

After Darkness, Light

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Please turn in your Bibles to 2 Kings 22. I'm going to depart from our study of Ruth for this Sunday. It's October 30th, the day before Reformation Day, October 31st, tomorrow is the 499th anniversary of the day that Martin Luther started the Protestant Reformation by nailing the 95 theses of statements of protest, those 95 theses were statements of protest against the practice of indulgences in the medieval Roman Catholic Church, and that was a spark that began a process and ignited a fire that became the Protestant Reformation. So tomorrow is 499 years. Amazing.

The Protestant Reformation, Martin Luther, Ulrich Zwingli, William Tyndale, John Calvin, great leaders in the Reformation. One of the highlights of a trip that Patti and I took some years back, we did a Reformation tour in Europe and one of the real highlights was coming to Geneva and in the shadow almost of John Calvin's church, St. Peter's church, is the Reformation Monument. The Reformation Monument was given to the city of Geneva by the Hungarian Reformed Church as a thank you gift basically for the Gospel. It was begun in 1909, the 400th anniversary of John Calvin's birth, he was born in 1509, finished around 1917 or 1918 and this monument is 330 feet long, so it is a football field long, 30 feet high. In the center there are four statues: there is William Farel, John Calvin, Theodore Beza, John Knox, the four men who were very influential in the ministry of the church of Geneva, and there are these other statues along the side and then on the one end they've got inscribed the name Luther and on the other end the name Zwingli. It's focusing on Geneva and the impact Geneva had but, of course, acknowledging that it flowed from what Luther and Zwingli had done even before. Then these other statues are men who took the Gospel from Geneva out and those who then subsequently took the Gospel to other places and it just struck me as I learned that it was from the Hungarian Reformed Church and one of the men, the statues there is a man who evangelized that area of the world, that they were basically thanking Geneva for the Gospel. Now, Geneva I don't think really cared by the time they got the thank you gift sadly in 1909; the church in Geneva was a shadow of what it had been. But the motto of the Reformation is inscribed in the midst in huge letters inscribed across this great wall: Post Tenebras Lux, after darkness, light. That's the message of the Reformation and that is the thank you that they were saying: thank you for sending the light into our darkness.

After darkness, light. That's the title of our message this morning. After darkness, light. What we're going to see is that's really the story of the Bible in general and there tend to

be these patterns through history and we're going to see an archetype of it in 2 Kings 22 and essentially what we see is that the Reformation, the reason that the light came back, was that the Bible was recovered. For basically a thousand years, the Bible, or almost a thousand years, the Bible had been locked away in a dead language. After the fall of Rome, less and less people spoke Latin. It continued to be the language of the intelligentsia and the universities but the common man did not speak Latin all over Europe, but the Bible was only read in Latin. The Bible was only available in Latin. The Catholic Church forbade the Bible to be translated into any other language. This was one of the evidences of their heretical nature, that they kept the Bible from the people locked away in a mystical language and hidden behind all kinds of traditions that choked out the light of God's word. So what happened when the Reformers came to see the Gospel, they started studying the Scripture like Luther did in the Greek and Hebrew because he was a monk and he was trained in those languages, the word of God set his life ablaze with the light of the Gospel of the glory of God in the face of Christ, and then he wanted to see the Scriptures translated and so he translated the New Testament and the Old Testament into German and that happened all over Europe. William Tyndale did that in England and died for it.

Others translated the Scriptures into all the various languages and so churches, can you imagine coming into church today, if I were to be sitting here talking to you in Latin, in a language you don't know, I mean, some of our homeschool kids will be able to follow me a little bit but most of us wouldn't have a clue. And the fact was that many of the priests didn't know what they were reading either because it was much easier just to learn how to phonetically say the words than to really learn the language. So they would be saying the words in Latin and not knowing what they were saying. The people aren't knowing what they're hearing. There was no congregational singing. Everything was done in Latin. It was like you walked in, I mean, fly across the world and go sit in a meeting somewhere where they are speaking just Mandarin Chinese and see how much you get out of it. That was church throughout the Middle Ages, and when the Reformers saw the power of the word of God impact their lives and they translated the Bible into the languages and they started printing Bibles in English, in German, and people for the first time held the word of God in their hands and began to read the word of God and to teach the word of God to one another, families around the Bible, God's word, the light of God's word flooded into an area that had been formerly deep darkness and that's what *post tenebras lux* means, after darkness, light. And we see in this amazing passage in the Old Testament, the story of Josiah, really almost unbelievable and yet we see in this exactly what I was just talking about, the tendency of the people of God to lose the Bible, to lose the book.

