

THE CHURCH HAS LOST ITS FOCUS

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If you have your Bibles you might want to open them to the fourth chapter of Jeremiah, because I believe that is where I am going to be ministering. I am very glad that we can be with you here today.

There was a meeting when we got here Saturday night and I was told of the vision that came forth in the midst of the meeting. I think it would be very good for someone to share the vision later on, perhaps in its entirety. Perhaps you could write it down and pass it out. I think it is very indicative of the desire that is in God's heart concerning this conference in particular and also in the times to come. Sometimes God will give us an overall picture of what it is that He desires and the direction that He is going, very much like a blueprint. He will lay it out and give you the ability to discern and to decipher what needs to be done and when it needs to be done.

One of the problems that I think we have as a church is that we do not follow through with what God has given us. I believe that God brings us together in this forum for a particular reason. Number one is that there is a strength and anointing that comes as the people of God come together. There is a strength that comes via the anointing and the desire that is in God's heart to impart something to people. The problem is that we can go away from the conference thinking, "Well, that was a great conference. We had a good time in the Lord." Then come out doing our thing and moving in the vein of ministry or whatever it is, as though God never said anything in the forum that we just came out of. It is not so much an individual fault as much as it is a church fault, a ministry fault.

One of the things that I noticed in the vision that came was that it was delegated into three definitive categories or parts. The second part of the dream was dealing with the ramifications in taking care of what the first part of the vision spoke about. In the vision there was this field that had been plowed and in the plowing of the field there were these big hunks of dirt clods that had been brought up to the surface. I found this very interesting because just this prior week before coming here I had been involved in an operation on our farm that was doing exactly what the vision was showing.

In order for a piece of ground to get in that condition, it takes a big piece of equipment. We call it "ripping the ground." The ground has a tendency to settle and to become compacted. Because of that it loses its ability to produce food. It cannot receive the water and retain it in the way that it should. So it is necessary to come in with this piece of equipment that we call a "rip shank." It has a bar on it. It is hooked up to a big tractor depending on how deep you are going and on the back of the bar there are these big pieces of iron that are curved and have a very sharp point on the end of it. The object is to get that shank down as deep as you can get it so that it will break up the ground. As it goes through the ground, the ground begins to break up and heave. It takes a very

strong tractor to pull it if you want to go deep and break up the ground the way that it should be broken up.

All of this is pertinent to you and me. It is pertinent to the position that we are in and the desire that we have for God, or the need that we see in our lives for God. Instead of a tractor and a piece of equipment, what God uses in our lives is tribulation. Of course all of you like tribulation, right? We may seem to like it before, but never during and always afterwards (that is if it turns out all right). The church today has a problem with the word of God. The word of God is designed to go deep down into the innermost recesses of our heart. Usually it doesn't penetrate very much farther than that portion of our brain that works our mouth. That means that we can hear it and we can talk it but we are not so much interested in walking it. One of the problems we have with these types of gatherings is that as the word of God comes forth, the church does not take what is being spoken, breaking it down so that we, as a people, might be able to assimilate it and translate it from theology into the reality of our lives. Hallelujah.

God is not interested in just making us better people. God is interested in changing us totally, completely and irrevocably so that we are never the same again. Hallelujah. Can you say, "Praise the Lord"?

We as the church are entering into a new dispensation with God. It used to be that by hook or by crook God would pull you into Himself. I mean, I didn't get saved because I wanted to get saved. I got saved because God wanted me to be saved, because I really didn't love God in the beginning. I really loved myself more than I loved God. So God had to create situations that He put me in that were outside of my ability to cope. He had to press me towards that edge of that precipice of hell and then push me just enough until I could not maintain my equilibrium. As I felt myself falling, what did I do? I cried, "GOD, HELP ME!" Can you say "amen," or am I the only one that God had to treat that way? God wanted me saved more than I wanted to be saved.

I was a rebellious child. I was a rebellious young man and I liked to participate in what the Bible calls "sin." But God knew the end of my ways and my destructive nature that was going to bring me to an everlasting place of torment and He did not want me in that position. Hallelujah. I can probably say that I am more appreciative of the grace of God because of the knowledge that I have of my propensity to be bad. Glory to God. Glory to God. I have come to the conscious conclusion, not subliminal, not back there somehow in an imaginary realm... I have come to a conscious cognizant position of knowledge that "in me dwelleth no good thing" (Romans 7:18a).

