Daddy, Daddy, don't go; don't go." I'd say, "Why, Son?" He'd have tears in his eyes and he'd say, "They are going to capture you and they are going to put you in prison and they'll kill you, Daddy." And I would say, "Thanks for the encouragement, Stephen, I really do appreciate that. I hope you haven't got a word that I messed somewhere along this way."

I would go over there and come back and sit him down in the den and we'd talk about my experiences. I was able to show him under the horrible deal of communism and what was going on in Romania at that time. I said, "Son, I was safer over there, more in the light over there, than I would have been in my den thinking that I was safe back at home." And I would take him right to the scripture over and over again. Folks, you aren't safe, you aren't even secure, and you don't even know where you're going, unless you've said yes to Jesus and been willing to take the next step that He's given you in your life. Even when it mean a step outside of the comfort zone.

Well, Jesus is beginning to read what's going on. In Jn 11:11, "And after that He said to them, 'Our friend Lazarus has fallen asleep. But I go so that I may awaken him out of sleep.'" That'll come back a little later, I'll bring that back up. The interesting thing here, the disciples weren't planning on going to Judea. When he said he was "asleep" they loved it. "Oh, this is wonderful; he's not actually sick. Jesus got a word from the Father, he's just asleep. We don't have to go! We don't have to go! We don't have to go!" I'm telling you, "thick, thick." You know the Lord Jesus used the word "sleep" The word is always used when it is meaning death according to the body, never to the spirit. When the body gets tired, it lays down. What does it do after it's slept awhile? It gets up. That's what's going to happen to our body, we put it in the ground, it's going to get up one day. And Jesus gave a beautiful picture of that. But they didn't understand; they thought He meant that he was just asleep.

Jn 11:12, "The disciples then said to Him, 'Lord, if he's fallen asleep, he'll recover.'" Isn't that awesome, I'm so glad. Oh, boy.

Jn 11:13, Jesus said, "Now Jesus had spoken of his death, but they thought he was speaking of literal sleep."

So in Jn 11:14, "Jesus then said to them plainly Lazarus is dead." Do you understand?

Jn 11:15, look what he says. And it's so important because he's pointing something out. And it needs to be pointed out in our life. When God speaks—and he speaks through His word and through His leadership and in others ways in your life—when God speaks we step out. You never, ever question. If you do, then you are right back in darkness again. He said, "I am glad for your sakes that I was not there."

Now, why would he say that for the disciples? Why? "So that you may believe. But let's go to him." What? Disciples who said they would die for Him: "That you may believe." That is the problem, unbelief is fear and fear is darkness. He's pointing something out here; they didn't understand you join Him, even if it to go back to where it is dangerous over in Judea. You join Him and you're only safe when you're walking with Him. Jesus nailed their unbelief. "You're my disciples, and you don't even believe me? You're looking out for yourselves. You're full of fear, you don't want to get out of your comfort zone. You just don't trust me." Well, have you been there? Boy, I've been there, many times.

Then Thomas throws in his two cents worth. This is the one that really gets you, the anger. "Therefore, Thomas who was also called Didymus [the twin] said to his fellow disciples, 'Let us also go, so that we may die with Him.'" Lots of people say look at his loyalty. Yeah, I see that, but do you see the other side of that? Whoever said anything about anybody dying? But he's already figured it out, hasn't he? Good old Thomas. Boy, I've been in many a business meeting that I've had people stand up on the business meeting floor. "Well, it seems to be unanimous, except for me, and we're going to try to borrow this money or whatever we're going to do. I'll tell you what, I'll just go ahead and concede. I'll be with you, although we're all going to go bankrupt together, we'll at least be unanimous." Thanks, a lot. Lots of people are that way. They have already figured out the worst is going to happen. You see, this is unbelief. Why would they think the worst was going to happen? Man, they are with [[Jesus]], the one who spoke [[creation]] into existence. And they are questioning?

Well, it is ignorance. He had a little bit of loyalty, pat him on the back for that. At least he's willing to die with Him. It came out of a lack of trust of who He was. They still didn't grasp who they are dealing with. I wonder if we do today. We can't see the actual for the obvious. We're always thinking "this is the obvious, isn't it?" We haven't learned that God's delays are not necessarily denials. And we operate out of fear, instead of walking by faith, protecting our comfort zone.

Well, so far, no wonder we do ministry our own way because so far who needs Jesus anyway. He's going to do so different, we can't seem to accept it.

Finally, we fail to realize that, in joining with Him, we get to see what only He can do. Only when we join with Him and we begin to accept the fact that His timing is not our timing. We begin to step outside of our comfort zone and take the steps He tells us to take, only then do we get to see what only He can do. Remember back in Jn 11:11? I said I would bring it back. "He said to them, 'Our friend Lazarus has asleep.'" But then He says, "But I go so that I may awaken him out of sleep." Now, here's what He's saying: 'You're going to go with me; I'm going to show you what belief is all about. I'm the only one in this group that knows what's going on and secondly can do what needs to be done. I know the need that Lazarus has. I understand the prayer of Mary and Martha, but I want you to go, because you are going to watch me do what only I can do. Jesus waited two days because He wanted a resurrection. Mary and Martha wanted a healing, that's all they wanted, but Jesus backed off and said, "No, I want a resurrection."

Which one would you rather have? Which one are you clinging to in your life? Four days had elapsed when Jesus finally got there. Jn 11:17, "So when Jesus came, he found that he had already been dead in a tomb for four days." Now Jesus knew that from day one. He said he was "asleep." He already knew that Lazarus was dead. In four days. One day, I guess for the runner to get back. Two days when He stayed where He was and one day to travel there, I guess. I'm not sure how that works itself out. But he's been in the tomb four days when Jesus gets there.

Now the four days were significant, because in Jewish thought the spirit left the body after the third day. In other words, you can

understand the urgency of their prayer, that was in their superstition. So they were saying, “Lord, you better get here quick, because the Spirit is going to leave the body on the third day.” He wasn’t just sick, he was dead. And Jesus knew that. This is going to be the miracle of all miracles, to bring somebody back from the dead. On the fourth day, when the spirit has supposedly left the body, basically when He gets there. We’ve already read Jn 11:21-22. When He gets there, Martha says, “Well, Lord, if you’d been here, he wouldn’t have died.” In other words, you can’t do anything now, and you can’t do anything here. It’s too late. You didn’t do it the way we told you to do it; therefore, now you can’t do anything.” Mary said the same exact thing. Even when he was right there in front of them, the unbelief is so clear in who He is and what He could do. The situation was just too bad, Lazarus was dead. Well, way to go, Martha, Mary.

But when Jesus stood before the tomb—and I’m making this short—He says “Take me to where he’s buried.” And He went to the tomb. He told them to roll the stone away. Martha even said, “Anything you ask of God, He’ll do it.” Excuse me Martha, do you understand who you are talking to? Well, she kind of had a little bit of hope there. But when He gets to the tomb, Jn 11:39, “Jesus said, ‘Move the stone.’ Martha, the sister of the deceased, said to Him, ‘Lord, by this time there is going to be a stench, a stink, for he has been dead four days.’” Oh, Martha just sit down and be quiet. Lots of folks like that in the Kingdom, aren’t there? Verse 43, “Jesus stepped forward and said, ‘Roll that stone away.’ And they rolled it away. He said, ‘Lazarus come forth.’” One of the contemporary singers has a song about this and he depicts it as: Here is Lazarus in heaven telling everybody what’s going on in his life, and all of sudden, he’s talking to them and he says, “Excuse me, do what? Uh, do what? Excuse me, guys, I got to go.” And his spirit returns to his body. He comes forth. Now they had him wrapped in grave clothes. So I guess he had to walk like this. “And Jesus said, ‘Unwrap him and set the boy free.’” Unwrap his mouth, so he can witness; unwrap his hands so he can work; unwrap his feet so he can walk. Here’s a believer being set free. It’s always redemptive when Jesus is involved.

Well, God’s plan, God’s delays, God’s will is always redemptive so that unbelievers can come to know Christ or believers can finally get set free and get back up under grace and be the believers that God wants them to be. Ministry is received, not achieved. It is joining Him. That means a lot as we’ve just seen. Walking with Him, allowing Him to direct our path. It’s allowing the interruptions of life to become opportunities for Him to do through us, what we cannot do. So we begin to realize that the obvious is rarely the actual. That God’s delays are not necessarily denials. That we ought to walk by faith and not by fear. And that we get to join Him to watch what He can do. We just stepped up on the platform of ministry; it’s now received, it’s no longer achieved.

Pillar Four – God’s Priorities of Ministry

Romans 15:17-18;

Jeremiah 9:23-24

We’re going to talk today about the Priorities of Ministry. Really it’s one priority, but there are three things involved. True ministry is not a result of our commitment but it is a result of our surrender; and that’s what we want to talk about today.

As I was growing up during Christmas time, we didn’t have a television forever; and we were grateful for that. We’d get a big puzzle; we’d work it together as a family. We’d always get a big one, over 1,000 pieces. I couldn’t wait. We did not get a whole lot of things for Christmas, but we had plenty of fruit and we had a big old puzzle. Mom would fix a big old ham. It was good stuff. We’d get together and work that puzzle. You know, the first thing we had to do was to see the whole picture. We had to look at the whole thing and see what it was we were putting together. Then we would put all the different colored pieces together. Somebody would get it started. It was just the most fun. We’d never finish it in the first day. But we’d come back the next day and when we came back we had to do it once again, step back, look at the whole picture and then get involved and putting the pieces together. That was a great time; I miss those days.

Well, if you’ve made the mistake in listening to these Pillars we’ve been talking about, of somehow separating the seven pillars from what true Christianity is: Jesus being Jesus in us, moment by moment Christianity, trusting Him, the integrity and accountability built in because you can’t walk with Him that He doesn’t convict you of sin, you can’t walk with Him that He doesn’t hold you accountable, you can’t walk with Him without the word of God renewing your mind and the Spirit transforming your life. If you somehow, have separated these seven pillars over here as seven pieces of a puzzle, you forgot the picture. Then no wonder you might be confused about this time. Because, you see, you cannot separate the two.

For years we’ve been talking about what I call “Living Grace,” Christ being who He is in and through us; the life inside the coat, I’ve shared so many different times. “Jesus be Jesus in me, no longer me but Thee, resurrection power fill me this hour Jesus be Jesus in me. Lord, I can’t, you never said I could, You can, You always said You would.” Approaching life that way, waking up every morning, situation by situation and saying yes to Him: “Yes, Lord, yes, Lord, Yes, Yes, Lord.” If somehow in your mind, you’re thinking that the seven pillars are something else, you’ve missed it. Because, you see, the Christ in me is the well that all of this flows from. Ministry takes care of itself. We’re just explaining it in a more detailed way. You don’t even have to have these seven pillars, if you are walking, letting Jesus be Jesus in your life. So make sure that you are making the connection. One has to be there

before the other can take place.

So far we've seen three pillars. Pillar number one, we saw God's Pattern for Ministry, and every pillar that comes from that was cut from that pattern. First Corinthians 12:4-7, the Lord who lives in me, gives me the gift, gives me the ministry, and gives me the effect. That's the pattern for ministry; it won't ever be any different down here on earth, Christ living in me.

The second Pillar was God's Power in Ministry, from Isaiah 6. Whatever God initiates, the ministry, the effect, He anoints, which means that He divinely enables it with His power.

The third Pillar, we looked at last time, was God's Platform for Ministry. What is that? That ministry is not something achieved for God, but something that is received from God. We saw that from John 11. I guess the thing that still rings in my mind was what we've learned in John 11 from Martha and Mary and the disciples as to why it is so difficult to the human brain to understand this truth; why it is so difficult to join Jesus in what Jesus is doing.

We learned many things. We learned from Martha and Mary that they were not able to distinguish the obvious from the actual. They saw an obvious problem, Lazarus, their brother, was sick and so they sent and told Jesus. They couldn't have understood; they didn't understand that if you are going to join Jesus, He has a bigger picture than just Lazarus being sick. You see, this was going to be the miracle that was going to pull the trigger of Him going to the cross. They couldn't see that; therefore, they had an agenda. They said, "Lord, you need to be here; and you need to be here now." And they sent Him word.

Not only were they not able to understand the difference the obvious—which they thought was real and the actual, which He understood—but also, because of that they didn't understand that God's delays are not necessarily denials. When He got the message, the scripture told us last week that He stayed two more days. Thanks, Lord, I appreciate your moving when I think you need to move! One day for the message to get back to them that He sent; two days that He stayed, and then one day to travel to get back to the Bethany outside of Jerusalem, two miles from Jerusalem. He was at Bethany, but on the other side of the Jordan; there are two Bethany's. So when He gets there Lazarus has been in the tomb four days.

Martha sees Him and says, "Thanks, Lord; if you'd been here he wouldn't have died. You can't do anything now. You can't do anything here. He's dead. That's too big for you." And then when they got to the tomb, they even showed more of that disappointment. He said, "Roll the stone away." Martha, bless her heart, said, "Lord, it's going to stink by now, he's been in there four days." In the Jewish superstition they felt like the spirit left the body after the third day. No body had been resurrected on the fourth day. I believe that He purposely did that; we don't have any proof of that. I think He went on the fourth day for that very reason; this was the miracle among all miracles.

But, you know, not only that, they finally begin to grasp, the disciples particularly, that they had been living by fear and not by faith. You see they had built a comfort zone. They said, "Lord, are you going there? Ah, not us! We're not going there. We were just over in Judea with you and they tried to kill you. Lord, we put two and two together. Kill you; kill us, we're not going." And He said, "Don't you understand, unless you walk with me, you're walking in darkness, you're walking out of fear. Why don't you walk with me? You're more secure with me than you would be here." Well, they couldn't quite grasp it. They loved that old comfort zone, don't we all? They put little borders on it and said, "I'm not stepping outside this comfort zone, God. I'm not joining you, because I'm afraid of what might happen to me."