We'll start reading 2 Kings 22:1. Josiah was one of the last kings of the nation of Judah before the Babylonian exile. Verse 1,

1 Josiah was eight years old when he became king, and he reigned thirty-one years in Jerusalem; and his mother's name was Jedidah the daughter of Adaiah of Bozkath. 2 He did right in the sight of the LORD and walked in all the way of his father David, nor did he turn aside to the right or to the left. 3 Now in the eighteenth year of King Josiah

So he's 25 or 26 now. He's been reigning for 18 years. His father Amon reigned for two, his grandfather Manasseh reigned for 55. So what we're going to see in a moment, this is how long it's been dark.

3 Now in the eighteenth year of King Josiah, the king sent Shaphan, the son of Azaliah the son of Meshullam the scribe, to the house of the LORD saying, 4 "Go up to Hilkiyah the high priest that he may count the money brought in to the house of the LORD which the doorkeepers have gathered from the people. 5 Let them deliver it into the hand of the workmen who have the oversight of the house of the LORD, and let them give it to the workmen who are in the house of the LORD to repair the damages of the house, 6 to the carpenters and the builders and the masons and for buying timber and hewn stone to repair the house. 7 Only no accounting shall be made with them for the money delivered into their hands, for they deal faithfully."

Josiah, God puts on his heart to repair the temple. The temple is in disrepair so he sends them over. This is what happens, verse 8,

8 Then Hilkiyah the high priest said to Shaphan the scribe, "I have found the book of the law in the house of the LORD." And Hilkiyah gave the book to Shaphan who read it. 9 Shaphan the scribe came to the king and brought back word to the king and said, "Your servants have emptied out the money that was found in the house, and have delivered it into the hand of the workmen who have the oversight of the house of the LORD." 10 Moreover, Shaphan the scribe told the king saying, "Hilkiyah the priest has given me a book." And Shaphan read it in the presence of the king. 11 When the king heard the words of the book of the law, he tore his clothes. 12 Then the king commanded Hilkiyah the priest, Ahikam the son of Shaphan, Achbor the son of Micaiah, Shaphan the scribe, and Asaiah the king's servant saying, 13 "Go, inquire of the LORD for me and the people and all Judah concerning the words of this book that has been found, for great is the wrath of the LORD that burns against us, because our fathers have not listened to the words of this book, to do according to all that is written concerning us."

The temple, in the temple among the people of God, the one nation that belonged to God, they found a book and no one had any idea what it was and it was the word of God.

Let's go to the Lord in prayer.

Our Father, we thank you that you are a God who has spoken. You are a God who has always been speaking. It is your nature to communicate, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, eternally living in a communion of love, a communicating, loving. And then you have spoken to us. You have spoken to us in your holy word, and you have spoken to us most

supremely in the living Word, the Son, the Lord Jesus Christ. We pray that you might now help us as we study your Scriptures to have the mind of Christ and to understand what you would have us understand. Help us to follow our Savior. We pray in Jesus' name. Amen.

There are three points I want us to gather our thoughts around this morning and the first point is the very real danger of losing the book. Basically I'm going to give you, the three points are going to have the words losing, finding and living. So we're going to talk about losing now. The very real danger of losing the book. That's the first point. The seventh century BC Judah, the nation of Judah, the people of God, the northern kingdom has been carried off into captivity but God's people in the south, the son of David on the throne of Judah, the temple intact, yet the people lost the book. How can that happen? But they did. They're cleaning up, they are moving things around, picking things up, dusting things off, looking for the money so they could pay the workers because God has supernaturally put into Josiah's heart the desire to restore the worship of Yahweh, and as they do that, somebody says, "Hey, what's this?" And they began to read and it is the word of God. "In the beginning, God created the heavens and the earth." What is this? How can that happen? I mentioned before Josiah has been reigning 18 years, it's the first he's seen of the Bible. His dad, Amon, and his granddad, Manasseh, were wicked men who reigned for 57 years in Judah and had basically promoted idolatry and wickedness and so over time somehow among the people of God, the book was lost.