I think about the grace of God that saved me. I think of the divine intervention of God in spite of my rebellion, in spite of my stubbornness. Of course you are probably not stubborn, right? You probably don't even know how to spell the word "rebellion," right? Because of my rebellion, my pride in who I am and what I am, all of that was rejecting God; pushing God away! Yet God in His magnificent magnanimities reached down into my personal hell and picked me up. Do you know what? We could just go one by one by one by one by one by one and listen to testimony after testimony of the capacity of God to save to the uttermost!

My goodness. You are still in your seats. You are still in your seats. I can't believe it. I think you have glue on your chairs.

If it wasn't just the fact of my salvation, I can begin to think of the impossibility of my situation, the darkness of it, the death of it, and the hoards of hell as they have encroached upon it. God, by virtue of His own being, opened up Himself just a little bit. Light coming forth! Light coming forth! Darkness splitting! EARTHQUAKE! Up out of the grave comes a dead one who is no longer dead, but is ALIVE! Glory to God! Glory to God!

So how is it that we can be a people that do not want tribulation? How is it that we can be a people that do not want trouble? Not for the sake of the trouble, not for the sake of the tribulation, but for the sake of the hope of the glory that comes forth out of the midst of that trouble and that desolation. "Oh grave, where is thy victory?" "Oh grave, where is thy victory? Oh death, where is thy sting?" (I Corinthians 15:55). Loose them! Loose them! Energizing power! My goodness! My goodness! How is it that I could desire anything else and yet I do? Let it splash, let it sparkle, let it fizzle and my eyes begin to go in that direction. My heart begins to yearn.

I think we are entering into a new dispensation. It is not a dispensation of God coercing you or working you over, dragging you, manipulating your circumstances so that you have no other way to go. I think we are entering into a dispensation of "whosoever will." You have to desire God as God has desired you. You have to learn God. You have to love God even as God has loved you. There is something that God is requiring of the church in this hour. It is that they begin to learn the position and the nature and to develop the disposition of giving out of themselves for the sake of God.

Chapter 4 of Jeremiah is a hard chapter. There are a lot of books in this Bible that are hard chapters. But it seems to me that Jeremiah has more. Verse 1, *If thou wilt return, O Israel, saith the LORD, return unto me: and if thou wilt put away thine abominations out of my sight, then shalt thou not remove.* ²*And thou shalt swear, The LORD liveth, in truth, in judgment, and in righteousness; and the nations shall bless themselves in him, and in him shall they glory.* Hallelujah. Hallelujah.

There is a scripture in Isaiah where it was talking about the Spirit of God and I believe that it was talking about the Spirit of Christ. It says that God would come and that He would lay judgment to the line. Isaiah 28:16, *Therefore thus saith the Lord GOD, Behold, I lay in Zion for a foundation a stone, a tried stone, a precious corner stone, a sure foundation: he that believeth shall not make haste.* ¹⁷*Judgment also will I lay to the line, and righteousness to the plummet: and the hail shall sweep away the refuge of lies, and the waters shall overflow the hiding place.*

I think the church has lost its focus. I hope you won't misunderstand what I am saying and I hope that you don't go out of here and misquote me. But I believe that the church has lost the objective. I believe that one of the operations of the church should be the saving of souls, evangelism, but I think that is a by-product. I think the church should be involved in Christian activities and expanding the borders of their tent, but that is not the main objective. Nor is it a sign of your success in God, if the word that you hold is something other and more than the fact of those things that are working in a Christian environment. All of those things are by-products. If they become the thing that we are focusing upon then we have missed the objective of why it is that God made us Christian

in the beginning. We can get very busy being Christian and not obtain the position and the relationship with God that the word that we are hearing desires to produce. My God.

If you wanted to make heaven, then what you need is an Evangelical word. If you wanted to make heaven filled with the Spirit, or baptized with the Holy Ghost, you need a Pentecostal word. But we are not preaching and God is not speaking an Evangelical or a Pentecostal word. That is not the word that you and I have heard. It is not just to be a church going member. It is not just to be a part of a congregation of people who are worshipping and praising the Lord. That is not the intent of the word that you and I have heard.