But then, the last thing we saw was they finally realized that only in joining Him do they get to see what only He can do. Martha and Mary wanted a healing; Jesus wanted a resurrection. Which one would you rather have? Boy, when He stood at that tomb and said, "Lazarus, come forth!" And old Lazarus, all bound, He said, "Unwrap him; take the blinders off of his eyes; take it off of his mouth, so he can witness; take the wrappings off of his hands, so he can work; take the wrappings off of his feet, so he can walk." Lazarus came back, isn't it incredible? It says on down, this was the miracle that caused them to plot to kill the Lord Jesus.

It was just no time before He was on the cross. You see, when you join Jesus, He just doesn't do thing our way. Somehow His watch is on a different time zone. Somehow He's always slow, but you know what? He's never late. His ways are not our ways. His thoughts are not our thoughts. So when we try to join Him it doesn't make a lot of sense when you sit around a table and try to figure it out. This is some of the hindrances that we all run into.

Our text today is Romans 15:17-18. Now in this message today, we're really going to jump back to chapter 1 in a few moments. We're going to see the heart of the apostle Paul. We're going to see what true ministry really is in the life a believer who loved God. But look what he says in Romans 15:17-18, "Therefore, in Christ Jesus, I have found reason for boasting in things pertaining to God. For I will not presume to speak of anything except what Christ has accomplished through me, resulting in the obedience of the Gentiles by word and deed."

Now the word "boasting" he uses in Ro 15:17, is the word *kauchesis*, comes from the word *kauchaomai*. It means to glory in something, to draw attention to something. It's mostly used in scriptures as a bad thing. It's mostly what arrogant, proud people do;

they call attention to themselves in many different ways. The root word that we get the word from is the word *aucheo*, the Greek word for neck. It has the idea of a proud, arrogant person sticking his neck out and calling attention to himself. Ah, haven't we all been there from time to time?

When I was growing up, we had a duck. Its name was Dippy. And Dippy was a good duck except it was a territorial duck and had a mind of its own. You talking about proud and arrogant, buddy, you did not infringe on his territory. Any time I got near him, my mama said, when I'd go to hug the duck, or pet the duck, the duck would take out after me and chase me around the house biting me. He had that neck stuck out and, man, he was just running after me. He's calling attention to himself and to his territory. That's exactly the idea of what we're looking at here. You know, men love to boast. Mankind loves to boast. All of us do, women or men; but mankind loves to boast. What are we boasting about? I'll tell you what we boast about, the Bible will tell us. Jeremiah 9:23 tells us what we love to boast in, what a man is most arrogant about, how a man draws attention to himself in at least three different areas. It says in Jeremiah 9:23, "Thus says the Lord let not a wise man boast of his wisdom, and let not the mighty man boast of his might, and let not a rich man boast of his riches."

Now, three things mankind loves to boast about, whether it be in the church; it can get into Christianity very easily: in what he knows, in what he knows. Dear old Vance Havner used to say, "We're dying by degrees, Ph.D.'s, D.D.'s, MD's LTD's, fiddledeedees." I can hear him say it today. It's like when you go into somebody's office and they have degrees wallpapering the walls. I want you to know something! They want to boast in what they know. "Wow! Am I not something?"

But secondly, mankind loves to boast in what he can do. He said, "Let not the mighty man boast in his mind." These campaigns we have in Christian circles, "We can do it, we can do it, we can do it; we can; you're okay, I'm okay; let's get this thing done.' Oh, boasting in what we can do? That's pretty sick.

And then the third thing that mankind likes to boast in, is what he has. He says, "Let not a rich man boast in his riches." We love to talk about what we have, don't we? This subconsciously comes out in the flesh; this is when the word is used in a bad way. Churches can do that. People can do that. Man loves to boast in these things. But God is not pleased with that kind of boasting. However, there is a boasting that He is pleased with. He says that in Jer 9:24, "Let him who boasts, boast of this that he understands and knows me, that I am the Lord who exercises lovingkindness, justice, and righteousness on earth, for I delight in these things, declares the Lord."

Now this is what Paul is doing in Romans 15:17-18, he's boasting in the right thing. He's not calling attention to himself. When he was a religious man, as a Pharisee, he always called attention to himself. Something has changed in his life; he's boasting in things pertaining to God. Look at the Ro 15:18, "For I would not presume to speak of anything except of what Christ has accomplished through me resulting in the obedience of the Gentiles by word and deed." Here's the former religious man saying something entirely as an antithesis to the thing he used to be.

The word "through"—For I would not presume to speak of anything except of what Christ has accomplished through me—is a little word *dia*. It means by the means of me. Paul had learned something. Paul had learned that he's not that important. Paul had learned that he can be a conduit, he can be a vessel through whom Christ could accomplish His works. He could live his life through him. He had learned this in the new relationship that he had with the Father, through Jesus Christ.

Wow. How different this is from Paul's own words describing what he used to be in Philippians 3:4, "if anyone else has a mind to put confidence in the flesh, I far more." What he's saying to the Philippians is, "You don't know how religious a man I was." He says in Php 3:5, "circumcised the eighth day of the nation of Israel of the tribe of Benjamin, a Hebrew of Hebrews; as to the law, a Pharisee, as to zeal a persecutor of the church, as to the righteousness which is in the law found blameless." But, if you know that passage, he goes on to say, "But I count every bit of it as loss, for the excellence of experiencing Christ in my life." Christ had taken a religious man, sincere in his heart, and turned him inside out, saved him, put him in the waters of baptism and brought him into the Kingdom. As a result of that now, Paul is a changed man. Paul now understands Christianity is not some religious effort; Christianity is a relationship; and he gets to participate in what God's doing on this earth. He's still living on this earth and in the lives of the people who have received Him.

Now, what was it about Paul's life that we can learn from today? He tapped into it; he experienced Christ in his life. How can we do the very same thing? How can we see ministry flow out of us? Something that we don't have to achieve for God, but something we can receive from Him? In looking at this and studying Romans, I didn't have to go past chapter 1. Three verses there tell me everything I'm looking for. You see, the one thing Paul had to do which has many dimensions to it—that's why we say Priorities instead of Priority—is that he had to learn to die to self. It's really a simple act; we die to self when we say yes to God and to His word. We're not talking about perfection, we're talking about a life style; we're talking about predictability. When we sin, we say yes to Him, agree with Him that we've sinned. We come and do what His word tells us to do. This is the lifestyle that we learn to adopt. If we're doing that, we're saying no to self. You can't say yes to self and yes to Christ in the same breath. You don't focus on self, you focus on Him. As you say yes to Him, victory is not overcoming sin, victory is Jesus overcoming you.

All those years Paul spent committed and determined to do it right were now replaced with a willingness to simply yield and say yes to God. "Lord, I can't, you never said I could, You can, you always said you would."

We want to look now at this newfound way of living in Paul's life. Let's try to discern, what was this surrender we're talking about? How do we know that our surrender is what [[God]] is talking about here in Paul's life and in our life? How do we know that? Romans 15:17-18 again, just to keep it in your mind: "Therefore, in [[Christ]] [[Jesus]] I have found reason for boasting in things pertaining to [[God]]; for I would not presume to speak of anything except what [[Christ]] has accomplished through me, resulting in the obedience [this is the eternal work it does] of the Gentiles by word and by deed."

Three things, first of all, Paul's surrender was without any selfish argument. You see, Paul's surrender was from his heart, not from his head. It wasn't lip service he was paying to God, it was something of his heart that had been surrendered to God.

Romans 1:1. If you want to look there with me, we'll start there. Three things in chapter 1 that will tell us everything we need to know about Paul, about his surrender. In Romans 1:1, it says "Paul, a bondservant, of Christ Jesus, called as an apostle set apart for the gospel of God." The word "bondservant" tells us everything that we're looking for about the surrendered heart that Paul had. The word bondservant is the Greek word *doulos*. It means slave. In fact, in most of the translations it is translated as slave. That's interesting. Why did the translators chose not to translate it that way here? Why did they put bondservant instead of slave?

Well, there were two kinds of slaves. The translators understood the meaning that Paul had here and tried to help us to understand the context of what's happening. A simple slave—which, by the way, in Roman times was very common; thousands and thousands of people had slaves—now, these slaves didn't want to be a slave. They were either born into slavery, or they chose to be a slave, or they were made to be, whatever. It wasn't something you grew up wanting to be. They did what they did because they had to. They always had a gripe, they always had an argument, they always had a complaint because they didn't choose to be a slave, and they didn't like having to do what they were doing.

But a bondservant was entirely different. A bondservant made a choice to be a slave. He did what he did because he got to. He did what he did because he wanted to. He loved his master. It was not something a person had to take out a whip and drive him to do. No, he did this out of a reflex of his heart, the love in his heart. In fact, scripture bears this out.

Matter of fact, the most beautiful picture of this—and I guarantee you this is what Paul had in mind, and exactly why the translators translated it this way. Paul didn't have the New Testament; he wrote three fourths of it—it comes out of the Old Testament. Deuteronomy 15:12-17 that tells us what a bondservant was. In Ro 15:12 it says, "If your kinsman," and this is Hebrew slave, different from Roman slave, I understand that. They could hire themselves out, they could be a slave to somebody, particularly if they'd gotten themselves into a debt. But there were rules on how you treated your slaves. "If your kinsman, a Hebrew man or woman, is sold to you then he shall serve you six years. But in the seventh year, you shall set him free, that's a Sabbatical Year." Leviticus 25, seven times seven of those times was the 50th year, was the Jubilee. So this was the sabbatical year, the year slaves were set free.

Ro 15:13, "When you set him free, you shall not send him away empty handed, you shall furnish him liberally from your flock and from your threshing floor, and from the wine vat. You shall give to him as the Lord your God has blessed you." You treat him just like you would a family member. This is the way Hebrews treated slaves, not the way Romans treated them.

Ro 15:15, "You shall remember that you were a slave in the land of Egypt and that the Lord your God redeemed you; therefore, I command you this today." Don't forget you were a slave and see how God treated you; now you treat them the same way.

Ro 15:16, "It shall come about, if he says to you, I will not go out from you"—Now that's an interesting situation. Here's a slave and he doesn't want to leave. It's the sabbatical year. — And he says, "Because he loves you and your household since he fairs well with you, then you shall take an awl [a little instrument they would use to drive through the ear and pierce it through it and into the door] and he shall be your servant forever. Also you shall do likewise to your maidservant."

You know, what happened was, after this sabbatical year when people would see the same slave continuing to serve his master they would step back and say, "Oh, what love is this? Look how he loves him. He was set free, and he made a choice to go back and to serve his master." Why? Because he loved him. That's like the disciples said to Jesus one day, "Lord, if we leave you where would we go? Nobody treats us like you treat us."

This is what Paul had in mind. Paul had been a Pharisee; he'd been a slave; he'd been obliged; he'd been commanded to obey the law. He had lived in that kind of bondage for years, now he'd been set free. Now he can make a love choice to become the servant, the slave of righteousness of the Lord Jesus.

But now this new kind of obedience as a bondservant that Paul had was out of his love for Christ. Hang on to that thought, because I don't want you to lose that. He was grateful and wanted to yield to the will that God had for him. The word bondservant expresses

the true heart of a believer who loves Christ and this becomes his motivation in all that he does.

Let me ask you a question. Why do you do what you do? That's the bottom line. It's not what you do, it's the motivation behind it. A bondservant has a heart, a bondservant says, "I want to. I get to. Thank you, Lord." But a slave says, "I don't want to. Okay, I'll do it." "Take him one mile." "I'll take him one mile and no further." A bondservant says "I'll take him as far as you'll let me take him. I'll take him as far as God will let me take him." You see, a slave obeys, yes; but he has a gripe to it. He has a complaint to everything he does. He always has an argument. He's not doing what he's doing out of a love for the Lord Jesus Christ. A slave doesn't understand obedience out of a pure love for his master.

One more time, why do you do what you do? Do we complain about everything that happens? Is our attitude one of selfish wants instead of grateful submission to Christ? Is it out of a grateful heart? Have you understood that He didn't need to save you, and He owes us nothing? Has it ever overwhelmed you to the point that you think, "Oh, God," like the Psalmist said, "what is man that Thou are mindful of him." And being so overwhelmed in who He is that you just do what you do and there is no complaint, there is no argument; there's no strife whatsoever.

If you are living that way, you are a bondservant and the ministry is taking care of itself. You don't have to worry about it. You don't even have to hear about the seven pillars. Ministry is already there. Your life is the seven pillars. Really, that would be my objective in this whole thing, that our lives be and reflect the seven pillars. Not something on a piece of paper, this is what we become. This is what we are. You wouldn't dare open your mouth; I wouldn't dare open my mouth if I were a bondservant about anything that I could do for God. Who am I, but flesh and blood and deserving of Hell? Oh, but I would open my mouth about what Christ has accomplished through me and so would you. And that's what Paul is talking about. It's a different kind of service. There's no complaint; there is no argument. There is no strife, because we get to do what we do.

Well, the reason Paul's surrender was without any argument, without any complaint, without any gripe was, secondly, because he had in his surrender, he had no soulish agenda. You see, one feeds the other. A selfish argument comes from someone who has a soulish agenda. When there is arguing and complaining, you can take it to the bank, there is a soulish agenda somewhere. What do I mean? There is a string attached somewhere. I'm doing what I'm doing, but I've got something that I want out of this.

Now, what am I talking about? Look at Romans 1:9. See, these verses tell us about a heart of a man, about his surrender. We see now what his surrender is like. He says, "For God, whom I serve in my Spirit, in the preaching of the gospel of His Son, is my witness as to how unceasingly I make mention of you." Now make note of that little phrase, "God, whom I serve in my Spirit." The term "spirit" refers to that part of man that God dwells and where He speaks to us through His word. It's equated, from time to time, with the heart. But it is a special, it's not a compartment, it's a part of man that God communicates with man.