That is a very real danger even today and you see it repeated again and again. I mean, when Jesus came to minister the word of God, when the living Word of God came to Israel, came to show the way of salvation, to accomplish our salvation on the cross, what did he find in the nation at that time? He found people who he says in Mark 7:1-13, who have invalidated the word of God by their tradition. Basically they believed the Bible but they had piled so much tradition on it that they had rendered it, as the King James said, of none effect. "But you guys who are teaching the Bible, you're teaching it but you have rendered it of none effect because you have added on all of your human traditions." So even though they thought they had it, it was buried. It was lost.

So it was so lost that when he came, they didn't recognize him and he said to them, "If you knew the Scriptures, if you knew Moses, you would know me because Moses wrote about me." Remember in Luke 24 when he takes the walk on the road to Emmaus and he shows them how everything written in the law and the prophets, in the writings concerning him. "Look at all these things pointing to me." So it's almost inevitable that the people of God if not diligently holding to the Scriptures lose the book.

The third example, of course, is what we're talking about with the Reformation Day. The Bible was completely lost in the church. The Roman Catholic Church which claimed to lift up Christ yet the Bible was completely lost. The dead language, Latin, it was buried in that dead language. They killed people for trying to make it known. That's why John Wycliffe died. I mean, he died actually, he wasn't actually martyred, he was going to be. The pope dug up his bones and burned them because he didn't get to kill him in the first place. It was in England. It was a long way away so it took a while to get there.

Wycliffe's crime was he translated the Bible from Latin into English. John Huss, another man who wanted the Scriptures known and proclaimed, he was burned at the stake. And here Martin Luther comes in the train of those two men saying the same thing, "We need the word of God." And it was recovered and so we celebrate Reformation Day 499 years later.

And yet even in the 20th century Christian church, the word of God was again lost. It's really ironic too when you think about the history of the 20th century, Christianity in the last century. You had the fundamentalist modernist controversy in the first half of the 20th century where liberalism was taking over the seminaries and the colleges and coming over from Europe, that people who would be studying the Bible but then just not believing it. Then the conservatives though, they were losing the Bible because they didn't believe it. Okay, it's understandable that the liberals lost it, what's amazing is that the conservatives lost it too. The fundamentalists who stood up against them like J. Gresham Machen, other men of God who said, "The word of God is inerrant. It's infallible. We build our lives upon it. It's all that we have. The Gospel is in the word of God."

Great heroes but men who followed in their footsteps, the evangelicals and fundamental Bible believing conservatives of the 20th century somehow we also lost the book. Where did we lose the book? We lost the book in the area of soul care. Somehow among those who believe the Bible to be the inerrant, inspired word of God, sufficient for all that we need for life and godliness, we lost the book in the area of dealing with people's problems, their psychological problems. How could that happen? But it did. We started referring our parishioners out to psychologists, psychiatrists, and then the whole discipline of Christian psychology, Christian psychiatry; that is, the intermingling of the doctrines of psychology, the humanistic, man-made views of why people have the problems they have that are rooted in all kinds of unbiblical, ungodly thought processes, to try to bring those together with the doctrines of Scripture and to mingle them together. You can't bring oil and water together. Light and darkness have no business together. But it happened. It happened so that most people who went to Bible believing churches that would preach on Sunday mornings the inerrancy of the word of God, if you said you were really severely depressed, what would happen is your pastor would say, "I've got a name of a counselor, a psychologist you need to go and see." This was even true when I was in seminary. Dr. Mack was sharing with me, we had some opportunity to share this last weekend and he was telling me how when he went through seminary it was just like it was when I went. I had one counseling class. That's what he had. Did you have one counseling class? One counseling class and it wasn't a biblical counseling class, it was basically saying this is what you need to do, generally refer. The Bible is not sufficient.