God is not preaching a word of discipleship. Hello! God is not preaching a word of discipleship. God does not want disciples. If God wanted disciples the Bible would have ended with the twelve apostles. He would have achieved the objective that He wanted in the very beginning when He had His twelve apostles. God does not want disciples.

GOD WANTS SONS! GOD WANTS SONS! He doesn't want "children" sons. He doesn't want "adolescent" sons. He doesn't want a lot of havoc and confusion with somebody trying to rule over another and trying to corral everybody and bring them into a place of submission.

GOD WANTS WALKING, TALKING, MATURE SONS! Those that are attached to Him first and not first to each other. I can have great harmony with my brother. I can walk together with my brother. I can do great things with my brother. But if I have missed the objective of God then I have disappointed or frustrated the grace that God has given me. My God! I have frustrated the grace of God that He has given me because I am not achieving His objective. I am not appropriating His reality into my life.

If I am a son and this brother here is a son then we walk together, not because we are in agreement, but because we are hearing the same word, the same thought is coming from the same Head. This foot moves and that foot moves together in unison and in unity. My God! We need to be careful that we don't become a bunch of little "pastors" or a bunch of little congregational people bowing down to the "pastor".

Brother George had a dream. He had this remote starter for his car and he was counseled by the ministry that the ministry never boxes their cars in where they can't get away. Well, maybe you don't understand what that means, but I have a very good understanding of it. Sometimes a "quick get-away" is a thing that is needed.

The church has lost its vision or place of focus. First of all, it is the church and the operation of it and those that have a responsibility as far as ministry is concerned. Then it is in the congregational aspect of those of you who are just sitting there like "bumps on a log." You hear a word and then you go out and you live like hell. You have all of the propensities and the problems, and nothing ever changes. Oh, you may become more frustrated. You may become a little more desperate maybe. But overall you seem to be satisfied with your position and with the status quo of your circumstance and all of the time you hold within your grasp the power to change. But you don't change and it is not because you can't change.

My Bible tells me that there is nothing impossible with God (Matthew 19:26). God has demonstrated with this person right here the reality of change. I think that if I know that I have the ability to change, knowing what I am and who I am and the propensity that I have as far as my flesh is concerned, there is within my grasp a rod of authority that gives me the ability to make the difference. Hello! The only reason that I will not change or cannot change is because I do not want to change. Hello! Let me put it another way. It is because I want something else out there that is not of God. Loose! Loose!

You know my hopes, my aspirations, my desire can be perfectly "religious." "Oh God, I just want to bless the people. That is all I want to do." But all the time it is ME that wants to bless the people. It is not the Spirit of God. It is not the compassion of God that is in my heart for the people. Loose! Hallelujah. The only way that I am able to come to that position is if I allow the workings of the cross to be worked out in my life.

Brother Leonard Ravenhill says that the foot of the cross is always crowded. There never seems to be enough room at the foot of the cross, but there is always room on the cross. We either want to huddle at the base of it or we want to put it on our back and carry it, but who in their right mind wants to lay on it? We have lost our focus. We have lost our objective. Fool, don't you know that: "except a corn of wheat fall into the ground and die, it abideth alone:" (John 12:24)? It abideth alone! Oh "sonship!" When I first heard this word of sonship, oh boy! My heart started beating; visions started happening. I could see myself with a nice big crown with robes of splendor wrapped around me with a golden scepter. Huh? Is it a scepter or a baseball bat, you know what I mean? "If you don't submit to my authority, I will use my scepter on you." I kind of missed something in the equation. Of course you are probably not like that. Remember James and John? "I want to be on your left hand." I wonder how they came to the conclusion who would be on what side? I wonder if there was even a squabbling in and amongst them. "I don't want to be on His left side. I want to be on His right side." "Well no, you can't be on His right side because I am." Of course you never thought that way did you? Ruling and reigning with Christ. Well, I think that we have the concept that because He did it, we don't have to do it. My goodness. We have lost it somewhere.