Now let me explain, at the risk of confusing somebody, two theological terms that would be helpful to understand. One of the theological views of man is what's called the dichotomus view of man. What does that mean? This is the view that man is basically made up of two components, the physical and the spiritual; the body, the spirit; that is dichotomy of man. What they do, they take the soul and compress it into one; it's all the spirit. It's all the spirit. Man is physical; man is spiritual, period. There is no other compartment like the spirit where God dwells within.

But then there is the trichotomus view of man. That's the term, it's similar, physical and spiritual, but the spiritual is divided into two. There is the spirit where God dwells and speaks to us through His word. Then there is the soul. Now, the soul is the mind, the will and the emotion. The Greek term for that is *psyche*. In fact, animals have a soul in that sense. In other words, the soul is the immaterial part of us that enables us to relate to the world which we are in. Since in the Christian life, we are not relating here first, we're relating with God, then we have the Spirit and that's where God speaks to us. And then the will is affected, the mind can understand, and the emotion can take its place. So man is different, created, higher than the animals. We have a spiritual part of us.

Now both of these two views come out in scripture, in case you get confused. If you look at death passages, particularly in the Old Testament, it put the soul and the spirit together; they all go at one time. But when you get into the believer's walk, it's always the trichotomus view of man: body, soul and spirit. God speaks to us through His Spirit when we are yielded to Him, through His word and our minds have an understanding the world could not have given to us that we relate to. And then the will can be affected and the emotion. We get emotional about it because it is real to us. We see the trichotomus view in 1 Thessalonians 5:23, "May the God of peace Himself sanctify you entirely, and may your spirit and soul and body be preserved complete and without blame at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ."

So Romans 1:9, Paul say, "I serve God in my Spirit." Now he is telling us something here. He did not soulishly—the way man would serve God—he did not soulishly serve God. You see, a religious person doesn't have a relationship with God, only knows the soulish service to God, which is bondage and slavery. But a believer has been elevated. Christ has come to live in his spirit. Now he can understand, he doesn't live like he used to live.

The soul is where the fleshly agenda comes from. Paul says, "I don't serve God out of a fleshly agenda. With what my mind has understood, and with what my will has chosen to do." Paul served God in his spirit. Romans 1:9 is very similar to something Paul said in 2 Timothy 1:3, "I thank God, whom I serve, with a clear conscience." The word "clear" is the word *katharos*, which means unspoiled. In other words, it's been cleansed of something. Of what? Of any soulish agenda. The only way to get rid of soulish agenda is to yield to Christ with a heart that is grateful to serve and He cleanses us of any soulish agenda, and we are able to hear from Him in our spirit.

Our greatest battle is with our flesh. All of us know that. I've struggled with mine today. Galatians 5:16-17 tells us it's going to be a war, it's going to be a battle until Jesus comes back. The apostle Paul had to fight that same battle. One of the things he had to fight was his old soulish way of serving God. In 2 Timothy 4:7, he makes this statement, "I have fought the good fight, I have finished the course, I have kept the faith." The word "fight" there is the word *agon*. We get the word "agony" from it. Paul had agonized over this struggle.

But if you'll check that word out, every time it's referring to Paul, it's him dealing with his flesh. It's him dealing with something, it's not him defending the faith, etc. That was a given. It was his fleshly tendency to do things his own way. We saw that in Acts when he just tried his best to get his agenda done over in Bithynia, and Asia and Mysia. God said, "No, sir," and slammed the door in his face and brought him down to where he wanted him to be. He fought that all of his life. We all fight the flesh. We agonize over it.

Well, Paul had learned to allow Christ to have His way. Bottom line, have you come to that place? It was so sweet, the other night we had a young man come to know Christ. And he said, "I'm just at the end of my self; I'm sick and tired of doing things my own way. I want to do things God's way." Paul had learned to allow Christ to overcome him.

What's your fleshly agenda today? If you have one; you may not have one. I'm just asking the question. Do you have a fleshly agenda? Are there strings tied to your serving Lord? That's why you're always complaining and always arguing, because you can't do that unless you have an agenda somewhere that's hidden. The two walk and fit together. What is it that causes us to argue and complain in what we do in that which we call ministry? When there is no soulish argument, there is no selfish agenda

But the third and the final thing is this. Paul had no sinful attitude. This is really the root, right here. We're going at it backward, but this really where it starts right here. There was no selfish argument, when there's no selfish agenda, you can bet on it; there's no sinful attitude. But reverse it, when there's a selfish argument, when there is a soulish agenda; there is a sinful attitude somewhere.

Now what is that sinful attitude? This attitude poisons everything. Have you ever had a great day, and somebody woke up that morning determined that they were going cause you not to have a great day? They have the gift of dissension. Have you ever been around people like that?

It's incredible, you get somebody doing what they call the Lord's work and they have a sinful attitude, then that same person is going to have a soulish agenda and that same person is going to be the most critical, most judgmental. They are the people that will make life miserable for everybody. They are poison in the body of Christ.

Talk about having an attitude. I had a friend who had a Rottweiler, dangerous dogs. Everybody says that they are sweet, sweet little dogs. Well, he had two beautiful daughters, and his daughters were dating and that Rottweiler has grown up with those two girls and no body was going to take his girls away from him. Every time the boys would drive up to his house out in the country that Rottweiler would keep them inside the car. In fact, he was told by the boys, five of them, five different ones, that the Rottweiler had bitten a hole through the tire. He didn't believe it. He went to the vet and he said, "There's no possible way my dog would have that kind of strength" He said, "Sir, a Rottweiler has a bite that is 54 times that of a German shepherd. Yes, he can do that." That's how strong he is. Talk about having an attitude.

Paul was not a man who was filled with a sinful attitude. He didn't live life that way. No one owed him anything. You see, a sinful attitude says "I deserve something, because I've done something. And I'm a slave and didn't want to do it to start with. I deserve something." People who are on spiritual welfare, "Somebody needs to appreciate me." Paul said "I'm not that way."

Romans 1:14 says, "I'm under obligation, both to the Greeks and to the barbarians, both to the wise and the foolish." "I'm under obligation;" there's your phrase. Oh, wow, it means I'm a debtor. "Nobody owes me anything; oh, do I have a debt to pay. I'll never be able to pay it, but I have a debt. He wasn't talking about his debt to the Lord, he knows he can't pay that one back. This one was a debt to his fellow man.

The words "under obligation," *opheiletēs*, to owe a debt. It's in the present tense, which means I live with this every day. I go to bed with it at night, it hovers over me. I wake up in the middle of the night, it hovers over me. I get up in the morning, it hovers over me. There's a debt I owe to my fellow man. I don't live on spiritual welfare; I'm not asking somebody to do something for me because I have obeyed God. Paul says that's not who I am. Christ had saved him, and Paul knew that he didn't deserve that. He only deserved Hell, and he lived with that debt in him. It's kind of like being on a boat that's sinking and you are the only one who knows where the

life raft is. Somehow you were privileged to know how to be saved, and you now have an obligation to everyone on that boat, whether you know them or not, to tell them how they might get saved. Paul lived with that every day of his life.

How can you know when that sinful attitude is there? Well, you serve and you serve and no one ever thanks you for it. Nobody even gave me a little note of appreciation. That's how you know.

Thank, God, Paul was uniquely different. He did not have an agenda. He didn't have a sinful attitude. He certainly never had a selfish argument. Bondservants, they are the ones Christ is working through. They are the ones that are not fighting anybody anymore. They've given it up. They don't have a selfish argument; they don't have a soulish agenda; they don't have a sinful attitude.

When Japan surrendered to America, all the Generals were there. The Emperor of Japan came up. He didn't walk up and say, "Okay, guys, boy, you whipped us; that was a close one, but you got us. We surrender." No, sir, he took his sword, which was very strong language, handed it to the General of our forces and said, "We'll never fight you again." That's what surrender is. God, I'll never fight you again; I'll never fight you again. What if God told you to do that today? You see, when you have an agenda, you can't handle it because it doesn't fit your schedule. And by the way, there's a sinful attitude in me. I want what I want, and I'm going to argue about it, and because even though I have to do certain things, I've got a complaint. You see the difference? Wow.

Ministry is a precious thing. It's not about my fleshly commitment to do something for God out of an obligation, out of bondage to the law. But it is a simple surrender and a yielding to God. "Thank you, thank you, thank you, I don't deserve to be saved. Thank you for including me, thank you for letting me join you." That's what it is.

Pillar Five – God's Purpose in Ministry

Romans 11:33-36

Turn with me to Romans 11:33-36. We are on Pillar number five, "God's Purpose in Ministry." And what is that purpose in ministry? That He gets the glory. That God gets the glory for His ministry. That's pillar number five. God gets the glory. We just sang, "Lord, be magnified." That's exactly what we're talking about. Lord, be reflected in our life. God, you get the glory for that which you call ministry here on this earth.

That's important today, as we approach this pillar talking about the glory that should go to God never to us, that we understand the word glory. The word glory is the word *doxa* in the Greek, that has the predominate meaning of bringing proper recognition to someone. When someone is glorified is when their nature, their true worth, has been so revealed that everyone around them can see it. You can't glorify someone if you don't know it. That's why the emphasis has been not on ministry, but on knowing Him, of the intimacy we can have of walking with Him. If you are not saying yes to Him, if you are not living that kind of life, then you don't really know Him.

You know Him though the word by faith and obedience to the word. As you know Him, then you understand why it is that proper recognition and glory go back to Him. God's pattern of ministry is that He gives us the gifts, the ministry and even the effects of that ministry, as pillar number one told us in 1 Corinthians 12:4-7. Since God's power in ministry is that whatever He initiates—the gift, the ministry and the effect—He anoints with His divine enablement; He carries it out. He gives the power for it as we saw in pillar number two in Isaiah 6. Since God's platform for ministry is that it is received from God, ministry is not achieved for God. We don't do for Him, but we join Him in what He's doing, as we saw in pillar number three in John 11. God's priority in ministry is not that we fleshly commit to doing our best, but that we surrender to Him, as we saw in Romans 15:17-18 in pillar number four. It stands to reason that pillar number five would be that His purpose in ministry is that He receives all the glory for His ministry that He does through us.

When we have come this far in the Pillars, when we are living what these pillars are saying, then really—and I hate to use this term, because sometimes it sounds sort of trite—but it's a no-brainer. My wife doesn't like that term. But, for whatever reason, it explains what I'm trying to say. You shouldn't have to convince somebody to give glory to God when he's living a surrendered life and he's experiencing Him daily, letting Jesus be Jesus in and through him. Now His true worth, His true nature must be seen in all ministry because it is not about us, it's all about Him.

It is so exciting to know the message of grace, to know that Christianity is not about us trying to live like Christ; but it is about allowing Jesus to be Jesus in and through us. When we are allowing Him to do that, we're saying yes to Him. You see, the believer has Christ living in Him. Christ came to live in us to work through us. When we're living that way, I call that "Living Grace." "Let Jesus be Jesus in me, no longer me, but Thee, Resurrection Power, fill me this hour, Jesus be Jesus in me." When we are living that way, ministry takes care of itself. Ministry flows out of that kind of lifestyle.

I was talking with a gentleman last night and he said to me "I heard your message 30 years ago. The man who shared it with me

was a chaplain for the Washington Redskins. He said to me, the Christian life is Jesus coming to live in you, so that He can do His work through you with no help from you." Boy, I like that. That's exactly right, it says it so beautifully. I love phrases like that. That helps turn the key in our understanding.

Now this truth, that all glory must go back to Christ, not to us, and I'll tell you, it's not easy for our flesh to receive. Why? Because we want the recognition. That's what religion does. Religion gives you a system that you can measure. We want to see the recognition; we want to claim it for ourselves. We're good for God. We like that. Our flesh does.

Giving glory to God is difficult for the flesh; but giving glory to God for what He alone can do is what our text is going to address this morning. I mean, it is as clearly as you have ever heard it in Romans 11:33-36. Let me read the verses to you, "Oh the depths of the riches, both of the wisdom and knowledge of God. How unsearchable are his judgments and unfathomable his ways. For who has known the mind of the Lord? Who became his counselor?" Ro 11: 35: "who has first given to him that it might be paid back to him again? For from him, through him, and to him are all things. To him be the glory forever. Amen" This is the greatest doxology you'll ever find in scripture. It is after the theology of Romans 1-3, which talks about man's sin; the theology of Romans chapter 4 and 5 which talks about salvation; the theology of Romans chapter 6 through 8 which talks about sanctification, about Jesus coming to live in us to do through us what we could never do; it follows the theology of Romans 9-11 where he talks about the sovereignty of God, especially when it comes to salvation. You can understand why Paul says "to him, be the glory forever. Amen,"

Doxology always follows theology. One of the reasons people have difficulty in praise is that they have no theology. They are not overwhelmed by theology of what the word teaches us of who God is and of His marvelous plan and design He has for you and for me. The way we glorify God, the way we reflect His worth, the way we reflect His divine nature which we partook of, as Peter told us, when we became a believer is, once again, by allowing Him to live His life in and through us. When we yield to Him, when we allow Him to do this; then it is His nature, His power that is reflected in and through our lives. But when we do things for Him in the energy of sincere flesh, then we are the ones being recognized, not Him. Religion glorifies man, but Christianity glorifies Christ and His true worth.

Paul, after showing the Ephesians believers whose they were in Eph 1-3; and after showing them how to be strengthened in the inner man, in Eph 3:16 and his prayer that he is praying in Eph 3:17, he says in Eph 3:21: "to God be the glory in the church and in Christ Jesus to all generations for ever and ever. Amen." You see, God shares His glory with no man. How many times we have sought—I've done it—to usurp His glory by taking credit for something that's happened down here on earth that is divine? In Isaiah 42:8 God says, "I am the Lord that is my name. I will not give my glory to another nor my praise to graven images." In Isaiah 48:11, "For my own sake I will act, for how can my name be profaned, and my glory I will not give to another."