So they lost the book. It's an ever present danger to lose the book. We are prone to lose the book in other ways. Even if we who now understand that biblical counseling is the way that we should live, we still are prone to lose the book. Just the presence of indwelling sin, the work of the enemy of our souls, the deceiver, who wants to blind us, the world system. We constantly are tempted to neglect the word of God, to forget the

word of God, to when we see the word of God to rebel against it and to run from it and the next thing you know, we've lost the book in areas of our lives.

I was talking to a brother the other day who said, "You know, I find in my," he said this about himself, "I find in my own life that if I miss three days of time in the word, man, I just see it affect my mindset." And how do we do that? Well, we're too busy. We've got other things on our minds. We'd rather check our email or get right to the news of the day and we don't get in the word of God and before you know it, we've lost the book. A very real danger of losing the book.

Second point: the life and death urgency of finding the book. We saw the very real danger of losing the book, now the life and death urgency of finding the book. We need the book. Hosea 4:6 the Lord laments, looking at his people and he says, "My people perish for a lack of knowledge." The reason they are perishing, the reason they are being undone is that they don't know the truth.

Deuteronomy 8:3, "Man shall not live by bread alone but by every word which proceeds from the mouth of God." Think about that and we are told in Deuteronomy 8, Moses tells the people, "The reason God fed you with manna was so that you might know this, it wasn't to show you a cool miracle." I mean, it was an amazing thing and it taught them dependence in some way, yes. Remember, they had no food, millions of people traveling through a barren wilderness, no way to provide for themselves, they are not going out plundering the nations around them as they go, they don't have any food but God fed them for 40 years with manna out of heaven. Every day they would gather the food for that day except on Friday they would gather two days worth because they didn't gather on the Sabbath. And every day their bread would last just for that day except on Friday they got a two day version of it. Remember how it would get worms if they tried to save it overnight until the next morning? "Man, this was some really good manna and for some reason I got the cooking of this just right. I'm going to save some for tomorrow's breakfast." In the morning, worms. Why did God do that? We're told, Deuteronomy 8:3, "The Lord led you in the wilderness and fed you with manna from heaven so that you might know man does not live by bread alone but by every word that proceeds from the mouth of God." That is, that your life depends upon the word of God and you don't need it once a week, you need it every day. You need it every moment of every day to sustain your soul. That's what we need.

So when they lost the book, this was going to bring about devastation and that's what we see. The life and death urgency is seen in what happens when you lose the book. I mean, what happened to them in the seventh century, when you read on into the next chapter, you know, we see Josiah repent and reestablish the covenant with the people, the people commit to follow the Lord and then what happens is he starts cleaning things up. Let's read a few of these verses. Verses 4 to 7, and this is what happens. How could it get this bad? It gets this bad when you lose the book.

Look at verse 4 of chapter 23. "Then the king commanded Hilkiah the high priest and the priests of the second order and the doorkeepers, to bring out of," where? "Out of the

temple of the LORD," to bring out of the temple of Yahweh, "all the vessels that were made for Baal, for Asherah, and for all the host of heaven; and he burned them outside Jerusalem in the fields of the Kidron, and carried their ashes to Bethel. He did away with the idolatrous priests whom the kings of Judah had appointed to burn incense in the high places in the cities of Judah and in the surrounding area of Jerusalem, also those who burned incense to Baal, to the sun and to the moon and to the constellations and to all the host of heaven." You see this crazy occult stuff going on everywhere in Jerusalem and around.

Look at verse 7, "He also broke down the houses of the male cult prostitutes which were in the house of the LORD." How could that be? And as they broke down the houses, those houses where those cult prostitutes were, "women were," even then, "weaving hangings for the Asherah." It had become such a way of life, idolatry had become such a way of life.

Skip on down to verse 10. He's dealing with more stuff all along but I'm hitting the highlights for the sake of time. Verse 10, "He also defiled Topheth, which is in the valley of the son of Hinnom, that no man might make his son or his daughter pass through the fire for Molech." It had become a standard practice for the Israelites to sacrifice their children on the altar of Molech, to burn them in the fire.