The devil comes in and he wreaks havoc in the church: cancers, all kinds of maladies, physical, mentally, emotionally, depression, thoughts of suicide. Why? Because we have lost our focus. We are so possessive of the things around us. "This is mine!" "This is mine!" "This is mine!" "This is mine!" We have lost our focus and if you don't think that this word is a serious word, then you are mistaken. If you think that you can neglect the fact of what it is that God is speaking, you are mistaken. There are so many examples in the Bible that I cannot even imagine what it was that God put the children of Israel through in a literal natural sense to demonstrate the seriousness of our set of circumstances.

We like to think that we are God's little honeys. We like to think that we are right up there somewhere in God's sublime unconditional satisfaction. Hallelujah. I don't believe that is the condition. I don't believe that is the set of circumstances. I believe that God is very saddened over the position of the church. God is looking for sons, not disciples.

Can I share with you a little bit of revelation, a little bit of light that God gave me one day? It has to do with the Garden of Gethsemane. For three and a half years these men had walked with Him, talked with Him. Not just in this type of a setting, but they were intimate. They slept and ate with Him. He was going with them through their ups and their downs and their roundabouts. Hallelujah. He was bringing them closer and closer to that reality that was in God's heart for them. Can you imagine that kind of environment? Yet a man says to Him, "Show me God!" How much plainer can He be than to say, "Well, Philip, if you have seen me, you have seen the Father."? John 14:8, *Philip saith unto him, Lord, shew us the Father, and it sufficeth us. ⁹Jesus saith unto him, Have I been so long time with you, and yet hast thou not known me, Philip? he that hath seen me hath seen the Father; and how sayest thou then, Shew us the Father?*

It is a simple basic foundational concept that God wants sons. Do you know that God can save you? He can fill you with the Holy Ghost. He can make you a good person and you can become an excellent disciple. But He cannot make you a son. You have to want to be a son. You have to want to be a son. You have to want it more than you want yourself. You have to want it more than you want life, because it is going to be required of you to give your life.

You know, by all standards I think that you could probably say that the disciples were good men, especially at the end of the three and a half years. I don't think that you could walk with them, except that you had the spirit of perdition, and NOT change. Now let me tell you something. You are ALL born with the spirit of perdition. HELLO! You are all born dead! You were all conceived in sin. You were brought forth in iniquity. You lived for the devil until God came and intervened in your life, but when God came into your life and deposited within your soul the seed that is called Christ, that did not automatically eradicate or move out of the way that sin nature. What it did is put you in a position of control. My God! It puts you in a position of control. Do you understand what I am saying? You are in control of your destiny!

YOU ARE IN CONTROL OF YOUR DESTINY!

You have the ability to decide at the end of the day where you are going to be and it can be in spite of God's desire for you. My goodness. We are so self-absorbed, so self-orientated, so self-conscious.

Go to Jeremiah 4:3. Four is the number of tribulation, three is the number of fulness. It is the fulness of tribulation. Paul said, "I rejoice in my tribulation (Romans 5:3). Count it exceedingly joyful." When was the last time you said, "Oh boy! I am in trouble again!?" "Oh boy! I am depressed again!" "Oh boy! I am really having an anger fit again!" "Anger is coming again! Oh boy!" "Oh boy! Somebody took advantage of me!" "Oh boy! Hallelujah! They don't like me anymore!" When was the last time? I'll bet it was, "Oh me, oh my!" I'll bet it was, "Oh no! Here we go again!" Or, "Who do they think they are?" Or how about this one? "Why me, LORD?"

I think I am preaching to the wrong people. I have to be preaching to the wrong people. They all seem so happy. Fulness of tribulation. This isn't, "Thus saith Burt." This is "Thus saith the LORD."

Jeremiah 4:3, *For thus saith the LORD to the men of Judah and Jerusalem, Break up your fallow ground, and sow not among thorns.* Do you know that when they talk about Judah, who they are talking about? That the scepter of authority was transferred from the tribe of Levi to the tribe of Judah. Do you know that David was not only king, but he was also priest? God ordered that position for him by not smiting him with death when he came in before Him and he had fellowship there in the presence of God.

Peter says you are what? "But ye are a ...peculiar people;" (I Peter 2:9). That is why they put Christians in an insane asylum when things get really tough. They think Christians are crazy because they "hear voices" and see visions. They call it hallucinations.