Our text today shows us once again why it is that God, and only God should be the one to receive the glory for all that's going on down here on this earth, for all that He's doing on this earth. We are going to look at the wonder of God, the wonder of who He is. I love this passage, if you can't tell. I love this passage of scripture. As we said, Romans 9-11 deals with the marvelous sovereignty of God, but particularly in salvation and particularly to Israel. It talks about God's marvelous love for the nation of Israel, and how He is going to bring them back; how He is going to save Israel one day.

So many people talk about—they are replacement theologians—and they say, "God is through with Israel." No, God is not. God made a promise to Israel. He said, "When the moon stops shining at night, then my promise is no longer valid." And, I don't know about you, but last night the moon was out. God continues to honor the nation of Israel. He will bring them back into salvation.

Romans 11:17, he addresses the Gentiles as wild olive branches. When you get up in the morning, look in the mirror and say, "Good morning, wild olive branch." Ro 11:17 says, "But some of the branches were broken off and you, being a wild olive [speaking to the Gentiles], were grafted in among them and became partaker of them of the rich root of the olive tree." What he taking about are these broken off branches. You see, it started with Abraham; He singled him out and gave him a covenant, the everlasting covenant. He ratified that to Isaac and passed it on to Jacob, not Esau. And Jacob's name was changed to Israel, and Israel had 12 sons. But the nation of Israel disobeyed [[God]]. They went after idolatry and [[God]] withdrew the fire from the temple in the book of Malachi.

But what He's saying here is God can bring them back. If we, being sinful Gentiles, can be grafted into the Tree of Life, when we were not even a part of it, then certainly the broken branches can be brought back. That's chapter 9, 10 and 11. God is the initiator of salvation for the Gentile but also for the Jew.

Now it is in this mindset, in the marvelous understanding that salvation is God's business that we come in to Romans 11:33-36. Salvation is such an awesome subject. The world's theological libraries attest to the restless intellect of believers of all ages who have tried to probe the depths of salvation, to understand it, to put it in some kind of theological box. Man has tried for centuries to understand salvation both for the Gentile and for the Jew. But in our text today, the apostle Paul pops their intellectual bubble and he says the wisdom and knowledge of God, particularly when it comes to salvation, is so far beyond man's capability to understand it isn't even funny. This is what he is talking about.

God loves all mankind. This is difficult for men to understand. Spurgeon was asked by a woman in his church, "How could God ever hate Esau?" I love Spurgeon; I can't wait to get to Heaven and meet him. He just seems like a cool guy. Spurgeon answered back, "That never bothered me. How come it bothers you?" and she says, "Well, how come it doesn't bother you?" He says, "I've never worried about how He could hate Esau. I've always wondered how in the world He could love Jacob." Now you haven't got it yet, you think a little more on that. Look in the mirror in the morning and ask, "How in the world could God ever love me?" It's a mystery beyond anything we could ever understand; but He did.

The psalmist said, "what is man that thou art mindful of him?" See, the mystery of how God loves you and me is what salvation is all about. Not only about being birthed into the kingdom, but in the life that follows after that birth. All of this is about His love for you and , and men cannot comprehend this truth. That's why the glory, the recognition should never come to man. We are so unworthy. But it ought to go to Him who is worthy.

There are three things that Paul brings out in this as to why the glory always ought to go back to Him. First of all, God's wisdom is unsearchable. Ro 11:33, "Oh, the depths," Paul says, "both of the wisdom and the knowledge of God." The word "depth" there refers to the extreme depth of something. He's not talking about an eight-foot deep lake; he's talking about something that is extremely deep.

We lived over in Reno almost three years. We lived 25 miles from Squaw Valley and Lake Tahoe. At Lake Tahoe, you know, people used to say, "It doesn't have a bottom. They've never been able to find it." Well, now with sonar they've been able to do that. It's about 1600, 1700 feet deep. It's a real deep lake.

When the apostle Paul says nobody knows the depths of the wisdom and knowledge of God, he said there is not a man on earth who can probe the depths of the wisdom and knowledge of God. God's wisdom, contextually again, is salvation, and particularly of the Jews and how He brings them back someday. That is what chapters 9, 10 and 11 are trying to get across. There is no way the human mind could ever probe the depths of that; for instance, the way that God revealed His purpose in Christ to not only deliver us from the penalty of sin, but to come to live in us and deliver us daily from the power of sin. That's a mystery that people are still trying to understand. It's a mystery.

Paul is a saved Jewish man, and now he can vouch for the fact that it had to be revealed. He was as sincere a religionist that ever lived, but God had to reveal to him His plan. He says in Ephesians 3:1, "For this reason, I, Paul, the prisoner of Christ Jesus for the sake of you Gentiles, if indeed you have heard of the stewardship of God's grace which was given to me for you, that by revelation was made known to me the mystery as I wrote before in brief. By referring to this when you read, you can understand my insight into the mystery of Christ." In other words, it had to be revealed to me; I'm not smart. I'm not an intellect. God reveals this to my heart, Paul says.

And then he says in Eph 3:5, "Which in other generations was not made known to the sons of man and it has now been revealed to the apostles and prophets in the spirit." In fact, Paul, one of those apostles now, who had been given this revelation, is now assigned to preach what God has revealed to his heart to others. He says in Eph 3:3-10, "to me the very least of all saints this grace was given to preach to the Gentiles the unfathomable riches of Christ, and to bring to light what is the administration of the mystery which was for ages hidden in God who created all things, so that the manifold wisdom of God might now be made known through the church to the rulers and the authorities in the heavenly places."

Now just think for a second about the marvelous wisdom and knowledge of God to come up with the plan of salvation. To come up that for mankind who He knew would sin in the garden. Yet Jesus already stood in the portals of Heaven and said, "Lord, let me be the Lamb that will be sacrificed for them." All of this wisdom, all of this knowledge somehow finds its centerpiece in the Lord Jesus Christ.

It says in Colossians 2:3, speaking of Christ, "in whom are hidden all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge." You see, folks, it is just unsearchable. That's why it has to be revealed. No man can just sit down and figure it out. God has to reveal it to the human heart. Man, in his arrogance, has not only acted as if he has figured out salvation, but also in his arrogance, by his lifestyle, thinks that he can handle it from there. "God, don't call me, I'll call you." Don't we love to boast in what we can do for God, as if we have a clue? Don't we love to boast in what God has given to us as if we have a clue? Jeremiah 9:23 says men love to boast in what they know and they love to boast in what they can do. And that has entered into salvation and you've got people thinking they can understand something, the depths of which man cannot even begin to probe.

The mystery of salvation not only refers to our being birthed into the family, as I said earlier, but also refers to the life and the work and the ministry that He performs through us after that. That is part of the divine plan. That's part of the whole concept that God had for mankind. And He, and He alone, deserves the glory for that plan. He and He alone, deserves the glory when it comes to ministry. He's designed the church, not to function as an organization but to function as an organism. We are going to see that next week as we follow the context in 12:1-9. God's wisdom and knowledge in the way He designed the church to function and all that He wants to

do through us in this time for centuries causes us to say, "He deserves the glory, we cannot take it." I'm awed every day even that God has saved me. Are you that way? Every time I sin, every time I yield to my flesh, I think, "God, why do you even put up with me?" If God was a God like you and me, I'd have been dead years ago, because He'd have taken me out of here. But by His grace, by His goodness, how can I take any glory for salvation? How can a church talk about what they've done for God? How can we begin to approach a subject like that? God deserves the glory; it's not about us, it's all about Him. The wisdom and knowledge of God are beyond understanding. And, therefore, it beckons us to give all glory unto God.

Not only that, secondly, His ways are untraceable. You see, not only did He come up with the concept of salvation, but also the way He worked it out, it will blow your mind. His ways are untraceable. We cannot probe the depths of His wisdom, and understanding, we cannot even begin to explore His ways, we can't figure them out. God doesn't work the way that men do. The whole concept is beyond us. Paul continues in Ro 11:33, as he goes from the concept to the working out of that concept, "Oh, the depths of the riches of both the wisdom and the knowledge of God, How unsearchable His judgments and how unfathomable His ways." His judgments are unsearchable. Now what is he talking about? The word for judgments is *krima*. *Krima* means a decision that is made. The *ma* on the end refers to the actual choices God made to bring about this awesome salvation that you and I have, both the Gentile and the Jew. God's plan involving the decisions that He made to bring about salvation—they're unsearchable.

Now you think about it. Look at the Old Testament. Can you figure that out? How He drew Abram out of the land of the Chaldeans; he was a pagan, and brought him out of that. He said, "I want a nation for myself." Israel was not a nation. He made that nation. And then He gave a covenant to him, as we said earlier, and passed it on to Isaac, then to Jacob, whose name was changed to Israel. There were 12 tribes of Israel. Then you follow through the Old Testament how God was so patient with Israel when they split; ten tribes went to the north and two tribes went to the south. The Assyrians took over Israel, the Northern tribes, and finally the Babylonians took Judah into captivity. Yet God continued to love His people and you see that plan working out, and the ways that God worked through that. Malachi, the fire was taken out of the Temple; 400 years a period of darkness, and then finally, in the fullness of time, Jesus came and God spoke finally through His son.

You look at this and say, "Who could have figured this out?" Who in the world could have come up with anything like this? You cannot trace God's ways. His plan is unable to be explored. I want to tell you, until you get a handle on that, until I get a handle on that, we're not going to understand what true ministry is. His judgments are unsearchable. We cannot in any way grasp it with our feeble minds. In fact, Paul adds, "and unfathomable His ways." His ways relate to His carrying out of His plans, as we've said, for our awesome salvation.

The word for ways is an interesting word. It's the word that refers to a road that is heavily traveled, a beaten down path. Most of the roads of that day were that way. They did not have many roads, they had one or two roads and everybody walked on it. You could blindfold somebody and they could get home on those roads because they were well walked, well-beaten. But he says God's ways are not well-beaten paths. God didn't give us a map, He gave us the guide. Because His paths, not only in effecting salvation, but once we are saved and the way that we walk in that relationship, they are not beaten-down paths. He gave us a guide, He didn't give us a map. That's why we have to know Him. That's why we have to walk in intimacy with Him. We don't know where He's taking us, we just know He's taking us. He's in control.

You know, at different times I've mentioned things similar to this, but when I traveled all the time, every time I'd rent a car. They started putting these little things, on the car where it tells you how to get there. You all know what I'm talking about? That was really neat. I love it; she says, "Take a right turn in 1.2 miles." And then she would say, "Take a right turn on 0.7 miles." Then she'd say, "Take a right turn in 0.3 miles, then in 0.1 miles." I loved that, because I didn't know where I was, and I needed a guide. God's paths are not well-beaten. You think you know where God's taking the church? Would you mind telling me, because I don't know. All we know is that He is the guide and we better get in touch with Him as quickly as we possibly can. Because where He takes us, it'll be good, I promise you that. But it won't be the direction you think He's going to take us.

Isaiah 55:8, "My thoughts are not your thoughts. Nor are my ways your ways declares the Lord." I don't have well-beaten paths; there are no landmarks. You have to listen to me, if you are going to walk with me. You see, folks, that's why we have to join Him in what He's doing. He's already busy. If He doesn't have us working with Him, that's fine; He'll still get the job done. The beautiful thing is that we can join Him in what He is doing. He has the design. He knows has the way, we don't.

To stress this point, Paul brings out some quotes from the Old Testament. In Ro 11:34, "For who has known the mind of the Lord? Who became His counselor?" We live sometime as if God is seeking our advice. We get together in our times together and we say, "Oh, what do we need to do? Let's see, I'll tell you what, 'God, we've got some great suggestions.'" And God says, 'Oh, thank you, because I just didn't know what to do. Thank you so much because I depend upon you everyday to give me advice'? The apostle Paul quotes out of Isaiah and says, "Who in the world does he ask?" We're not His counselor. You see, folks, that's why it is so important. What Paul is doing here is amazing. He's taking away the arrogance of some people who think they can actually do something and ask God to bless it. Can you imagine the arrogance of somebody who comes up with a ministry and then asks God

to bless it when God's paths are not well-beaten paths? Can you imagine that?

Well, I can, I've done it many times in my life. If you don't want to be honest, I will be. Thank God, He's showing me, "Don't you dare bring anything before me. You come before me open and empty-handed, and I'll show you what you need to do, because you don't have a clue what's going on. I'm the one; I'm the one."

Prayer is a verbal expression of our trusting God. You've got to have people burdened to pray. But prayer is not a compartment you add; it's not an add-on. It's not as if we do this and this and this and then, oh, yes, by the way, we have prayer. No, prayer is the carpet that should undergird every single thing that we do. When we have a committee meeting we don't need me to sit there and figure things out. We need men to get on their face before God and say, "Oh, God, what do you want us to do? Oh, God, give us divine leadership." When we have an Elder Meeting, we don't need people's wisdom to bring to the table. We need God's wisdom at that table. When we have a staff meeting, we need prayer to be the carpet that undergirds what we're doing. Prayer is the carpet that undergirds everything that we do—or if it doesn't, it's all about us and not about Him.

You see, Paul by referring to these Old Testament passages is getting rid of the arrogance in the Church, even then in Rome, of anybody thinking they can make ministry happen. What we see today called ministry, folks, would sicken the heart of God. God is the only one who can make ministry happen. It is not about us. Paul is also eliminating the arrogance of people who think that God owes them something. You know, sometime prayer is that way. We think God owes us something. Ro 11:35 says, "For who has first given to him that it might be paid back to him again." In other words, He is no man's debtor. Ministry is all about God; it's not about us. God owes us nothing. God gave us everything. He alone is worthy of all glory. His wisdom is unsearchable. God's ways are untraceable. You cannot trace them. They are not well-beaten paths.