Verse 24, I mean, we're skipping over a whole bunch more. Verse 24, "Moreover, Josiah removed the mediums and the spiritists and the teraphim and the idols and all the abominations that were seen in the land of Judah and in Jerusalem, that he might confirm the words of the law which were written in the book that Hilkiah the priest found in the house of the LORD." How does it get like that? How do you get like that? You don't eat an elephant...how do you eat an elephant? You eat an elephant one bite at a time. You get there little by little, day by day, step by step, when you lose the book.

You look at the Roman Catholic Church in medieval times and even the Roman Catholic Church even more today because they rejected the Reformation, but in medieval times, what was Luther dealing with? What did they grow up in? They grew up in a system where you lived in abject fear and hopeless despair that you had no hope of really knowing you could be saved. You practiced the seven sacraments of the Catholic Church just hoping that somehow God would infuse enough righteousness into you that you wouldn't have to spend too terribly much time in the horrible place of purgatory after you die where they taught that you go and burn until you're clean, you know, thousands and millions of years of flames, then you can be clean enough to get into heaven. And how you could believe that if you gave money to the church at certain designated times when the pope decided to make a special offering, you could give money and somehow that could spring grandma or your father from purgatory. And they believed it because there was no book.

So Luther began reading the book and that's what led him to write the 95 theses. He reads the book and he says, "Wait a minute, there is some real problem with this whole indulgence thing." And he didn't really have it all figured out when he wrote the 95

theses. I mean, we never have it all figured out, do we? But he was still in process...many people think he wasn't converted until 1519, Luther actually thought that. God was working in his life, he was seeing the effect of the word of God but it wasn't until later that he truly came to conversion, that he came to understand what the way of salvation truly is.

But it got that way because they lost the book and the urgency of finding the book is if you don't find the book, it's going to get like that. 20th century fundamentalism I mentioned earlier in conservative Christianity, what we had was this dichotomy. We talked about the inerrancy of the word of God, the sufficiency of the word of God, and yet we denied it at the same time we were affirming it by practicing this idea of looking to the writings of people like Freud, Rogers, Maslow, Jung. We denied the sufficiency of Scripture and because of that people were left in agony of soul. Depression, take some more medicine. Anxiety, you just need to be medicated or you need to work through some psychotherapy and you pay hundreds of dollars a session to get no better. I mean, study after study after study basically shows this is the standard thing whenever I read one of these, 1/3 of the people who go through psychotherapy get better, 1/3 of the people get worse, and 1/3 of the people have no change. Then they'll always have a control group that they did nothing for people who had the same problem. Do you know what happened to the control group? 1/3 of the people got better, 1/3 of the people got worse, and 1/3 of the people had no change. It doesn't profit. We don't weapon according to flesh. We don't war according to flesh. Our weapons in our warfare are not of the flesh but they are mighty through God to the pulling down of strongholds.

Even today though, we can know these things and we can look at this and say, "How could they do that? How could they have done that in the medieval church? How could they do that in 20th century fundamentalism?" which many of us are a part of, "How could we have done that?" But the question is how could even we still do it today? I mean, the dark corners of our lives, the ugly parts that we try not to let others see, evidence the fact that the book hasn't been brought to bear on that. You see, sin doesn't stand still and so when the book is not being brought into all the corners of your life, what happens? The dark corners get messier and uglier. I mean, we live in a war zone, a spiritual warfare is going on. Satan is a roaring lion seeking whom he may devour. The world is at war with us. It is opposed to us. It's lying to us every day. Not only that, the enemy is not only all around us, the enemy is within us. The born again Christian still has in himself the principle of indwelling sin. So with all that against us, what do we expect if we are not bringing the word to bear with diligence and with consistent effort and desperation? What's going to happen? Sin is going to grow and it's going to wreak havoc. That's why lust continues to dominate, anxiety continues to control, anger and outbursts of anger continue to happen. We look like the world in the areas where the word has not been brought to bear, the areas where we have lost the book. And so finding the book is of the greatest importance, finding the book is a matter of life and death. Finding the book every day, day after day, moment after moment until Jesus comes or until we die, that is the most important thing.