When He talks about the "men of Judah," where are the men of Judah? I think God is having a hard time finding the men of Judah and I am not talking in the physiological sense, because in Christ Jesus there is neither male nor female. (Galatians 3:28b) There is just one entity, one position, one life, one Son.

For thus saith the LORD to the men of Judah and Jerusalem, Break up your fallow ground, and sow not among thorns. He wasn't talking to the heathen. He wasn't talking to the nominal Christian. He was talking to the called out ones,- the elect of God. The elect and the called out are determined by the word that you are hearing. If you are hearing a word that you are to be a son, then you are an elect. You are not Baptists. You are not Methodists. You are not even "come-out-of-ers." You are not even "end-time church." You are "elect." You are called. You are appointed. You are a "peculiar" person that is being collected and connected to a "peculiar" people.

He started it with Abraham. I don't know why it is that we are so hard of hearing. What did He say to Abraham? "GET THEE UP!" (Genesis 12:1). He didn't wait to translate Abraham. I don't know what Abraham's circumstances were, but I can assume that he must have been somewhat comfortable, and somewhat prosperous. Isn't that what the Bible says? I mean if I had all those goats, cattle, cows, pigs, servants and maidservants, I would assume that I would have been prosperous and successful. So Abraham had to make a decision. Now do you think that everybody was in agreement with him? How about the members of your family? How about the members of your community?

"Where are you going?"

"I don't know."

"Where are you going to live?"

"I don't know."

"How are you going to live?"

"I don't know."

"What are you going to do when it is all gone?"

"I don't know."

We must think that it is like some sort of little fairy tale. We must think that Abraham really didn't pay anything, that he took it all with him. He had family. He had aunts and uncles. He had a father and mother. You know, there is an interesting thought. A lot of us are like Lot. Lot didn't have the reality of the vision, but he had enough sense at least to latch on to Abraham's coat tail. I really want you to get that. He had enough sense, enough spiritual discernment to say, "He may be crazy, but there is something here that I had better be careful of." "I had better be careful here. I had better just attach my wagon to his train." So I think we have a lot of Lots. I think we have Lot Jr. and Lot Jr. Jr. and Lot Jr. Jr. Jr. But having the discernment, having the revelation that there was something here was not enough. Hello? IT WAS NOT ENOUGH! Lot didn't make the grade.

There came a point in the development of Abraham's character that could no longer allow for contingency liabilities. It wasn't that Abraham kicked him out. Lot made his own decision! Do you want to know something? Lot could have made a different decision. He could have said, "Well, you know uncle, I am the junior here. There is something going on here that isn't right, but if you will give me one more opportunity, let me take control of my environment. Let me bring it into authority. Let me talk to my herdsman and let's see if we can't work out some amicable agreement that will not cause a division and a separation in the relationship that I have with you because I love you."

Self-interest, self-preservation, with a predominant, inherent position and my rights won the vote. Some of us are making the same decision. Some of us are faced with the same set of circumstances. Do you know what would have really solved the issue between Abraham and Lot? Do you want to know what would have really solved the issue?

"Uncle, consider what I have as yours. No longer let me be a relative, but allow me to be your servant."

What alternative would Abraham have had? But there was something working in Lot. It had been working there all along. He hadn't been dealing with it. It was an attitude that was festering in his soul and that position of self-interest was not coming under the control or the authority. He always held on to his position of self-interest.

Do you want to know what is wrong with the church? Look at Lot. Do you want to know what is wrong with this church? Look at Lot. It is self-interest. It is self-preservation. We have lost the focus. We have lost the focus, if we ever knew what the intent or the desire was from the beginning.

Let me give you another example of something a little closer to home and I referred to it a little earlier. At the Garden of Gethsemane, there were twelve men, (only eleven in the garden at the time) and out of the eleven, there were only three that were supposed to be really close. Some of us are like Peter. We are "hit and run" people. We hit and we run. They were good people. They had given up a lot. They probably sustained a lot of criticism and ridicule. You know that the rabbinical society didn't like them very much. If you don't think that society was not vocal in their position of opposition and their place of displeasure, you are mistaken. So it is not as though it wasn't costing them something to follow Jesus.

Now I don't know what kind of father Zebedee was, but I can guarantee that if I am doing something important and two of my sons walk out of the situation and it is "cold turkey," it is not going to make me very happy (without preparation, if they just walked out on me). If I had two sons and we were involved in a project and I needed them in order for the project to work and they just walked away, I would not be happy. Jesus came and said, "Follow me." They said, "Bye, Dad!"