Why is all of that? Because God's worth is unimaginable. "From Him, and through Him and to Him are all things," Paul says. Ro 11:36, "to Him be the glory forever. Amen." God is the source of all things. For "from Him" that little word is *ek*, which means out of His very being they come from. He's the divine author and originator of all things. But it also says He's the sustainer of all things. "And through Him" The little word *dia*, which means the means. God is the means by which all things happen and He's the goal of all things. It says "and to Him." The little word, *eis* is used there which means motion into something. It describes a beautiful picture here. What God has originated—listen carefully—what God has originated is on a divine path back to Himself. Everything He originates has got to return to Him or it didn't come from Him to begin with. Like a boomerang.

I was down in Australia years ago to Perth. One of the things they have down there is a boomerang. Isn't it neat? It's on a divine course to do what? Return right back to its sender. That's exactly what he saying here. What God does has got to return back to Him with the glory that we give to Him. You realize when we shortcut that, when we usurp the glory for ourselves? If we step in the process and stop the boomerang from going back to Him, we take the glory; as if we are anybody. If we are not reflecting Him and if we are not reflecting the glory that He deserves, then we have stood in the gap and stopped the process. And that, my friend, is sin before God. It's got to go back to Him.

When we realize that His wisdom is unsearchable, and His ways are untraceable and His worth is unimaginable, then this should evoke a response in every one of us. Nobody can praise unless they are worshiping God by their walk, and bringing glory to Him. But you see, the apostle Paul is overwhelmed. You're talking about a doxology, a praise; he's overwhelmed that God even revealed anything to him, much less what he just taught for 11 chapters. And he says, "To Him be the glory forever. Amen." The psalmist said in 86:12 a very similar thing. He was caught up in the same way. He understood what it was all about. It overwhelmed him that he was even included. The psalmist said, "I will give thanks to you, Lord, my God, with all my heart and will glorify your name forever."

This should be the cry of every adoring heart. Do you wake up in the morning like this? "Oh, God, somehow reflect Yourself in me today. Lord, I'm a mess. I don't deserve it. I don't deserve salvation. Lord, I've tried to figure out why You love me and I can't figure it out. Your wisdom is unsearchable. I've tried to trace the way in which You entered into my life and how You beckoned me to Yourself; I can't figure it out. I can't even explore it, there's not even a well-beaten path. I realize Your worth, Oh, Lord, is unimaginable I can't hardly stand it, Lord, because I'm so awed that You love me."

See that's a cry of an adoring heart. The purpose of our lives as believers, the purpose of all ministry, is to bring glory to Him. Never, ever do we praise man, never. Yes, we can appreciate man, but we never praise him. Our praise goes to the one who works in him.

We're all about us, aren't we? The world revolves around us, doesn't it? But I'll tell you what, when you start experiencing Jesus to be Jesus in your life, it won't revolve around you any more. It will revolve around Him. All you can do is bring glory back to Him. You know what the word "amen" means in the last part of Ro 11:36? It means "let it always be so, and don't you dare think about changing it." Hey, I didn't write that. I just have to live it, like you do.

Well, in closing, on March 23rd 1743, when *The Messiah* was first performed in London, the King was present in that great audience. It was reported that all were so deeply moved by the Hallelujah Chorus that, with those impressive words—and you've heard them

sung many times—"for the Lord God omnipotent reigns," the whole audience, including the king, sprang to their feet and remained standing through the entire chorus. From that time to this, it has always been the custom to stand before the chorus is performed. With spontaneous joy the soul stands to salute Him who comes in the name of the Lord. He is King of kings and He is Lord of lords. To Him we pledge our allegiance. To God be the glory, for great things He has done.

Pillar Six – God's Picture of Ministry

Romans 12

I'll tell you what, if it gets any better, I can't stand it. Romans 12. Last week we looked at Romans 11:33-36. We're going to pick it right up today, as we look at Pillar Number Six: God's Picture of Ministry. What is God's picture of ministry? The church as an organism, not an organization.

We are living in a day when, oddly enough, really sadly enough, you have to explain yourself when you mention the word, "church." People have made the mistake, many people have, of thinking of the church as being a place. If you think about it, certainly we meet in a place, but it is not the place. God doesn't live in a building. You can see the mother bringing little Johnny to church. "Johnny, Johnny, be quiet you are in God's House." Four-year-old Johnny is looking around thinking, "God lives in this place," and grows up thinking that God lives in a building. "That's what the church is; it's that building on the corner down the street." You see, people who think it is a building or a place have missed the whole point. To many people it is a place where they can go and meet other people—and certainly that is an aspect of it—a social club, however, of sorts; find a date; maybe even a mate! We'll go to the place, the church, the building. To many people it is a place to go to have all their felt needs met. And I say that carefully, because people who have felt needs don't know what their true needs really are. And so, that place will meet my need; that's where I'll go, to that place. In some countries, and I've been to them, and it's really sad to say, they are afraid of God. And the church is a refuge from God. They actually run to the church to be able to get away from Him. There is a fear in their hearts towards God. We can just go on and on about what people think the church is. Most people, obviously are confused, thinking it is a place.

But what does the [[Bible]] say the church is? What does [[God]]'s word say? What do those ancient words in scripture say to us and tell us what the church is? The apostle Paul has much to share about what the church is. In fact, he calls it the body of [[Christ]]. Let those words ring in your mind. It's awesome, the body of [[Christ]]. He says in Ephesians 1:22, "And He put all things in subjection under His feet [speaking of [[Christ]]], and gave Him as head over all things to the church," and then he says in Eph 1:23, "which is His body, the fullness of Him who fills all in all." In Ephesians 4:11, "And He gave some as apostles, and some as prophets, some as evangelists, and some, pastors and teachers [why?], for the equipping of the saints for the work of service, for the building up of the body of [[Christ]]."

In Colossians 1:18, "He is also head of the body, the church [speaking of [[Christ]]], and He is the beginning, the firstborn from the dead; so that He Himself will come to have first place in everything." In Colossians 1:24, Paul says, "Now I rejoice in my sufferings for your sake, that in my flesh I do my share on behalf of His Body, which is the church, in filling up what is lacking in [[Christ]]'s afflictions."

Now the apostle Paul doesn't use the term "body" or "church" in 1 Corinthians, but he says the same thing in a different way. He says in 1 Corinthians 3:16, "Do you not know that you are a temple of God and that the Spirit of God dwells in you?" Then in 1 Corinthians 6:19, "Or do you not know that your body is a temple of the Holy Spirit who is in you; whom you have from God, that you are not your own." What Paul is trying to drive home to you and me today is that God lives in His people; in His church. They didn't even have buildings until about the eighth century or at least until Acts 8. They didn't have church buildings. And so, it is not the building. God doesn't dwell in a building, God dwells in His people. The true church is not a place. It meets in a place, yes; but in a third world country it might be behind a house somewhere, hidden because it is under persecution. If it is over here, it might be in a very nice building. It meets in a church building, but it is not the building. It is people who have received the Lord Jesus to come and live in their hearts by faith.

If you remember when you were growing up, remember that little thing, "Here's the church, here's the steeple, open it up and here's all the people." Do you realize even back then when we were growing up and they were teaching us that God doesn't dwell in buildings, He dwells in people. The church is not that thing with a steeple on it. It is the people inside of that building. It's the body of Christ on this earth. I love that phrase. If people want to see Christ, on this earth, today in the 21st century, they should be able to look at His people and see Him.

But that is the sad part of this message, so often we have dragged into our Christianity something that is not really biblical and as a result, they don't see Him; they see us, if we live surrendered to Him then, Pillar Number Five that we looked at last week, God gets the glory for what He does in ministry, then it will take place. Have you put it together yet? God's purpose in ministry is to be glorified. The word, "glory" means to be recognized for who He is; for what He can do, not for what men can do.

After all, Pillar Number One told us He gave us the gifts, the ministry, and the effects. Then we moved on to the fact that what He initiates, He anoints. With that in mind, ministry is something that is received, it's not achieved. Ministry is not a result of our commitment, our fleshly commitment to do our best for God; no, ministry is our full surrender to Him, who does His best through us. Therefore, He can be glorified for what He does. How? Through the church which is His body.

You see, it all fits. The apostle Paul is going to show us in Romans 12 basically how to work out what we learned in 11:33-36, how to bring glory unto God. If we are the church, and we are to bring glory to Him, Ephesians also says "to Him be the glory in the church forever." We are going to cause Him to be recognized; Paul is going to tell us how.

He begins by saying in Ro 12:1, "Therefore." Now, you know this already, I'm speaking to the ones who understand. Anytime you see a "therefore" you look to see what it's there for. Now, we know what it's there for, it's a no-brainer; he just told you what it's there for: to bring glory to God in all things. "Therefore," he says in 12:1, if we're going to do that, "I urge you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God present your bodies a living and holy sacrifice acceptable to God, which is your spiritual service of worship." In other words, if we are going to let God be glorified in us, which is what 11:33-36 talked about, then we are going to have to daily surrender our bodies to Him. Now that's an interesting concept, isn't it? How would I surrender my body to Him? Because you see, my body is the vessel, the conduit through which He wants to accomplish His work. "Lord, take my hands," we sing it all the time, "take my mouth, take my mind. May all of this be Yours." Why? So that He can think in my mind, speak through my lips. "You can work with my hands, and You can walk through my feet. You take over my body, Father. I am presenting it as a sacrifice unto You."

The word "sacrifice" is the word used only of burnt offerings, which tells us that it is a total sacrifice. But that's twofold. First of all, it's a living sacrifice, which means that our bodies are totally surrendered to Him as best we understand, moment by moment and situation by situation. I've been saying over and over again, don't look at the Christ life as a concept, look at it situation by situation. Practice the presence of God by saying yes to Him in the midst of every situation in your life. Secondly, it involves a holy sacrifice. What does that mean? It means that our bodies are totally surrendered to Him, set apart for His use at all times. Now this involves surrender to God's word. I mean, you can't have Lordship in Ro 12:1, and something else in Ro 12:2. Lordship is what we are dealing with in Ro 12:1. When He is Lord of our life, it has to include the word of God. He says in verse two, "and do not be conformed to this world" —don't be conformed to its mold, of how it does things—"but be transformed"—from the inside out *metamorphoo*—"by a renewing of your mind." Only the word of God can renew our mind. The word "renew" means to renovate, to tear out the old way of thinking, of what you thought of things, and to build into it what God says it is.

And then what? What happens when you do that? Presenting your bodies a living sacrifice, letting the word of God so renew your mind that the Spirit of God can transform your behavior. What happens? It says, "so that you may prove what the will of God is, that which is good and acceptable and perfect." Now, contextually, what would that be? That will would be, bringing glory to Him. We get to experience that, and also we get to experience Him, and it is good and acceptable and it's perfect. Now when this is happening and God is changing the way we see things, because He is getting glory in all that He is doing, He changes our whole perspective as to what the church is all about. In other words, we don't parade our ability before Him any more. We used to think we could do a lot of good things for God, but once He gets hold of our mind, once He begins to live in our bodies, we begin to understand that's not what the church is. Church is Jesus being Jesus in us.

In Romans 12:3 Paul addresses that. He says, "For the grace given to me I say to everyone among you not to think more highly of himself than he ought to think, but to think so as to have sound judgment as God has allotted to each a measure of faith." That term, "sound judgment" is a great term. So for now it is the term that means to be in your right mind. You know what Paul just said? Anybody who thinks he can come up with ministry, anybody who thinks he can do something good for God and ask Him to bless it, is not in his right mind. God is not being glorified in this person's life. He is not living the surrendered life allowing his mind to be renewed by the word of God. Paul is trying to show that since we are Christ's body on this earth then we must realize that we are going to function differently than we thought we were going to function. It is going to be totally, drastically different.

When the church comes alive, and the church is bringing glory and recognition to Him, it is not going to look like people think it's going to look like. Paul said, "God has allotted to each a measure of faith," in the last part of that verse. What he's talking about is, he is beginning to help us to understand that we are gifted differently; that God is the one who has designed His body, His church, on this earth and each person has a measure of faith. In the context he is talking about the fact that every gift that has been given—and we'll be looking at it in a moment—to each gift comes a measure of faith to believe God in the midst of that gift. Each person has an ability to believe God in a particular gift that God has given to him, so that he might function in the body of Christ.

When I got saved, it was like the Lord Jesus stood there and put His arm around me and said, "Welcome to the family, Wayne." He had a present all wrapped up and said, "Here, Wayne, I want to give you a present." "What's that, Lord?" "I want you to be a functional part of my body down here on this earth." "Lord, I don't deserve that. I don't even deserve salvation. God, what are you talking about?" "Wayne, I want to include you so I have gifted you; not only have I gifted you, I've given you the faith to believe me in the midst of that gift which will function to build up and to edify my people."

Paul is showing us basically in what we are going to study today what it should look like inside these walls. When you get outside these walls gifts just float away, because everything that is a gift in here is a command out there. And the people who are gifted in here to do certain things to help us do what we are commanded to do out there much more gracefully. We are commanded to do it all. But when the church comes alive and where the Spirit of Lord is, there is liberty. This is my prayer. When He is free to work, then the body begins to function. Each person has a different role, a different function, to build up and edify the body of Christ. You see, we desperately need each other. Nobody has been given all of the gifts. Yes, we've been given the giver; but that's another thing. What we're talking about is that nobody has been given every single gift in the body of Christ. It is so constructed that we are so dependent upon each other. Matter of fact he says that, in Ro 12:4, "For just as we have many members in one body, all of the members do not have the same function." See? Just like our physical body. "So we, who are many, are one body in Christ, and individually members one of another." Now you think about that for a second. He gave us a clear picture; he said it is like the physical body.

I discovered one thing, I didn't know that I had a gall bladder, until one day I started having pains in my back. Now what's that got to do with the gall bladder? I remember going to have it checked and they did a sonar test on me. They said, "Your heart's fine, your lungs are fine, everything's fine, but you got a little,..." and they kept stopping right here. And finally, I just asked them, "You all keep whispering; what's right there?" And they told me, and of course, they threw in an ulcer to go along with it. It's amazing how those things are unseen. But how dependant my body and the strength and health of my body is on those little unseen things.