Finding the book is of the greatest importance but it's not merely finding the book that is enough. Thirdly, we've seen the very real danger of losing the book, the life and death urgency of finding the book, thirdly, let's consider the transforming power of living the book. The transforming power not just of hearing but of living it. Living the book, when you hear and you act. The Scripture is clear, it's not just enough to hear the word. Don't be merely hearers of the word, James tells us, but be doers of the word. You don't want to be like a man who looks at the mirror of God's word, sees what's wrong and then does nothing about it and walks away. "Gee, glad I looked at that mirror." No, a doer of the word goes to the word of God, the word of God exposes what's wrong and then we seek by God's grace to address it. Don't be merely hearers of the word but doers of the word or as Jesus taught in the parable, don't be like the man who built his house upon the sand, be like the man who built his house upon the rock. What was the difference between those two men? Was it that one man had the word of God or heard the word of God and the other didn't? No, when you read it carefully in Matthew 7, it wasn't that, that they heard something different, it was how they responded to what they heard. They heard the same thing. Jesus says the man who built his house on the sand is like a man who heard the word of God and yet did not do it; and so his house was built on sand and so when the winds came and the storms came and the winds blew, it fell and great was its fall. But the man who heard the word of God and practiced it was the man who built his house upon the rock, and the storms came and the floodwaters rose and the winds blew and the house stood because it was founded upon the rock. So living the book.

Now, what you see in living the book, the transformation that happens, the transforming power of living the book, we see it first of all when we go back and consider seventh century Judah, the changes that happened. I mean, what we looked at earlier, how bad it had gotten. Well, we saw how bad it had gotten because Josiah was going out there and cleaning it up. It's amazing his discipline, his diligence, his urgency to clean everything up. I mean, he had holy zeal. In fact, we are told in verse 25 of chapter 23, before him, before Josiah, listen to this, this is amazing praise, "Before him there was no king like him who turned to the LORD with all his heart and with all his soul and with all his might, according to all the law of Moses; nor did any like him arise after him."

The word of God transformed him and then he went about changing everything in society. They reinstated the Passover and worship was restored and there was a wonderful revival. Yes, it didn't last because God's judgment still fell because the people didn't really turn back with all their hearts because the Gospel hadn't come, Jesus hadn't come yet. But in the Reformation, what happened? The transforming power of living the book in Luther's life. I mentioned before, he was trapped in all the medieval darkness of Roman Catholicism. Luther was weighed down with a sense of his sinfulness and he would confess, you know, confession was one of the additional sacraments they kind of added and if you really wanted to be holy, you needed to confess your sins to the priest. And you would go to the priest and you would confess your sins to him and he absolves you of them and he tells you what you need to do, go do your penance, this is your penance, you go and you say so many of this prayer and so many of that, you do this and you do that, and then that will clean the sins that you've done today. And you come back

tomorrow or the day after that and you'll talk about the sins you've done since then, we keep working at it.

And Luther diligently did that. I mean, he would stay and confess so long that the priest that were over him were like, "Please, you've been at this for two hours. You've done enough." But Luther could not deal with the guilt that gripped his soul. He felt under the wrath of God until finally, as I said earlier, he learned the languages Greek and Hebrew and he was studying the New Testament in Greek, he was reading Romans 1 when he came to chapter 1, verse 17, where we're told that "the righteousness of God is revealed from heaven through faith, for it is written the just by their faith shall live." Luther as he was reading that passage, the light of the word of God seized him and he finally understood that the righteousness of God was a gift, a gift from outside of us that God gives and he imputes to us, credits to us when we believe; that we can't make ourselves more righteous. It's a gift given because of all that Christ has done is credited to us when we trust him. He said when that happened, it was like the gates of paradise opened. He had been studying his Bible for like 12 or 13 years at this point diligently but finally all that deception that had been built into his life, it took a long time for God to open his eyes. It was like the gates of paradise opened and he walked in a saved man and the joy of that transformed him and the urgency of that then led him to be bold as a lion for the truth and he stood up to the papacy, he stood up to the Roman Catholic Church and through him other people, his writings, started helping other people to look at the word of God in a whole new way, and those others that God raised up came alongside him and you had the Protestant Reformation.