I would not be a happy camper. I would have problems. I would not only have a problem with them doing it, but that they did it to me. I would also have a problem with this man that was coming along saying, "Follow me!" and that they were following Him, without hesitation and all these years I have been working with them and fighting through the resistance and the rebellion and this Man just comes on the scene and says, "Follow me!" I know what it is to suffer with children. I know what it is to have children that are rebellious. I know what it is to have grandchildren that are rebellious. I know what it is to work with them in a relationship and to try to build something and to have them just resist and fight and then to have something come along and say something and they "run off." So it isn't as though there isn't trouble in the set of circumstances. I mean I can just relate to the circumstances by the fact of my own life. Trouble! Tribulation! What it means to be Christian in the right sense and the sacrifices that are made by individuals to be Christian. It is not something frivolous.

What I am telling you is, "if you desire to be a son it is not sufficient to be a disciple." Every one of you is coming to your Garden of Gethsemane. Every one of you has a place in the garden in the time of tribulation and trouble and the spirit of death, the spirit of murder rises up to confront you. You had better have the nature of the Son! You have to have the nature of the Son! The nature of the disciple wasn't sufficient, it was not sufficient. It took the quality and the nature of the Son. All the nature of the disciple could do was to think of its own position of self-worth and self-life.

Jesus had just talked to them an hour previously. Matthew 26:40, And he cometh unto the disciples, and findeth them asleep, and saith unto Peter, What, could ye not watch with me one hour? One hour. Can thou not watch and pray with me for just one hour? "Lest ye" what? Mark 14:38, Watch ye and pray, lest ye enter into temptation. The spirit truly is ready, but the flesh is weak. Lest you not succumb to the nature that is within you. Lest you do not do what you are going to do. He said, "Tarry ye here, and watch with me" (Matthew 26:38b). Watch and tarry with me. They were more interested in sleeping. They missed the opportunity to be sons. Hello! They missed! They missed! They missed! They missed! Do you understand? They missed! You and I can miss!

The Bible says that I am supposed to work out my own salvation. Philippians 2:12b, ***Work out your own salvation with fear and trembling.*** Me! Not in my own strength. I am not saying that, but I have a choice to make. I am confronted with my way or His way! Or it could be my way or your way! Do you understand what I am saying? I have to be cognizant of the unction, the anointing of God in my relationship with you, because God isn't necessarily going to come down in His splendid glory and give me this word, "Son! This is the way. Walk ye in it!" He may come through the vessel that I least want to hear from. He may come through the avenue that I least want it to be. But I have a responsibility to hear God. I have a responsibility, an accountability that is going to qualify or disqualify me and I cannot blame it on anybody else.

"You could have said it any other way but the way you said it." My God. My God. There is a consequence coming to the line of demarcation. I have to take the first step before I can take the second step or receive the third step. Hallelujah. I wasn't born to live. I was born to die, that I might live. We have lost our perspective. We think we are born to self-persevere. Jesus said, "For this purpose." What purpose? "I was born to be crucified." They said, "No, you can't do that. That would ruin all of our plans. That would destroy our ambitions and our aspirations." Isn't it funny? The revelation of sonship always gets in the revelation of self .

I don't know how we missed it. I really don't. I don't know how we missed it. Jesus said to the woman that was weeping over the way that they were treating him and the way that it was going to wind up on the hill of Golgatha . How did we miss it? "Don't weep for Me, sister! Don't weep for Me! Weep for those that are coming after Me." Luke 23:28, ***But Jesus turning unto them said, Daughters of Jerusalem, weep not for me, but weep for yourselves, and for your children.*** Verse 31, ***For if they do these things in a green tree, what shall be done in the dry?*** How did we miss it? Did we think that somehow, someday we were going to get "raptured" out of a position of tribulation and suffering? Did we think that we could live our lives in comfort and peace and safety and have the decision to make as to whether or not we were going to be crucified? Did we think that crucifixion was actually a historical event? Did we think that there would be no position or place that we would have to make a decision, that for this purpose, for this reason, for this aspiration and for this Word was I called? Did I hear? Did I respond? Do I not now have the obligation and the responsibility? My God!