This is what Paul is saying. Many of the gifts that we're going to talk about today are not seen and they are just as important as the ones that are seen. It affects the health of the whole body of Christ. Well, these gifts that we are about to look at in Ro 12:6-8, to me is the most complete list of gifts anywhere in scripture. There are many people I know that put 1 Corinthians 12 with it, Ephesians 4 with it, 1 Peter 3 with it and they come up with 21 gifts. I don't think that is a correct way of studying scripture. No, the pure list is in Romans 12. In 1 Corinthians 12 it is not a pure list, it's correcting error. Paul is trying to drive home some points to help those Corinthians understand. In Ephesians 4, it is a different word for gifts, not the *charismata*, but it's talking about the gifted men. It's not even a gift, it's gifted men. It's a gift but it's a man, it's a person. And then in 1 Peter 3, it's talking about hospitality, which I don't know where you want to put that; but to me the pure list is in Romans 12, that I'm about to read.

Listen to Ro 12:6-8: "Since we have gifts that differ, according to the grace given to us each of us is to exercise them accordingly. If prophecy, according to the proportion of his faith, if service, in serving, or he who teaches in his teaching or he who exhorts in his exhortation, he who gives with liberality, he who leads with diligence, he who shows mercy with cheerfulness."

Now there are seven gifts mentioned there; actually they fall into one of two groups: the speaking gifts and the serving gifts. Are the people who are speaking serving? Absolutely. But that's not what he's trying to drive home. The bottom line of any gift is the function so that it ministers to others. We have people who speak and we have people who do, in the sense of serving and so he gives you two categories and yet seven different gifts are mentioned that fall into one of those two.

First of all, gift of prophecy: This is a speaking gift. Paul says, "in prophecy according to his faith." Now the word prophecy is the Greek word *propheteia*; it comes from two words, *pro*, meaning before and *pheteia*, which means to tell or to tell forth. Now there is an exceptional use of this word in scripture which has the idea of foretelling something, but that was something that was apparent to the New Testament church and to the Old Testament. We don't need that anymore because we have the written word of God.

There is a movement in our day that talks about new century prophets; well, it even says you can be wrong. Boy, tell that to the Old Testament prophets. If they were ever wrong, what happened to them? Stoned to death. We don't need those prophets anymore, we have what we need, the prophetic word of God. We have the revealed word of God through the prophets and the apostles of scripture. So there is an exceptional use.

The word basically means "to tell forth," "to proclaim," "to proclaim the truth of God to others." The supernatural ability to take God's truth and share it with other people. Now make sure that you don't confuse the gift with the office of prophet. We are not talking about a prophet, we are talking about the gift of prophecy. Ephesians 2:20, "Having been built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Christ Jesus Himself being the cornerstone." That's the foundation; that's what I said a moment ago, we don't need prophets anymore. The whole faith is built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets.

We have in no way the office of prophet today. We don't need that office; we have the office of elder and of deacon. We have the position of pastor-teacher; we have other things, but we don't have the office of prophet anymore. We do have the gift of prophecy, and that's what we're talking about. It is a speaking gift.

Now there is a condition to this gift, it says, "prophecy according to the proportion of his faith." Now this can be taken one of two ways. If you read it literally like it is written as if there is no Greek behind it, then you can take it to say that this gift is directly in proportion to a man's faith, or willingness to trust God that was a gift to him with this gift. That's not good, I don't agree with that. First of all, there's no "of his faith" in the Greek text. You can't show me anything in that verse that says "his faith." But what is in the

original text is "the faith," and when the definite article is used it is always the word of God. If one has this gift of telling truth or proclaiming and revealing truth to others it must be according to God's word. It cannot be something he came up with, it's got to be what does God say? "The faith" refers to God's written revelation.

Now the word "proportion" is the word *analogia*. We get the word analogy from it. It means something that has a right relationship to something else. The gift of prophecy must be in right relationship to the word of God, for it to be valid and to bring glory to Christ and not to us. This speaking gift is in the company with two other speaking gifts that we'll address later on. Understand something, each one of them is a speaking gift but each one has a different motivation behind it. The gift of prophecy has the motivation of confronting somebody with truth.

I've heard for years that a prophet is a mean, hard, judgmental, casting judgment on people, that's what a prophet is. Well, excuse me, that comes out of the book of Hebrews 14:11. It has nothing to do with it. If you find a person that is mean and forthright and in your face and they say they have a gift of prophecy; no sir, they have the gift of flesh and know nothing about the fruit of God's spirit, which is love that has to wrap all of the gifts. Read Jeremiah. He said some hard things, didn't he? Read Lamentations; he wept all the way through the book. This idea that a prophet is one of these in your face kind of people, no sir. There is a love that so surrounds these gifts that speaks of Jesus and glorifies Him that nobody can miss. Even when they say the hard things and confront with truth, there is a love behind it. You'll see a significant difference in the motivation of the other two speaking gifts. So hang on to that thought. The gift of prophecy.

Secondly he mentions the gift of service. I love people that have this gift. He says, "If service in his serving." The Greek word for serving is *diakonia*; it means menial service. It's like when somebody comes up and says, "Wayne, your yard is not mowed, can I mow it for you?" or when a person says, "Can I shine your shoes or go get you a glass of water? Can I do something for you?" That's a person with a gift of service. The supernatural part is that he never wants to be seen, he only wants [[God]] glorified in what is done. It is a gift that looks for the practical needs of someone, so that you can meet them. And you find great joy in doing that; you don't find joy in being recognized for the fact that you did it. You want Him to be recognized.

You see, it is not a position of power in any way shape or form. It's a humble thing; it's a humble service within the church of God. This is where the word "deacon" came from. And the word "deacon" was never translated in scripture, it was transliterated. Transliteration means that they took a word and made a word out of it. They took the word *diakonia* and made the word deacon out of it. It's also the word for ministry. When you think ministry you have to think the same way. It's for God's glory, never to be seen yourself and to meet the practical needs of other people. It is the person who is supernaturally gifted and finds his innermost joy in meeting those needs that God, and God alone, has shown to him need to be met so that God can get the glory.

Now Paul says, "If serving in his serving." There are three prepositions that are helpful in understanding that last little phrase, "in his serving." *Eis* means motion into something; *ek* is motion out of something; *en* means to remain inside something. That is the preposition that is used here. Now I want to show you something about that. You may have the gift of serving sitting next to somebody who has the gift of serving sitting next to somebody else who has the gift of serving and your service does in no way look the same. The heart of it is exactly the same, but the way it manifests itself is entirely different. I know a preacher in Florida, who said "My gift is not as much a speaking gift as a serving gift." His whole ministry was built around the main gift that God had given to him. It may show up in different ways. You see, that little phrase, "in his serving" is very individual. It's going to show up several other times as we go down this list. It means it is so individual, you don't want us to put a shingle on the door that says "I have this gift and everybody who has it must look like me," because it doesn't look the same. But the gift of serving is a beautiful gift to have in the body of Christ. You see, he has the faith to believe God in his serving; that God is going to be glorified and that he's doing an eternal work through that which has gifted him to do. He has the ability to remain in that which God has given.

So prophecy, serving and then thirdly, the gift of teaching. Romans 12:7 again, it says in the last part of it, "or he who teaches," now look at this, "*in his teaching*." We see that same phrase come up again. The word for teaching is *didasko*. It is the act of teaching. (When you see the word *didaskalia*, it means what is taught; the content of what is taught.) This word is the act of teaching. Again, we are talking about a gift. This is not a schoolteacher in a classroom who's gone to school and gotten a degree on how to teach. That's not it at all. This is a supernatural ability to do something with God's word that will benefit, build up and edify the body of Christ. We are not talking about the office of pastor-teacher, we are talking about the gift of teaching. You always have to separate the gift from the office. It's two different things. If it's the gift it's generic, women can have it; men can have it. The motive of this gift is not the same as prophecy. Prophecy is to confront with truth; teaching is to clarify the truth. In fact, the people who had the gift of teaching, the pure gift of teaching, struggle in giving illustrations as to what they are trying to say. They struggle there.

A person with the gift of teaching can clarify that thing so that when you walk out you say, "Oh, man! That is good." You stop and get in the car and say, "Now how do I live it?" You're not told how to bring it down and make it practical in your life. I remember a rule they used to tell me: Keep it simple, stupid; you know the K.I.S.S. method. Get the cookies on the bottom shelf where everybody can eat them.

Now a person with the gift of teaching sometimes errs right there. That's why he needs a person with the gift of confronting with truth, or the person with comforting with truth. We all need each other; nobody has it all together. Whenever you compare preachers, you be really careful because they may have a different gift than the one you are comparing them to. Don't ever think that one preacher is going to have the same strength as another one. He'll have a particular strength because it is of clarifying truth.

It is a speaking gift and it will manifest itself in different ways in his teaching. Just like serving will manifest itself in different ways. You can be a momma with children and you are not teaching some Bible study down the street and you are not on staff somewhere, but you have the gift of teaching, of gathering your little ones around you and clarifying truth to them. A person with the gift of teaching has that beautiful motivation in his life, he wants to make sure that everything is clarified.

Prophecy, serving, teaching. Now come on, let's go to the fourth one: the gift of exhortation. Another speaking gift. It is interesting, he starts with a speaking gift, he goes to a serving gift, and then he comes back with two speaking gifts. It says in Ro 12:8, "for he who exhorts in his exhortation." The word, "exhort" is the word *parakaleo*, a beautiful word. *Para* means to come along side and *kaleo* means to call; to motion alongside; to be called alongside by somebody.

Don't you love people with the gift of exhortation? It is mainly a one-on-one type of thing. Exhortation is another speaking gift. It doesn't mean to come along and put your hand on their back and say, "It's going to be okay." No, you take the word of God and you give them proper instruction so that they can walk in their Christian life. Prophecy confronts, that's not what this person does; teaching clarifies. All of those are probably involved in what he does, but his main method is to comfort people with what he has clarified and what he has confronted them with. It is the gift of coming alongside someone.

Now, listen, this is a true love gift. The Holy Spirit is called The Comforter. Isn't that awesome? Same word. John 14:16, "And I will pray the Father, and he will give you another Comforter that he may abide with you forever." That's a whole idea of it; I'm not going to leave you as an orphan. I want to come to live in you, to be alongside you. This is what the word means. A person with the gift of exhortation is a person in the body of Christ who would rather, really be on a one-on-one deal in a classroom than he would be up in front of many; however, since he says in his exhortation it can be manifest in different ways.

You'll see preachers—and I've done it, and you've watched me—I'll say, "You asked me the question," and I'll say, "I'm so glad you did." You are looking around saying, "I didn't ask him any question." What I've just done is make the whole congregation one person and from that point on the message is one person to one other person. That's what exhortation does. It manifests in different ways. It is somebody who wants to come along side and comfort with the word of God.

Well, you see, the persons who have that gift will be manifested in many different ways. Romans 12:8, "for he who exhorts in his exhortation."

Prophecy, serving, teaching, exhortation. And then the fifth gift: Giving. "He who exhorts in his exhortation," watch this carefully, he changes the parameters of this thing, "he who gives," not "in his giving," not "according to his faith" or "the faith," but "he who gives with liberality." What is he talking about here? The restriction has changed. The word "giving" means to give with good intentions. In other words, there is nothing you are holding on to. *Metadidomi*. The word *meta*, the front word, expresses an association with someone or something; and then, of course, the word giving. So you are associated with whatever it is. It is not just a blanket giving. A need never justifies a call, it is when God has put upon your heart to meet a specific need and you are associated with it somehow. Either God in His convicting you has associated you with it, or maybe you are already there. It is a God thing that brings glory to Him, not to us.

If you've got the gift of giving, you have the gift of making. This is where a lot of people misunderstand; they'll stand before God one day, and God will say, "You missed it, didn't you? You didn't realize I gave you the ability to have what you have, and therefore you had a gift of giving that would have edified and built up the body of Christ worldwide, but you didn't use it."

You see, a person with the gift of giving has the gift of making. Liberality is the word *haplotes*. You think it means abundance, just throw money. No, the word means not to have a double motive in your giving; it involves sincerity and purity of the heart of the one giving. So *metadidomi* (giving) means that you are associated with the person that you are giving and *haplotes* means when you give you don't have any strings attached. There is no double motive whatsoever.

We are living in a day, in many churches, where money is power. The people who want their voice heard, draw on "their" money; and Paul says in Corinthians "It's not your own; God owns it all." People tend to use money as an act of revenge; if there's something they don't like or whatever, they use their money as a signal that they are displeased, but they have missed the whole point. If they would just look at the person who has a gift of giving, they would understand. When he gives, he doesn't give it to the church, when he gives, he doesn't give to missions, when he gives he doesn't give it to that individual, he gives it to God, with no strings attached.

You say, "Well, wait a minute, aren't we supposed to follow this thing up? Doesn't God check out to see that the money is used the

right way?" Now let me ask you a question, folks, do you really have that low a view of God that He can't handle the people who would misuse what has been given to Him by faith? God has a way of taking care of His own. He certainly knows what He is doing. So, we don't give our money to the church; we give as God has directed our hearts. That's what the gift of giving would show us. If there are people who have the gift of giving, they stand out. We are all commanded to give, but oh, how they help us learn how we are supposed to do it. By looking at them, we learn ourselves how we are to give. When a person writes a check, it's God's money. Whatever happens with it, God will definitely take care of what's been given to Himself.

Sixthly: He who leads with diligence. This is an interesting gift. He who leads with diligence. The word for leading is the word *proistemi*. The word *pro* means before; *histemi* means to stand. It is a person who stands up in front of people and leads them, no matter the cost, because God has supernaturally gifted and directed his life. But the restriction on this one is also different. He says, "with diligence" the word diligence is *spoude*. It means once you know what God is saying, you treat it as urgent and you move upon what He's said. You may have to wait on hearing from Him, but when you do it, you do it with urgency; you do it with a sense of direction that God has given.