But salvation happens when we understand the word of God and the word of God must be brought to bear in our hearts to see a saved and justified but also to see us in our continuing sanctification process. The biblical counseling movement, what happened when the transforming power of living the book? What happened when in 1970, the 20th century error of listening to the world telling us basically, "Hey, it's fine for you to talk to your people about spiritual things but when they have real problems, send them to us." Jay Adams wrote the book in 1970, "Competent to Counsel," which basically as he was reading the scriptures he realized that the Bible talks all the time about the real problems of life. And when you read the Puritans and you read people from previous generations, they dealt with the real problems of life. They talked about helping people out of depression and overcoming anxiety and overcoming fear and overcoming lust, addictions the world says. The word of God is the key to that. So he wrote that book, "Competent to Counsel." Dr. Mack was sharing that he got a copy of that somehow and read it and it set a fire in his life. He said before he had always referred, he had done what he was told to do in seminary, refer them out. But then he read that book and then he found out Jay Adams wasn't so far away and he started studying with him and he became like Jay Adams right-hand man, carrying on the Reformation, the modern Reformation, writing books and changing lives.

You know, the Scripture is clear this is God's way. It's the word that does everything. One of my favorite passages related to just the power of the word is Psalm 107, the transforming power of the word of God. Psalm 107:10 says, "There were those who

dwelt in darkness and in the shadow of death, Prisoners in misery and chains." Why? "Because they had rebelled against the words of God And spurned the counsel of the Most High. Therefore He humbled their heart with labor; They stumbled and there was none to help." Look on down to verse 17, "Fools, because of their rebellious way, And because of their iniquities, were afflicted. Their soul abhorred all kinds of food, And they drew near to the gates of death. Then they cried out to the LORD in their trouble; He saved them out of their distresses. He sent His word and healed them." It's the word that does this. Verse 21, "Let them give thanks to the LORD for His lovingkindness, And for His wonders to the sons of men!" God sends forth his word.

Now in our lives, I mentioned earlier, we have dark corners where the word has not been brought to bear. The problems in our relationships that we have that are ongoing problems are there because the word of God is not being lived out there, heard and obeyed. We've neglected, we've forgotten or we have rejected the truth and light rejected always leads to more darkness. But I think one of the reasons that we struggle that the Lord has really, as I read the New Testament more and more, my mind is being changed because I think one of the problems we have as people who grew up in Western culture, we think, you know, you're a frog in the kettle. You know, a fish doesn't know it's wet. There are certain thought forms that are all around us from the time we're born and one of the things we're immersed in is this idea of individual approach to life; that is, that it's all about me and what I do and I've got to make my decision and I do it on my own, especially American individuals and rugged individualism.

Well, that stuff is there and so we come to the Christian life and we misread the Bible because we think in those thought forms. I think one of the reasons that the word of God has not been brought to bear in our lives is because this area is blocking part of God's plan in our life. We don't understand, if we were reading without that blinding, when you come to a passage like Colossians 3:16 which is a passage you remember from being a young Christian memorizing, "Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly with all wisdom." Right? "Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly with all wisdom, teaching and admonishing one another." Well, even the phrase "let the word of Christ dwell in you richly," dwell in you, "you" is plural, not singular. It's let the word of Christ dwell in y'all. And the verb "let it dwell," is a plural verb. It's saying you all need to work at letting the word dwell in you corporately richly.

I normally look at that and I'm thinking I need to spend more time meditating on the Bible myself in my own prayer time. Let the word of Christ dwell in me richly. Well, that's certainly not a bad thing to do. The Bible tells you that in other places, but here it's saying not that. Here it's saying the word of Christ is to dwell in the community of faith richly and how that happens is you're teaching and admonishing one another. You have to be communicating the truth to one another and admonishing one another, noutheteo, it means to set the mind straight, to get the thinking right, you've got to help each other get your thinking right. So what that says is there are going to be areas of my life that my thinking is not right and will not be right until you come along and straighten me out and I need you and we need each other.