Our theology sometimes is, "No man takes my life from me." We seem to forget the other part of it. "I willingly give it up and I lay it down" (John 10:18). So that I what? Do you know that if I don't willingly give it up then I have no aspiration or desire or right to pick it up again? Hallelujah! Is the thought of death so absolute and so horrific in our imaginations and minds to think that there is no afterlife, or after-effect, or after-position of experience? Is heaven just something of a figment of our imagination? Or is it really a realm that exists and moves alongside of this realm that we call natural?

Jeremiah 4:3, ***For thus saith the LORD to the men of Judah and Jerusalem, Break up your fallow ground, and sow not among thorns.*** "Break up your fallow ground!" You have the right, the liberty and the necessity, YOU! You know, I could have looked at that tractor and that ground. I can think in my mind, "Tractor, go out there and plow that ground." I can come day after day after day after day. The ground doesn't get plowed. The tractor doesn't move. The equipment doesn't do what it is designed to do. I have a responsibility to submit myself to my circumstances and to facilitate the will of God in the aspect of my dying to the nature that is within me, that I might live to that nature that is also within me.

Listen to what this says to the men of Judah and Jerusalem. For thus saith the LORD to the men of Judah and Jerusalem, Break up your fallow ground, and sow not among thorns. Loose them! My God! Do you remember the parable in Matthew of the sower that went out to sow? My God! Do you remember the analogy? Some fell among the rocks. Some fell among the ground that seemed to be good but it says that the weeds and thorns sprung up (Matthew 13:7). Do you remember? He said what? The thorns

and the weeds were what? The cares of this life (Matthew 13:22). Isn't that what He said? That they were the cares of this life? The cares of this world?

You know, I have natural responsibilities. Nancy and I find ourselves in a season that we have never ever ever been as busy in life as we are busy now. What we have to do is humanly impossible. I don't know if you can really understand what I am talking about. It is humanly impossible to do all that needs to be done. We are diligent people, we are responsible people, we are caring people, which adds to the responsibility and the position of diligence that has to be exerted in the thing that we are doing. BUT I cannot use that as an excuse! If I allow it to usurp my position and my desire for God, then there is accountability and responsibility; there is a judgment that comes into my life because of it. God has given us the power to maintain our position of focus upon Him and to receive from Him that which is necessary to do in the natural and to do in the spirit.

I want to tell you something. The load in the spiritual sense doesn't decrease because the load in the natural sense has increased! God always says, "Okay, one more thing. One more thing."

I have a responsibility to work out my salvation. ME! I have a responsibility. My responsibility! MY RESPONSIBILITY! If you don't think people don't bring problems, you are mistaken. Everybody comes with their own suitcase full of problems. Everybody comes with their own suitcase full of spiritual familiar things. If you do not think that they are as weedy as my garden is out there, you are mistaken. But I have a responsibility to tend my garden in the spiritual sense, as I have a responsibility to tend my garden in the natural sense. I learned that a long time ago. I don't think the church has learned it yet. We compartmentalize God. Working hours are working hours and God hours are God hours.

You know, as a young man I grew up working for my father, both my heavenly Father and my natural father. I remember that I was involved in the ministry and I was involved in the work of my father. I want to tell you something. God bless his soul, but my father was a workaholic. He was a man that had great expectations for those that worked for him and what they were supposed to do and how they were supposed to do it. My goodness. One day I got a little exasperated. I had a family. We had needs and not all of them were being met. Nevertheless we were doing the very best that we could with what we had. The work load was increasing in the natural. We had begun church in our home. People were coming. The work load was increasing. The spiritual demand was requiring more and more and I was getting a little exasperated.

I was saying, "God, You are going to have to do something about this situation. You are either going to have to release me from the work situation and let me go into full-time ministry, or You are going to have to release me from my spiritual obligations and let me go into full-time work." (Which I was very willing to do.) My contention that was with God was that "I couldn't do them both." I labored before the Lord in prayer and fasting, seeking His face, while at the same time, working at both obligations. You know, God is never in a hurry, is He? How many of you know that God is never in a hurry? Have you found out God is not like fast foods? You can't drive up to the speaker and speak into it and drive up to the window and get it. So I am kind of like a pot on the stove. So it is not really turned down too low. It is turned up not really high, but a little

bit too high. So you can imagine the sauce beginning to bubble and agitate and boil a little bit. Now, I just want you to picture this because this is what my soul was like. You know how when you turn a pot up a little bit too high, not real high, but a little too high, how it begins to spit. It begins to spit at you a little bit. Uh-huh! That was me! If you would say the wrong thing at the wrong time you might get splattered with the gook that was in the pot. That was me! That was my soul!