Can you imagine a room full of people who have the gift of leading? Say you had 700 people with the gift of leading, there would be blood flying every which way. Everybody is going to want to lead the meeting. I've been in a few of those, by the way. But it is a beautiful gift to have in the body of Christ. It involves an earnest effort in leading. It is not just a big mouth who wants his way. It is a supernaturally gifted individual that can hear from God; knows when it is time to move and is not afraid to step out and take the lead. This is a quality every elder ought to have. When they know what is right, and they know what God is saying, step out, don't worry about the flack, and don't worry about anything else. Lead the people.

A person with this gift has no hesitancy. It is a supernatural thing brings glory to God; he steps out when God directs.

So prophecy, serving, teaching, exhortation, giving, leading, and finally: mercy. Don't you love people with the gift of mercy? "He who shows mercy" and he changes it again, "with cheerfulness." The word for mercy is the word *eleeo*. It is the opposite of the word that means to grow hard and insensitive to others. This is the exact opposite, you are sensitive to the needs of others, but in a different way than the server is. There is a heart to mercy that marries with this gift that is so blesses you. It is not a feeling but an action toward someone who is in need. Now exhortation and mercy have the same heart. Exhortation shows its heart by what it says, mercy shows its heart by what it does. There is such joy in this gift. He said, "with cheerfulness" The word cheerfulness is the word *hilarotes*. Guess what word we get out of that? Hilarious. It is hilarious to them, they get such joy. This is not frivolous; this is something that is truly a deep, inward joy that they get out of what they are doing.

Prophecy, serving, teaching, exhortation, giving, leading, and mercy. I do not believe there are any other gifts in the body that make us function than these seven. And in these seven everything else will fall into one of these categories; in other words, in either speaking or serving gifts.

Now, how do these gifts work together? Well, let me see if I can help you. You are having a birthday party for your four-year-old. But your one-and-a-half year old really wants the attention; and she's not getting it. It's going to the four-year-old who's at the end of the table with a big cake and all the presents. So you're going to have a meal before you have the cake, and you've fixed spaghetti. You have all the friends over and some of the parents—there at least seven of them. You have them all around the table and the spaghetti is in a big bowl. But you put the bowl too close to where the one-and-a-half year old is sitting, because you forgot they are growing and their arms are longer than they were two weeks ago. You are ministering to the people, trying to put it all out, and that little baby is not getting any attention, so she just reaches forward, takes that bowl, picks it up and dumps it on her head. When she does, spaghetti is everywhere; the bowl falls off her head and breaks on the floor. There is pandemonium in the room; but you have all seven gifts represented in the parents. Now how do they operate? How are they going to treat that situation?

The gift of prophecy has to be the mother. "What have you done? Do you realize what you've done?" I think all moms have the gift of prophecy.

The gift of serving, "Oh, good grief, give me a broom and I'll clean this stuff up; it's no big deal."

The gift of teaching, "Hmmm, I've been studying this before and I want to give you five reasons why this has happened; and why children that age do what they do." And, of course, that is always really helpful.

The gift of exhortation, "Let me give you five steps to prevent that kid from ever doing this again. Number one, don't feed it until it is five years old." No, no, you have different lists of practical things.

Then the gift of giving, "Oh, good grief, here's \$20; go buy another bowl. What's the big deal?"

The gift of leading, "Okay, you get the broom; you move here; alright, let's go, let's go." He has everybody moving and doing what they are supposed to do.

The gift of mercy, "You poor little thing, I'm so sorry they are fussing at you. You didn't mean to do that. What can I do to love on you just a little bit more?"

Now, which one of them, out of those seven, was right in what they did? All of them were. But did they handle it the same? No. Do you understand now that I might be gifted differently than you are? And you are gifted differently than I am? And we are not going to respond to the same thing in the same way. God has designed the body to need each other. When you see a need out of your spiritual strength, God is saying, "I want you to meet it; not the one over here; he's not gifted."

You see, the body of Christ is awesome. It's not a bunch of people who come in, give their money to run an organization; therefore, they give the money, they have control over everything that is happening. Are you kidding? We come in here, and the only reason we give is because God tells us to give. And we are here to function to minister.

So how can you be functional in the body of Christ? Well, listen, if you'll start saying, yes to Jesus, God will make you functional in His body, even if you haven't yet figured out what your gift is.

Pillar Seven – God's Preparation for Ministry

Ephesians 4:11-13

Today we are going to be talking about Pillar Number Seven, "God's preparation for Ministry." How does He put it together now? Here it is. The church staff, the pastors, are to equip the saints for the work of the ministry. That's what they are here for and that's what pastors are for is to equip the saints for the work of the ministry. We've come to the last of our seven pillars today. What this has been is to show you the biblical philosophy of ministry. We said it was our philosophy, certainly it is, because we are believers; but it is the biblical philosophy, there is no other way. This is scripture. This is what ministry is all about. My prayer is that this study has been not only an encouragement to you, but also a great help in your understanding of what the church is supposed to be. I said it before and it bears repeating again. You cannot separate these seven pillars from Jesus being Jesus in us. If, somehow this has become a topical series that is separated from Christian life, which is letting Jesus live His life through us, then you've made a huge mistake. These seven pillars only become reality to the degree that we are allowing Jesus to be Jesus in us. "Jesus, be Jesus in me, no longer me, but thee, resurrection power fill me this hour. Jesus, be Jesus in me."

The gifts, the ministries, the effects, will take care of themselves if we will walk in intimacy with Him, saying "yes" to Him in a surrendered walk with Him.

Now, let's go back and get a little review. Some of you say, "Why does he do review all the time?" Well, let's get back in the flow, let's make sure we understand where this pillar fits with the other six that we've already looked at.

Pillar Number One was God's Pattern for Ministry. In 1 Corinthians 12:4-7 we learned that God gives the gifts, God gives the ministry and God gives the effect. Man cannot come up with any of that. So it originates out of the heart of God.

Pillar Number Two was God's Power in Ministry. What God raises up, He enables. What He initiates, He anoints. That was from Isaiah 6. God anoints with His enabling power.

Pillar Number Three was God's Platform for Ministry. From John 11 we learned that ministry is received, not achieved. We must learn to join Him in what He's doing if we want to witness what only He can do in our lives.

Pillar Number Four was God's Priority in Ministry. We saw in Romans 15 and also in chapter One, that ministry does not result from our best fleshly efforts to please God, it results from our abandonment to Him, our surrender to Him.

Pillar Number Five was God's Purpose in Ministry. You can see why it is where it is. It is in Romans 11:33-36. You see, God must get the glory, the divine recognition for all that He does in and through our lives.

Pillar Number Six was God's Picture of Ministry. Like a snapshot. In Romans 12:1-8, but particularly Ro 12:6-8, we saw how the church is beautifully pictured for us and how it looks when people live up under grace. It is one thing to talk about living grace, and it's another thing to live it out. What does a church look like when people are living it out? Romans 12:6-8 shows what Christ living in us looks like within the walls of the church. When Christ lives His live through us, He manifests Himself in different ways in different people because He's given different gifts. Just like the body has many different parts and none of them have the same function, but they all have to function for the body to be healthy. So it is with the Christian body of Christ. Each gift is a reflection of Him. Prophecy is Him living in us; confronting others with the truth that He has given to us. Serving is Christ in us, seeking to meet the practical needs through those He has gifted in the needs of the body. Teaching is Christ in us, clarifying truth so we can better understand it. Exhortation is Christ in us, which is comforting others with the truth of the Word of God. Giving is Christ releasing that which He has given the person the ability to earn—releasing that for the benefit of the whole body of Christ. Leading is Christ in us; helping us to stand out in front of the people and make critical decisions and move the body forward. Mercy is compassion in us for

those who are hurting. It will manifest itself on different levels in different people. People don't see us, they see Him magnified in us. When all these gifts are present, He is being glorified in His church.

We must remember this, since we are called the body of Christ, a body gives visibility to the entity that lives within it. At Dr. Olford's funeral, I thought of this because he is always had that beautiful white, flowing hair, and the personality that flowed out of him and made that body function like it did. At his funeral they had an open casket. The body didn't look the same. The body didn't look the same because the life was no longer in it. It was dead; devoid of life on this earth. That's what can happen to the church; the people do not function the way that God intended for them to function. Where they don't let Jesus, who is the life—He is the entity that lives within us; people need to see Him and manifest Himself in those beautiful ways.

But, you know, God doesn't stop there; God doesn't stop there. He doesn't just stop with giving us a snapshot of what the church looks like. It almost begs to answer a question: "Who is going to equip the members of the body so that they can come to a place to allow Christ to function in them; to allow them to use the gifts that God has given to them?" The most common and unlearned answer to that question is, "Good grief, we pay the staff to do the work of the ministry, so why are you talking to us about all of that?" Well, that's totally wrong. I'm going to show you in scripture what the pastoral staff is all about today. God has designed everything to function the way He wants it to function and He's put people into the body to equip the saints for the work of the ministry.

We are in Ephesians 4:11-13. Let me put you in the context; any text without a context is a pretext. So let me put you into the context. Paul is writing to the church at Ephesus. Chapters 1, 2 and 3, he has taught them who and whose they are in the Lord Jesus Christ. He has shown them how to appropriate all the riches they have in Christ in their life, by faith, chapter 3:16-17. Then in chapters 4-6 all that's in there hinges on what Paul said in chapters 1-3. If you don't know how to be strengthened in the inner man, for instance, there is no way you can walk worthy of Christ in Eph 4:1. So all of chapters 4-6 bases itself on how we appropriate what God has given in Christ Jesus. Eph 4:1-3 shows us how to preserve the unity of the spirit that He creates in people living surrendered lives. We cannot produce unity; we're here to preserve it by a surrendered walk. Eph 4:4-7 he talks about the oneness of the body of Christ.

Then in Eph 4:8-10, he begins to show the plan that [[God]] had and worked out for all of the body to be equipped. He says in Eph 4:8, "Therefore, it says when He ascended on high [now watch carefully] He led captive a host of captives and He gave gifts to men. (Now this expression, 'He ascended,' what does it mean, except that it also means that He had descended in the lower parts of the earth. He who descended is Himself also He who ascended far above all the heavens so that He might fill all things."

The word, "gifts" there "He gave gifts to men" in Eph 4:8, is the word we looked at in Romans 12:6-8. It's a different understanding here. The word here is *domaa* gift given with good will toward the person who is the recipient. But in this text he tells you what those gifts are very clearly. They are the gifted men. Now this is so unique. In Romans 12, he is talking about the spiritual gifts within men. But here he is talking about the gifted men that God has given to the body for specific reasons for equipping the saints for helping them to get to the point that they can be usable in the body of Christ.

Ephesians 4:11-13, will be our text for today. Let me read it for you. "And he gave some as apostles, some as prophets, some as evangelists, and some as pastors and teachers for the equipping of the saints for the work of service to the building up of the body of Christ until we all attain the unity of the faith and of the knowledge of the Son of God to a mature man to the measure of the stature which belongs to the fullness of Christ." There is a lot in there and we will break it down for our message today.

In Eph 4:11, he mentions some people. He mentions prophets and he mentions apostles. You see, they gave us the foundation. We don't need another foundation. We don't have any apostles and prophets like they had in the New Testament. We don't even need them. He quickly helps us to understand that's gone; we don't have those today.

The last two that he mentions, "evangelists and pastor-teachers," we still have. The evangelists were those like Phillip. Phillip is the only named evangelist in the New Testament who knew the gospel message and traveled about spreading the good news of salvation through Christ. They reached the people outside the walls of the church.

But there was another office he gave to the church. Offices: here is the apostle, here's the evangelist, now we have the pastor-teacher. Whereas the prophet and the apostle and the evangelist are not attached to any church, the pastor-teacher was and is. A single office; now remember, this is not just a position, this is an office in the church. It was a single office held by the one who was called to a church to be the pastor-teacher. For the sake of our culture today I'm going to call it the senior pastor-teacher. Why? Because in the days of scripture, they did not have a multiplicity of staff like we have today. They did not have a huge number of pastors that come alongside to assist in the work that God had assigned. There was no such thing as a pastoral staff. To be on staff and ordained and trained and called pastor today means several things. We need to get this in our heads.

If a person has come to our church to be on staff as a pastor in a particular area which he is assigned; first of all, it would mean that he is not in the office of senior pastor-teacher, because that is a single office. There is only one of those. It means that he has been called alongside whoever that is to help carry out the work and the assignment God has given. Secondly, to be an ordained pastor

on staff, it would mean that they have the qualifications of an elder, but not necessarily hold the office of an elder. In scripture there were paid elders and there were non-paid elders; we know that already. Further, his heart has to be to shepherd the flock to the particular area to which he is assigned.

Now what does that mean? In fact, the word, "pastor" is the Greek word for shepherd. A shepherd does three things in shepherding the sheep: he guides the sheep, he guards the sheep, and he grazes the sheep. Now that is a literal shepherd. But a spiritual shepherd on staff, a pastor on staff, does the same thing; however, a little differently. He guides the sheep with the word of God, he guards the sheep with the word of God, and he grazes the sheep with the word of God. That's what he's here to do: to take the word of God and equip the saints for the work of the ministry.

Let's look at that. There are four things about a person on staff. What is a staff all about? How come we need a staff? Well, let's just look at it. There are four things they are responsible for. Perhaps it will help you in your understanding as we put all of this together. This is the last pillar.