This is one of the areas where I think our church is being challenged and the Lord wants us to continue and to grow in the things that he is already doing in this church. I'm so grateful for all that he has done. It's such a pleasure to minister alongside you. I pinch myself, Patti and I do, we can't believe we have the privilege of being with a group of people like you. I say that in complete sincerity. I am delighted to be here. There is nowhere I would rather be in the whole world than with you, but I think one of the things the Lord is calling us to do and he's showing me the deficiency in my life is not being open enough to other people correcting me. "I'm open to it but why don't you ask anybody to correct you?" Well, I figure if they really want to, they'll say it. I don't have to ask them.

We have to get better at that. It's just stupid on our parts, and I'm the chief of sinners in this to, "Hey, what do you see that needs to be changed about what I just did or my thinking? Tell me what your perspective is." Because the Lord is going to use each other to show us things that we are blind to. We have blind spots. And one of the beautiful things about that, there is a humbling power. In the infinite wisdom of God, he has determined that you are not going to be fully sanctified until you learn this lesson. Well, you're not going to be fully sanctified until Jesus comes back but you're not going to be sanctified in areas of your life until you learn this lesson. There are certain things you are struggling with that are going to continue and it doesn't mean that as soon you change this and learn this lesson it's going to happen overnight because God doesn't do it that way. It's a process. But there are areas you're not making progress in that you would start making progress in if you learned this lesson. And it's because the biggest problem of all for every one of us is what? It's pride, and the Lord in his infinite wisdom has ordained that the way that he is going to deal with you and me is the way that will demolish our pride.

There is a quote by John Calvin that I love and I always used to think of this as preaching but I think it applies to everything, it applies to one another. He says this, think about this, when God gave his word he could have spoken out of heaven, he did in Exodus, remember, and he could have kept on doing that and it would have been quite impressive and Calvin writes but God didn't choose to do that, he chose to give his word to, as he says in Deuteronomy 18, "I'm going to put my word in the mouths of your brothers, prophets I'm going to raise up among your own brothers and I'm going to put my word in their mouth and you will listen to them." Calvin writes about this and he says, "It would be one thing if God spoke to us directly from heaven and we reverently received his word, but when a puny man, risen from the dust, speaks in God's name, it truly evidences our piety when we hear him." A puny man risen from the dust speaks the word of God and you listen to him, then you are really humble and God is going to bless you, and it doesn't just mean listen to the preacher, how puny he is. No, it means you and me sharing the word with each other. When somebody is talking to you and you're saying they're telling you something that you did wrong and you're thinking, "Well, I can give you about 10 things I think you're doing wrong." That's how sin works in us, isn't it? Well, what do you remember? Wait a minute, we're all puny men and we can see each other's problems better. I can see your problems better than I can see my own and so I need to love the fact that this person who is weak just like I am, who is puny just like I am, has

been raised up by God to speak the truth to me. What a gift. What a treasure. What a great God who knows how to humble men and lead us in paths of righteousness through that.

I want to end with one last quote, one of my favorite quotes from the Reformation. It came when Luther near the end of his life was asked about looking back on all that had happened, what do you think about it? And he said this, he said, "Throughout my life, I have opposed indulgences." He died in 1546, almost 30 years after the beginning of the Reformation. God had done so much in those 30 years. He said, "I have opposed indulgences and doctrines of the papacy continually but never by force. I simply preached, taught and wrote the Scriptures. Otherwise I did nothing. And while we slept, the words so greatly weakened the papacy that never did a prince or emperor do such damage to it. I did nothing, the word did it all."

Let's go to the Lord in prayer.

Father, we praise you for the power of your glorious word. We praise you for your infinite wisdom, Lord, that you who are a Triune God who dwelt together in a perfect communion of love for all eternity, who delight, Father delighting in the Son, Son delighting in the Spirit, Spirit delighting in the Father and the Son, a communion of wondrous connection and affection and love. You, Lord Jesus, you prayed that one day that we, your people, would be one even as you are one and we thank you that you accomplish that even through the process of sanctification, helping us to love one another and to help one another and to build one another up, to reprove one another, to encourage one another, is all a part of seeing how much we need one another and helping us to delight in one another and glory, most of all, in Christ Jesus who has made us his. We pray that you would have the supreme praise and glory in every way and we pray these things in your name, Lord Jesus. Amen.