So we hear that the prophet is coming and we were having home meetings in order to invite this ministry in. Of course I was being totally objective in my inviting the ministry to come, right? The prophetic ministry. Oh yes. Absolutely not self-oriented at all! But there was this little thought back here, "Well, you know if the prophet is here, maybe he will give me the word that I want to hear. He will give me my sense of direction. He will give me my release." Oh boy! I really think that God has something of a sense of humor to tell you the truth. He let me stew just long enough to bubble and boil.

So the prophet comes and we are having our meeting. My goodness. I am really telling on myself. I'm sure you probably never have any of these thoughts. It was a good word that the prophet was sharing, but I really wasn't interested. I wanted him to get through all the word and then to get to the prophetic part of it. Oh boy! So he ministered and it seemed like he was never going to stop. I was being good, I thought. So finally we get around to the end of the service and he begins to move in that realm of prophetic utterance. There might have been 15 or 20 people there. So he begins, he prophesies to this one and he prophesies to that one. Then he walks over and prophesies to this one and he turns around and prophesies to that one. He is prophesying to everyone except to the one that I think he should be prophesying to and I really think he prophesied to everybody but me.

Of course I am inside kind of seething a little bit. I'm thinking, "God, what are You doing? What is going on here?" All of a sudden as the man was walking back over to his seat, he turns around, he looks at me and he points at me. He says, "You really don't want to hear this. You really don't want to hear this. You really, really don't want to hear this." Of course, about that time I am thinking, "Okay, don't tell me." He says, "I am going to tell you anyway. God says..." I say, "Okay, okay, okay!" "God says..." I am on the edge of my chair, "Which is it going to be, work or the ministry?" "God says, you will do both!" I said, "You are right. I really did not want to hear that." I really did not want to hear it, because I wanted something else. There was something more important to me than hearing the voice of God.

For thus saith the LORD to the men of Judah and Jerusalem, Break up your fallow ground, and sow not among thorns. Ask for the fire of God to come into your lives. Ask God to give you tribulation, not for the sake of tribulation, but for the sake of righteousness.

You know, we just really touched the surface here. That piece of equipment that I have got on the back of my tractor, it has six of these big long shanks. I would say that that equipment probably weighs a thousand pounds. You know, I have seen ground so hard that it just skids across the top of the ground. Then I have to come back again and again and again. Sometimes I can get the shank down six inches and I need to go down

14 or 18 inches. I'm telling you it has big sharp points on the end of it and I have to come back again and again and again until I feel how the tractor is pulling. I don't know how to explain it. I've got those shanks buried back there and the tractor is moving along. You can hear it in the motor. You can tell the force that is being required to pull it. You know and every now and then you feel the kicking of it as it hits the harder dirt, hard pan. You will look behind you and there will be these big boulders and clods of dirt that are heaving up out of the ground. Then you know that you can go on to the next field, you can go on to the next stage. You can do the next thing that is required.

We have just touched the surface. We are just scratching the surface. Let us be sensitive in the spirit in the days that we are here. Let's not lose our focus as to why we are here. Let us not lose our sense of orientation, because of the people, the food, the environment, the scenery, or because of our personal position of care of want. Let us remain focused upon HIM.

The word of the Lord last night was that if you draw nigh to God, and he will draw nigh to you (James 4:8). The Lord was beseeching us last night that we would draw nigh unto Him. That should be the cry that is within our heart. As we are talking to each other we should be talking and discussing the things of the word. We should be examining the move of the spirit. We should not be frivolous with our time. We should be maintaining the harmony in the spirit with each other, working on our position of relationship with each other. It is easy in our familiarities between husband and wife and family to be distracted. Let us maintain our equilibrium in the Lord and hear what the spirit is saying in this week to come. God bless you. Amen.