First of all, the assignment of the pastor. Ephesians 4:12 says, "for the equipping of the saints." The word equipping, *katartismos*, means to make someone fully ready for a task. It refers to the finished product. It refers to something that has been broken, perhaps, and is now mended. Something that was apart and has been put back together. Something that has been made functional in the body of Christ. When it comes to the equipping that is mentioned in scripture, there is only one way in which it can be done. There is no other way; this is something that we need to understand. It is only by and with the word of God. It is the word of God that equips a person for the work of ministry. Second Timothy 3:16-17, "All scripture is inspired by God and it is profitable for teaching, reproof, for correction, for training in righteousness, so that the man of God may be adequate and equipped for every good work." The word of God has to be used. Why? Because it is profitable to teach, to show a person what track he is supposed to run on in his Christian walk. It is profitable to reprove, to show a person when he gets off that track. It is profitable for correction, to help a person get back on track. It is profitable for training in righteousness, to help that person stay on track. Ephesians 2:3-17, the word "equipped" is the root word that we are looking at in Ephesians 4:12 when it says "to equip the saints" That is the same exact word.

God-called pastors on staff alongside the senior pastor-teacher are not there to entertain people. They are not there to teach people how to cook; they are not there to teach people how to make baskets; they are not there to build numbers; they are there to equip the saints for the work of the ministry. Why? So that the church can begin to bring glory to God and not to themselves and man-made ideas. Now, they will answer to God for that assignment. Anything less is unacceptable in a pastor-teacher who is coming alongside the senior pastor-teacher of a church.

America has been so deceived by this numbers game. Folks, I can't tell you how it has swept our country. It's making smaller churches feel like they aren't even needed anymore. Many of them are trying to merge and go together so they can make a bigger church. Why? Because numbers are driving the whole thing. One nationally-known pastor made this statement: "Any pastor who thinks that the church can be built by preaching and teaching of God's word and prayer is out of touch with people in the 21st Century." Now, this is what we are up against. It is the numbers game in so many places.

Thank God, He's shown us that we are here for a specific reason; we are here to equip the saints for the work of ministry so that every man might be presented complete in the Lord Jesus Christ." So that's the assignment. That's what every pastor-teacher on this staff will stand before God one day and be held accountable.

Secondly is the aim of the pastor. Now we know what his assignment is; but what is his aim, what is he shooting at? We've seen the first one. We've seen that the word of God makes a person adequate. Adequate for what? What is the aim of this equipping? Eph 4:12, "for the equipping of the saints for the work of service." The word for service, *diakonia*, we've seen this word how many times before? The word translated as deacon, but it means "ministry." It is the word for ministry.

Now we must couple what we are talking about right now with Pillar Number Six. We all received gifts when we were saved, but no gift is functional until the one who has the gift is walking surrendered to the Lordship of Christ. The pastor teacher is not necessarily teaching the person how to use his gifts. That really doesn't have to be there. He is focusing on teaching the believer to live in such a way that his gifts are usable. That is what the gift of the pastor teacher is all about, to help a person get to a place in his walk that he can be usable, that his gift can be functional.

When you have a large church, like we have, we have to have more than one pastor teacher; we have to have many to come alongside. The only difference is, their assignment is the same, but it is more narrowed into different groups. The youth pastor is trying to do the same thing with our young people; this is what we are trying to do in the children; just what we are trying to do in the adult area: get everybody up on the same page to where we can start equipping each other so that our walk will be such that God can use us and bring glory to Himself within His church. The senior pastor teacher preaches from the pulpit, week to week. That's what God has given, or however He designs it. But these others have different pulpits. They have different places in the church. Personally, I think they are just as valuable, if not even more valuable because they are more able to get on a one-to-one basis with

the people. But a pastor on staff has the same aim as the senior pastor teacher.

I want you to understand something. None of us, from the senior pastor all the way through to the different pastors on staff, are here to pamper the unwilling. I want to make sure that we catch that. The word "saints" in Ephesians 4:12 refer to those who are willing to be equipped. We are not here to figure out why people don't want to be equipped. We are here to equip the people who want to be equipped. Now, I want to tell you something fallout, losing numbers, always occurs when this is taking place. Why? There are many people who want to be functional in the body but they don't want to be functional God's way. To be functional God's way, we have to deal with our flesh. To be functional God's way, we have to be renewed in His Word day by day. So the assignment of a God-called pastor is to equip the saints. His aim is that they might be usable in ministry; they might be functional in the body of Christ.

Thirdly, the aspiration of a pastor. In 4:12 it says, "for the equipping of the saints [that's his assignment] for the work of service [that's his aim, but then he aspires to something; look at this], to the building up of the body of [[Christ]]." To the building up of the body of [[Christ]]. A true [[God]]-called pastor teacher wants to see the body built up. The word for building in the Greek text *isokodome*, which means the act of building something. We have many builders here in our church. It is not the finished product; it is the act, the progress, the advancement of building starts here and continues to build.

That word does not refer to the finished product, although that's in mind, but the pastor teacher is in the business of the process of the whole thing. The body of Christ is in a constant state of being built up. It is a work in progress. I'm going to buy a shirt someday that says, "Please be patient with me, God isn't finished with me yet." I'm in the process. The church is in a process. It is a task that is not ended.

You see, in the church, growth is not measured by numbers. I wish we could understand that; growth is never measured by numbers, although numbers are important, yes, they are people. But that's not the driving force. Growth is measured by the people who start living lives where they are usable and functional in the body. When you see a person who is living under grace, you begin to see that grace worked out. You begin to see that person become functional and usable and God's hand is all over what's going on.

Now, once again, the materials that are used in this building are found only in the Word of [[God]]. In fact, Paul connects these two things, the Word of [[God]] and the building up of the individual and the body. In Acts 20:32, he is referring to the elders of the church at Ephesus, to which we are looking at in Ephesians. He says to them, "And now I commend you to [[God]] and to the word of His grace [which is what the scriptures are] which is able to build you up and give you the inheritance among all those who are sanctified." This is the aspiration of a [[God]]-called preacher; nothing melts his butter any better than this. Nothing lights his fire any better than this; than to see people get to a place in their walk to where they become functional and where they become usable; nothing blesses his heart anymore. That's his aspiration.

But, finally, I want you to see the accomplishment of a God-called pastor. How does he know that what's going on is actually working? I know you can see a person here and a person there, but is there any scripture that can help us here? Yes, in Eph 4:12, it says, "for the equipping of the saints for the work of the service [assignment; and the aim] to the building up of the body of [[Christ]] [that's his aspiration, but in Eph 4:13], till we all attain to the unity of the faith and of the knowledge of the Son of [[God]] to a mature man to the measure of the stature which belongs to the fullness of [[Christ]]."

Now, that's a mouthful, but oh, how powerful this verse is. Let me break it down and help you. Paul uses the word "all" in the phrase, "until we all attain to the unity of the faith." No one is to be left out. His focus has got to be from the cradle to the grave. This is why we need a multiplicity of pastors. This is why we have pastor teachers who look over the youth and children's areas, and the different areas. We don't want anybody to be left out. We don't want that. No one is to be left out.

"Until we *all attain*" Now that word "attain" is exciting. It is the word *katantao*, and it means to arrive at a place; until we all arrive at the same place. Isn't that amazing? You have a team of pastors all working for the same thing, but what they want is for the whole body of Christ to arrive at the same place; until we all attain the unity of the faith. The word for unity, *henotes*, means a place with no variation; there are no strong differences that would cause us to divide. We begin to see God's truth for what it is; we begin to see the word rightly divided. We begin to see where we are and how all of this fits.

The term, "the faith" until we all arrive or attain at the same place to the unity, where there is no difference or variation of the faith. It has a definite article behind it. Anytime you see the word faith with a definite article behind it, it refers to the revealed word of God, doctrine. You see, doctrine is important. So many people have told me over the years, "You preach too doctrinally. You preach too much of the word of God." Are you kidding me?? We can't get enough of the word of God.

The whole aspect, the whole assignment, the aim, the aspiration, of a pastor is to bring people to where they come into a unity. First of all in understanding what the Word of God has to say; that we understand what living grace is and what saving grace is; all these different things and how they fit.

But that's really not his point. Paul's point here is not just that we come to understand it—that's one thing, that's good—his point is that we come to the place to where there is no variation, there is no difference in the way all of us want to respond to what we say we understand. In other words, Paul says not only to teach the doctrine for the sake of information, the word of God is not just for information, the word of God is for transformation. When we come to the place where all of us not only understand but we are willing to obey it, oh that's the accomplishment of the goal of a pastor teacher who is on staff at a local church. He wants to see everyone come to that place.

You say, "I don't see that in scripture, where they are supposed to be obeying it." Oh, yes, it's there, if you'll just keep reading. The next phrase says "until we all attain to the unity of the faith [now look] and to the knowledge of the Son of [[God]]." You know what that word "knowledge" is? *Epignosis*. *Gnosis* is somebody who knows something. You ever know somebody who knew something and they try to cram it down your throat? That's *gnosis*. *Epignosis* takes a person to a different level. *Gnosis* you can know in your head, *epignosis* you know in your heart. That's the difference. *Epignosis* is when somebody is living something out. It is when he is experiencing what he says he understands and he knows.

The apostle Paul says, that place when people can understand doctrine and not only understand it, come to the place they want to obey it and then they will be brought to the place of experiencing Christ in their own life; *epignosis*, knowledge of the Son of God, that's what the accomplishment is. When everybody in this church comes to that individual place in their life that they love the word of God and they embrace the word of God, that they obey the word of God and they begin to experience Christ in their life; then He comes alive in the church. That's the accomplishment of the pastor teacher. Until we all come to where there is no variance.

The sad thing is we are a work in progress, we're not going to get there until Jesus gets here. But the beautiful thing is that the remnant can get bigger and bigger and bigger. And may I say to you there is remnant of believers that is so pure and so genuine; and my prayer is that remnant will get bigger and bigger and people will then, not only talk about what they say they understand but they will live it out they will experience Christ for themselves. That's the accomplishment of a pastor's efforts.

That's the accomplishment in the youth group knowing that they're losing kids because they want to be pampered; knowing that they're losing kids because we don't give out CD players if you bring the most kids. They're losing kids because they don't have a smoke bomb on the stage and play all the wild music. The accomplishment in the youth pastor is the same that's in my heart, the same that's in the heart of all the pastors here. When he sees young people come to the place that they understand what God's word says and they are willing to obey it and he starts seeing Jesus being Jesus in them. He knows then that the work is being done.

Folks, we've got to get with the program and understand if we continue on like we are doing, and the church grows numerically, thank God, because it won't be because they didn't understand where we're going to take them. We are going to take them to the word of God, we're going to equip them. I'll tell you something, I know this staff doesn't know anything else and neither do I. That's what we are here for and that's what we will answer to God for. What about the elders? What about the teachers?" I'm not talking about them today, I'm talking about the staff, that's my only point. You understand that it all works together as a team. This is an on-going process.

Somebody asked me, "What are you going to be doing in five years?" I don't know. I don't know what I'm going to be doing tomorrow; except, yes, I do. I'm going to be equipping somebody who's a believer in the word of God so that they can get their life to a place that they can become usable and functional in the body of Christ, so that they glory can never go to them. The glory will have to go to Him.

Eph 4:13, "until we all attain to the unity of the faith and of the knowledge of the Son of God." Now watch this. He takes the "all" and makes us one body again. He says, "to a mature man." He did not say "mature men;" the whole church functioning properly reflects Christ. "To a mature man, to the measure of the stature which belongs to the fullness of Christ." The word "mature" there is *teleios*, the accomplishment of a goal. Oh, man, watch this, "to a measure of the stature which belongs to the fullness of Christ." The word stature is *helikia*, which means something that is mature, something that is complete. That's the accomplishment, when the church gets to the point they don't even see the different gifts. They just see Jesus. And all of those different gifts have blended together so beautifully to bring glory to Him and to magnify His presence in their midst.

When we as a body of believers under the equipping of our pastors and teachers come to the place of the measure of the stature which belongs to the fullness of Christ it's been accomplished. And that is why we are here and that's what a church is all about and how it functions.

There is a dear man in our church who gave me a picture. It's in my office. It's by Thomas Kinkade. My particular picture it's a little church in the country and it's got a little creek and a dirt road going down. He can take an ordinary setting and by the gifts that God has given him, make that setting come to life. How he works with light. We have a little light that goes over it, I click it on and it is like the sun just comes up. It just brings light out of that picture. How can anybody do that?

Well, the apostle Paul is the Thomas Kinkade of the New Testament. He takes an ordinary church that has its problems, that has its warts and difficulties, and he begins to paint a picture in Romans 12:6-8 of how it can look. Then he takes over in Ephesians 4:11-13 colors it in and brings the light into it. This is how these people are equipped to function. You have the two working together and it paints a picture like none that you can find anywhere else. You want to know what the church is supposed to be? We've just told you. That's what it is supposed to be.

I was up in Michigan preaching this past week. While I was up there they have just begun to understand grace, living grace; Jesus be Jesus in us. You know what I did? I never did this before in my life. I just took what we've been doing in the seven pillars. I didn't take them all, but I just put them together and started to show them what a church looks like that's living under grace. Folks, we had revival this past week. That pastor stood and was so overwhelmed; he said, "Thank you, thank you, thank you. We didn't know what we're supposed to look like. We're coming out of a performance mentality." He said, "I don't even know how to do this thing anymore." Listen, folks, my prayer is that God will show Himself strong and that one day we will have those numbers, but they will be for the right reason and they will be for the glory of God and He will be magnified in everything that is going on. It will stand in the face of everything else that's going on in our country. I believe that's what God is doing, I really do. That's from my heart to yours.

Well, let me ask you a question. Are you functional in the body of Christ? Is God using you? "Well, I work hard and I just come here to church. I sit down and I get up and leave." Well, that's fine. If you are saved, you're still saved. But, I'll tell you what, you have a function in the body of Christ. You have a gift. God didn't send you here to sit and soak. God sent you here to get your life in such a place that you could be usable to Him and function in the body of Christ. The staff does not do the work of the ministry; this is not a staff-driven church, this is a staff-led church. But it can only be led to the degree of the people who are willing to say, "God, I'm here, use me." You don't have to know your gift, just know the giver and walk with Him. The rest will take care of itself.